

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

Volume 15, Pericope 4

Colossians 1:11b-14



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COMMENTARIES

English	German	French	Spanish	Latin
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English:

A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament:¹

1:12 τῷ πατρὶ {B}

This verse presents a curious nest of variant readings (see also the following comments). The reading that best explains the origin of the others is τῷ πατρὶ, supported by a diversified group of witnesses (P61 A C* D K P Ψ 33 81* 1739* it^{b, d, mon} vg syr^h cop^{sa, bo} goth arm eth). The strangeness of designating God simply as ὁ πατήρ when Christ has not been named in the immediate context doubtless prompted copyists to add either τοῦ χριστοῦ (330 451 2492) or (τῷ) θεῷ, either in apposition (x itg syr^p Speculum) or connected with καί (C3 81^c 88 104 614 1739^{mg} 2495 al). The agreement of P⁴⁶ and B in prefixing ἅμα is a noteworthy coincidence in error.

1:12 ἰκανώσαντι {B}

Instead of ἰκανώσαντι, which is strongly supported by P⁴⁶ x A C Dc K L P most minuscules vg syr^{p, h} cop^{bo} al, several witnesses, chiefly Western (D* F G 33 436 1175 it^{d, g} cop^{sa} goth arm eth), substitute καλέσαντι. The latter reading arose either accidentally in transcription (confusion between τρικανωσαντι and τωκαλεσαντι would be easy), or deliberately as a substitution of a familiar for an unusual expression (ἰκανόω occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Cor 3:6). The reading of B is an early conflation of both variants (καλέσαντι καὶ ἰκανώσαντι).

1:12 ὑμᾶς {B}

A majority of the Committee preferred ὑμᾶς (x B 1739 syr^{hmg} cop^{sa} goth arm eth), regarding ἡμᾶς (A C D G K P Ψ 33 614 Byz Lect it vg syr^{p, h} cop^{bo} al) as an assimilation to ver. 13.

1:14 ἀπολύτρωσιν {A}

The Textus Receptus, following several secondary witnesses, interpolates from Eph 1:7 the words διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ. If the phrase had been present originally, there would have been no reason for scribes to omit it.

¹Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 553–554.

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1/1. The letter {B} indicates that the text is almost certain.

A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament:²

1:11 Segmentation

If a break is made before the words μετὰ χαρᾶς (with joy), as in the text, the words μετὰ χαρᾶς go with what follows and indicate the attitude one is to have when giving thanks, as in NRSV, “while joyfully giving thanks.” If, however, the break is made after these words, μετὰ χαρᾶς go with what precedes and indicate the attitude one is to have while enduring and having patience, as in RSV, “for all endurance and patience with joy ...”

1:12 τῷ πατρὶ (to the Father) {B}

This verse presents a number of variant readings (see also the following comments on other places in this verse). The reading that best explains the origin of the others is τῷ πατρὶ, which is supported by a varied group of witnesses. Copyists no doubt found it strange that God is referred to simply as “the Father” when Christ has not been named in the immediate context. So they added either τοῦ Χριστοῦ (of Christ) or [τῷ] θεῷ (God), either in apposition to τῷ πατρὶ (to God the Father [so FC]) or connected to τῷ πατρὶ with the conjunction καὶ (to the God and Father). The agreement of P46 and manuscript B in prefixing ἅμα (together with) is remarkable, but unlikely to be correct.

In some languages, it will be necessary to add a possessive pronoun to the words “the Father” even though the reading in the text is followed.

1:12 ἰκανώσαντι (who has enabled/qualified) {B}

A variety of witnesses strongly support the participle ἰκανώσαντι. Several witnesses, chiefly Western, substitute the participle καλέσαντι (who has P⁴¹² called). This variant reading may have arisen accidentally when a copyist confused τωικανωσαντι (who has enabled) for τωικαλεσαντι (who has called), which would have been easy to do. Or the variant reading may have arisen deliberately when the familiar expression “who has called” was substituted for an unusual expression (the verb ἰκανόω occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Cor 3:6). The reading of manuscript B is an early combining of both readings (καλέσαντι καὶ ἰκανώσαντι).

1:12 ὑμᾶς (you) {B}

¹Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 411–412.

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The reading of the second person plural ὑμεῖς is probably original but was changed to the first person plural pronoun ἡμεῖς (us) to agree with v. 13 (“who has rescued us”).

1:14 ἀπολύτρωσιν (redemption) {A}

The Textus Receptus, following several secondary witnesses, inserts the words διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ (through his blood) from Eph 1:7. If the phrase had been present originally, there would have been no reason for copyists to omit it.

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

RSV Revised Standard Version

FC French common language translation (La Bible en Français Courant)

Word Biblical Commentary:³

An Intercession for Knowledge and Godly Conduct (1:9–14)

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Translation

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped earnestly praying for you that God may fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 in order that you may lead a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may show great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light, 13 For he has rescued us from the tyranny of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

³Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1982), 18–20, 23–31.

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Form/Structure/Setting

The second major section of Paul's thanksgiving paragraph commences at verse 9, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς. ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν κτλ. ("for this reason, since the day we heard about you"), and it spells out the content of his intercessory prayer report. The links between the thanksgiving and the intercession are strongly emphasized by: (a) the words διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς ... οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι ... ("for this reason ... we have not stopped praying for you"), verse 9, pick up and echo those of verse 3, εὐχαρισ τοῦμεν ... πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι ("we give thanks ... always when we pray for you"; cf. Phil 1:9; 2 Thess 1:11 where a similar device is used to link the two sections); and by: (b) the repetition of terms and ideas already used in the thanksgiving: so, for example, "since the day" (vv 6, 9), "we heard" (vv 4, 9), "knowledge" (vv 6, 9, 10), "bearing fruit and increasing" (vv 6, 10), "giving thanks" (vv 3, 12), "the Father" (vv 3, 12), "the saints" (vv 4, 12), "spiritual" of verse 9 corresponds to "in spirit" of verse 8, while "the inheritance ... in light" (v 12) may well overlap in meaning with ἐλπίς as the "object of hope" (v 5). It remains only to draw attention to the repeated use of "all" (πᾶς) in both sections (vv 4, 6, 9, 10, 11). "The resumption of these phrases and concepts clearly indicates that the thanksgiving and intercession are closely connected" (Lohse, 24).

After the main verb "we have not ceased to pray" (οὐ παύομεθα ... προσευχόμενοι, v 9) the content of the prayer is indicated by the ἵνα-clause: "that you may be filled ..." (ἵνα πληρωθῆτε, v 9). An infinitive construction indicates the purpose for which the readers are to be filled with a knowledge of God's will, namely "to walk worthily of the Lord" (περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου, v 10) while the four participles which follow, "bearing fruit" (καρποφοροῦντες, v 10), "increasing" (αὐξανόμενοι, v 10), "being strengthened" (δυναμούμενοι, v 11) and "giving thanks" (εὐχαριστοῦντες, v 12), define more precisely what is involved in walking worthily of the Lord and pleasing him in all things. Each of the four participles is modified by a prepositional phrase, and so the whole paragraph may be structured as follows:

διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς ...

προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι ...

ἵνα πληρωθῆτε ...

περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου ...

ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ

καρποφοροῦντες

αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ

ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει

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δυναμούμενοι

μετα χαρᾶς

εὐχαριστοῦντες ...

In verses 13 and 14 which are probably to be understood as an exposition of verse 12 (being fitted for God's inheritance in the realm of light meant that he had delivered them out of the realm of darkness, translated them into the kingdom of his beloved Son and given them redemption) two relative sentences occur (ὃς ἐρρύσατο, v 13, and ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν, v 14), the first of which has two lines in contrasting parallelism:

13a ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους

13b καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ.

Not all commentators, however, are agreed that Paul's intercession extends to verse 14. A considerable and influential body of continental scholarly opinion is convinced that the prayer-report concludes with the words about patience and long-suffering in verse 11. μετα χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες ("joyfully giving thanks") introduces the community's confession of faith in Christ. On this view verses 12–20 are understood as a unit with verses 12–14 being regarded by Käsemann (Essays, 154, 155) and others as an introit to a baptismal liturgy (Bornkamm, Studien, 188–203, and N. A. Dahl, "Anamnesis. Mémoire et Commémoration dans le Christianisme primitif," ST 1 [1948] 86, 87, understand the hymnic confession in a eucharistic context). Our criticism of this division (cf. Introductory Thanksgivings, 71–75) is threefold: first, it is not at all clear why εὐχαριστοῦντες is to be separated from the preceding participles (which we have suggested define more precisely what it means "to walk worthily of the Lord") and understood as a summons or in an imperatival way. Second, although εὐχαριστέω was used in a wider sense than simply the giving of thanks for personal benefits received it is doubtful whether it was employed as a technical term to introduce a confession (cf. Bornkamm, Studien, 196, 197, and note Deichgräber's criticisms, Gotteshymnus, 145, 146). Third, Käsemann's particular view of the whole section being "an early Christian baptismal liturgy" is unproven. We do not know enough about early Christian liturgies to be able to make pronouncements with this certainty.

Paul's thanksgiving period extends from verses 3–14 (containing a thanksgiving report, vv 3–8, and an intercessory prayer report, vv 9–14). It does not have a well-rounded and clear-cut climax, but passes almost imperceptibly from the form of a prayer to that of a creed or hymn. Some of the terms and ideas of verses 12–14 may have been associated with baptism but in their present context are the basis of joyful thanksgiving to the Father.

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Comment

1/2. ἐν πάσῃ δύναμει δυναμούμενοι κτλ. The third clause “strengthened with all power ...” indicates how the conduct, worthy of the Lord, was to be achieved. The standards set before the Colossians were far higher than those of the false teachers. And nothing short of God’s almighty power at work within them would enable them to live so as to please him in all things.

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

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

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

“Long-suffering” (μακροθυμία) in both Old and New Testaments is used of the patience of God and of his people—note especially Exodus 34:6, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (italics mine).

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Because of God's dealings with his people this word, which was not very significant in secular Greek, was given a new and unexpectedly profound importance, so that the human attitude of "long-suffering" (μακροθυμία) is now set in a new light. God's patience with his people means they ought to act in a similar manner toward others (cf. the parable of the wicked servant, Matt 18:23–35, and 1 Thess 5:14). "Long-suffering" is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), unable to be produced from the individual's own resources.

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

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

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

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

- 1/3. μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρί. The person to whom the Colossians are to offer joyful thanksgiving (μετὰ χαρᾶς, "with joy," is to be taken with εὐχαριστοῦντες, "giving thanks"; it preserves the balance of the three clauses in vv 11, 12, and is favored by Phil 1:4; see O'Brien, Introductory Thanksgivings, 93, 94, for further details) is "the Father" (τῷ πατρί). We have already noted at chapter 1:3 in Paul's thanksgiving the stress upon

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God in his character as Father. The same point is driven home at chapter 3:17, for it is to the Father that thanksgiving is to be given through the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the Father is praised because he has effected salvation and redemption in Christ.

τοῦ ἰκανῶσαντι κτλ. The grounds for this joyful thanksgiving are that the Almighty (ὁ ἰκανός is used in the LXX at Job 31:2 as a divine name, “the Almighty,” and C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* [London: Hodder, 1935] 15, 16, suggested this OT passage had influenced Paul here and at 2 Cor 3:6) has fitted (ἰκανῶσαντι, v 12) them for an eternal inheritance, delivered (v 13) them from a tyranny of darkness and transferred them into a kingdom in which his beloved Son holds sway. The aorist tenses point to an eschatology that is truly realized (i.e. God had already qualified [ἰκανῶσαντι] the Colossians to share in the inheritance, he had already delivered [ἔρρύσατο] them from this alien power and had already transferred [μετέστησεν] them to his Son’s kingdom), while by contrast, the present tense of verse 14, “we have” (ἔχομεν), stresses the continued results of the redemption wrought in the past.

εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου. This whole section, as has been noted, is full of OT echoes. “To share in the inheritance of the saints” recalls the promise, first given to Abram (Gen 13:14–17) and subsequently renewed to Israel (Num 26:52–56; 34:2, 13; Josh 19:9) that they would possess their inheritance as the tribes were apportioned the land of Canaan by lot. But the inheritance to which Paul refers belongs to a higher plane and a more lasting order than any earthly Canaan. (On the significance of the land of Canaan in the OT, Judaism and early Christianity see J. D. Hester, *Paul’s Concept of Inheritance. A Contribution to the Understanding of Heilsgeschichte* [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968] and W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* [Berkeley: University of California, 1974]).

“Part, share” (μερίς) and “lot” (κλήρος) were often used synonymously or together in the LXX (Deut 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29; 18:1; Josh 19:9; Isa 57:6; Jer 13:25), as were their Hebrew equivalents in the Qumran literature (1QS 11:7, 8; cf. 1QS 2:5; 1QH 11:11, 12; 1QM 1:1, 5; 13:5, 6; cf. E. Lohse, “Christologie und Ethik im Kolosserbrief,” *Apophoreta. Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen*, ed. W. Eltester and F. H. Kettler [BZNW 30; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964, 157–68] Reprinted in *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments. Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. 2nd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973] 249–61, esp. 258). Here we understand the phrase εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου as meaning “to have a share in the κλήρος,” i.e. the inheritance of God’s people (so Moule, 55, and Bruce, 188). There are parallels in the biblical data (Deut 33:3; Ps 89:6; cf. 1 Thess 3:13) and the Qumran literature (especially 1QS 11:7, 8, where the motifs of inheritance, lot and holy ones are mentioned) to suggest that “holy ones” (οἱ ἅγιοι) here refers to angels, and many commentators take the expression in this way. The further point is added that the readers have their hope secure in God’s presence (“in light”) where the angels live. Paul, reflecting on his thought in chapter 1:5, is looking forward to a polemic against the cult of angels, which the false teachers were evidently practicing (2:18).

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So “at a single blow he dispels this veneration of the angelic powers by assuring the Colossians that they have attained a place shared by the angels (3:1)” (Martin, NCB, 54).

However, this interpretation of “holy ones” referring to angels is less likely than the view that God’s people are being spoken about. The closely related passage of Acts 26:18 (the themes of “light,” “darkness,” “authority,” “forgiveness of sins,” “lot,” and “holy ones” are common to both passages), where words are attributed to Paul, “those who are sanctified by faith in me” (ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει φῆ εἰς ἐμέ), can only refer to believers. Furthermore, as Schweizer (47) aptly notes, all the other references to “holy ones” in this letter (1:2, 4, 22; particularly 1:26; 3:12) are to church members. κληρος τῶν ἁγίων is thus understood as a reference to the inheritance allotted to God’s people (cf. Dibelius-Greeven, 8, and many English-speaking commentators). “In light” (ἐν τῷ φωτί) goes with the whole phrase that precedes, i.e. “to share in the inheritance of the saints.” The point is that the inheritance for which the all-powerful Father had fitted them was in the realm of the light of the age to come. Unlike Canaan it belonged to a spiritual dimension, unable to be ravaged by war, famine or the like. For the Colossian Christians, most of whom were probably Gentiles by birth, this was good news indeed. They now had a share in God’s inheritance with other believers, or to use the equivalent words of Paul’s thanksgiving they had “a hope laid up in heaven” (v 5; cf. 3:1–4).

1/4. A further exposition of this remarkable change that God had effected at the time of the Colossians’ conversion is spelled out in two corresponding lines (cf. Lohse, 36, and Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 38; see above 19):

ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας ...

καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν ...

Negatively, God has delivered us (ἡμᾶς: note the change to the first person plural indicating that God’s action has reference to other believers, including Paul, as well as to the Colossian Christians) from the tyranny of darkness and, positively, he has placed us under the rule of his beloved Son.

ὁ ἐρρύσατο κτλ. Deliverance from an alien power was an important theme in the OT (the Lord rescued his people from the hand of the Egyptians [Exod 14:30; Judg 6:9], from bondage [Exod 6:6] and from all her enemies [Judg 8:34]). The psalmists in particular loved to sing of the Lord’s past deliverances, both national and personal, and on the basis of these prayed to him that he might deliver them from danger, sickness, death, enemies and hostile situations (Pss 33:18, 19; 79:9; 86:13; etc). The influence of the Psalter on the later prayers of Judaism is quite marked (see the Tefillah where after the sixth petition for the forgiveness of sins there follow the words, “Look upon our affliction and plead our cause, and redeem us speedily for thy name’s sake”; for Qumran parallels note 1QH 2:35; 3:19; cf. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*,

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80, 81). Most of the NT instances of the verb “to deliver” (ῥύομαι) appear in prayer contexts (Luke 1:74; Matt 27:43, the mocking words of the Jewish leaders to Jesus on the cross that God would not answer his cry for deliverance; though note 2 Pet 2:7, 9). So the Christian community prays to God “deliver (ῥύσαι) us from the evil one” (Matt 6:13; cf. Luke 11:4) while it awaits its Lord “who delivers (τὸν ῥυόμενον) us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10 in a thanksgiving paragraph).

The inheritance for which the Colossians had been fitted was in the realm of light, a complete contrast to that tyranny under which they had once lived (ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους; cf. Luke 22:52, 53) prior to their conversion (according to Lohse, 39, the contrast between the concepts of light and darkness for conversion to the God of Israel was already known in Hellenistic Judaism [Joseph and Asenath 8:9; 15:12]). Like a mighty king who was able to remove peoples from their ancestral homes and to transplant them (μετέστησεν; the same verb is used by Josephus [Ant. 9.235] of Tiglath-pileser’s removal of the Transjordanian tribes to his own kingdom: μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ βασιλείαν; cf. 1 Cor 13:2 where the verb is used of transferring mountains) into another realm, God had taken the Colossians from the tyranny of darkness (Chrysostom aptly noted that “power” equals “tyranny” here), where evil powers rule (Luke 22:53) and where Satan’s authority is exercised (Acts 26:18), transferring them to the kingdom in which his beloved Son held sway.

The notion of two realms to which human beings belong, which are characterized by the contrast of light and darkness, is found in the Qumran material: on the one side the lot of Belial and the sons of darkness (1QS 2:5; & 1QM; 1:1, 5, 11; 4:2; 13:2), on the other side the lot of the holy ones and the sons of light (1QS 1:9; 2:16; 11:7, 8; 1QH 11:11, 12).

This change of dominion so vividly described under the categories of “light” and “darkness” and which had taken place in the lives of the Colossians (together with other Christians including Paul—“us”) at their conversion was “absolutely determinative for the life of the believer” (Lohse, 37; cf. 2 Cor 6:14; Eph 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9). They are now “children of light” (υἱὸὶ φωτός, 1 Thess 5:5) and are to behave accordingly.

In the phrase “the kingdom (βασιλεία) of his beloved Son” we note one of the few New Testament references to the kingdom of Christ, an interim period between the resurrection of Jesus and the final coming of the kingdom of God. Paul seems to have distinguished two aspects of the heavenly kingdom in the phrases “kingdom of Christ” and “kingdom of God,” the former referring to the heavenly kingdom in its present aspect, the latter concerning the final consummation (1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; 2 Tim 4:1, 18; though some references have a more general significance: e.g. Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Col 4:11).

1/5. ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. In the kingdom where God’s Son holds sway there is redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις). This is equated with, or at least

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in apposition to, the forgiveness of sins, indicating, as Moule stated, “very clearly how entirely moral and spiritual the conception of the kingdom of God or of Christ was for the disciples of Christ” (58). Redemption, which connotes liberation from imprisonment and bondage, is not simply the object of hope (though cf. Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30). It is here an existing reality, a present possession (reading ἔχομεν, “we have,” which has the strongest manuscript support; cf. Büchsel, TDNT 4, 353), as often elsewhere in the Pauline writings (Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7), and is “bound up strictly with the person of Jesus” (Büchsel, TDNT 4, 354). It is “in him” (ἐν ᾧ) that we possess it. God has made him to be our redemption (1 Cor 1:30; on the subject of redemption see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. 3rd ed. [London: Tyndale, 1965] 11–64; 1st American edition Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings. Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* [SNTSMS 5; Cambridge: University Press, 1967] 49–81).

τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. The associated expression “the forgiveness of sins” does not occur frequently in Paul’s writings. Normally he refers to “sin” (ἁμαρτία) in the singular, as a power which entered the world through Adam’s action (Rom 5:12) and since then has tyrannized men until that power was broken by Christ’s death on the cross (Rom 8:3; etc). “Forgiveness of sins” is mentioned with reference to John’s baptism (Mark 1:4), while in the Acts of the Apostles it is repeatedly cited as the content of salvation (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). Paul, in this context, may have been using a traditional expression to describe the blessings of forgiveness given in Christ (though cf. Percy, *Probleme*, 85, 86, who claims that this fits the context better than the distinctively Pauline terms of “justification,” etc). The linking of this motif with redemption may have been due to the specific problem at Colossae, for it is possible that the false teachers, like those of a later period to whom Irenaeus referred (*Heresies* 1.21, 2), distinguished between “the remission of sins” as the first stage received in baptism and “redemption” as the final stage coming from the divine Christ (so Bruce, 191, 192). It would be quite understandable why Paul would show that both were present realities experienced in God’s Son.

With these words about redemption and the forgiveness of sins Paul’s prayer shades off into the majestic hymn about the lordship of Christ.

Explanation

Having reported his thanksgiving to God for the faith and love of the Colossian Christians, Paul proceeds to spell out the content of his intercessory prayer for them. Basically his petition is for the discernment of God’s will and the power to do it. He earnestly asks that God might fill the Colossians with a knowledge of his will so that they would possess true spiritual insight. This should lead to behavior fully pleasing to the Lord—namely, a crop of good deeds and growth

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in understanding. The power that would enable them to live in such a manner exercising patience and long-suffering could only come from above, that is, from God's glorious might. At the same time they are to give thanks to the Father for his mighty, gracious work in their midst: he has given them an eternal inheritance, delivered them from the power of darkness and transferred them into a kingdom where his beloved Son rules. Involved in this also were the blessings of redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

Paul's introductory thanksgiving paragraph of verses 3–14, of which the intercessory prayer forms an integral part, has a fourfold function:

- 1/6. epistolary—it introduces major themes of the letter such as the universal spread of God's word, the gospel (in contrast to the limited circle of the Colossian heresy), the Christian hope, true wisdom and knowledge with a resulting behavior that pleases the Lord (in contrast to the false wisdom of the heretical teachers with its rigorous asceticism and show of humility), thanksgiving to the Father, deliverance from bondage, and so on. These themes are then expanded, sometimes by way of answer to the heresy, in the body of the letter. Stylistic features are foreshadowed in the passage, while the degree of intimacy of the letter can also be observed here. Paul does not know this church personally, and so does not write in the warm manner of the Philippian letter, for example.
- 1/7. The didactic purpose is clearly in evidence. Important theological motifs occur in both the thanksgiving and the intercessory prayer, e.g. faith, love, hope, gospel, knowledge, God's will, wisdom and understanding, etc. It was the apostle's concern that these themes be fully grasped by the recipients, and he has expanded them in the body of the letter, so recalling the readers to truths already taught by Epaphras.
- 1/8. The exhortatory function is also to be noted. Catechetical references to long-suffering (3:12; cf. 1:11), the putting on of love (3:14; cf. 1:4), the corporate giving of thanks to the Father (3:15–17; cf. 1:12), walking in the tradition they had received (2:6; cf. 1:10) and so behaving wisely to those "outside" (4:5) are prefigured in this introductory passage. At the same time the Colossians, knowing that Paul was interceding for them along the lines that he did, would have been encouraged to respond in the appropriate way.
- 1/9. Finally, Paul, by his actual prayers and the recording of them (even if the reports are summaries of the prayers offered to God), demonstrated his pastoral concern for the readers. He desired that they might grow in spiritual knowledge in order to combat the dangers facing them. Such wisdom could only come from above, and we may suggest that Paul recognized that, apart from God's granting such insight, his teaching and exhortation in the words which were to follow would be of no avail.

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Chri

- ▶ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT
- ▶ NCB New Century Bible [Commentary] (new ed.)
- ▶ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT
- ▶ ST Studia theologica
- ▶ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT
- ▶ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT
- ▶ 1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)
- ▶ 1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)
- ▶ 1QH Hôdâyôt (Thanksgiving Hymns) from Qumran Cave 1
- ▶ 1QM Milḥāmāh (War Scroll) from Qumran

BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft [ZNW]

esp. especially

- ▶ 1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)
- ▶ NCB New Century Bible [Commentary] (new ed.)
- ▶ 1QH Hôdâyôt (Thanksgiving Hymns) from Qumran Cave 1
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- ▶ 1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)
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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)

SNTSMS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

BEvT Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie

SUNT Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck)

ST Studia theologica

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New International Greek Testament Commentary:⁴

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

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

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

⁴James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 73–82.

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(cf. 2 Cor. 4:16–5:5; see also 1:27; H. Hegermann, EDNT 1.346–47). That this train of thought is in mind here is confirmed by the strong eschatological and realized eschatological note in the next two verses.

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

1:12 μετὰ χαρᾶς (12) εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἰκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί. It is important to bear in mind that in the Greek this is not a new sentence and that the subject of the verb is not Paul and Timothy (repeating the opening note of 1:3). Rather, the subject is those being prayed for by Paul and Timothy. This prayer is not only for knowledge and wisdom, for conduct fruitful in good works, and for patient fortitude in the trying and testing circumstances of life, but that this may all be suffused by the experience of joy in thankfulness to the Father (so also 3:17). The implication is that these graces are all interdependent, that wisdom, conduct beneficial to others, and patience can only be sustained in that joyful honoring of Creator by creature which is the basis of all sound thinking and doing (Rom. 1:21).²² On εὐχαριστοῦντες see the introduction to the comments on 1:3–23 and the comments on 1:3, and on God as Father (πατήρ) see on 1:2.

The experience of joy seems to have been common among the first Christians (e.g., Acts 2:46; Phil. 4:4–6; 1 Thes. 5:16–18), and not least in the midst of and despite hardship and suffering (2 Cor. 7:4; 8:2; 1 Thes. 1:6; Heb. 10:34; 12:2, 11; Jas. 1:2; so also Matt. 5:12; Rom. 5:3–4; 1 Pet.

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1:6; 4:13). Paul evidently did not think of discipleship as a matter of grim endurance, nor is the experience described (joy in suffering) peculiarly Christian (cf. Psalms of Solomon 10:1–2; 1QH 9:24–25; 2 Baruch 52:6; see also Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 34). However, the joy actually experienced and manifested must have been so real and sustaining as to be a factor in attracting others to the infant Christian groups (see also on 2:7).

The special cause for Christian thanksgiving is outlined in a sequence of clauses, each of them with striking features. The first underlines again, as clearly as anything in Colossians, the extent to which Paul and his Gentile converts understood their coming to faith in Christ Jesus as an act of divine grace whereby they were “qualified or made fit” (ἰκανώσαντι) to share in an inheritance for which they had previously been unqualified, that is, an inheritance thought to be exclusively Israel’s (J. H. Friedrich, EDNT 2.299–300). Certainly the phrase “the share of the inheritance of the saints” is unmistakably Jewish in character. And for anyone familiar with the Jewish scriptures it would immediately evoke the characteristic talk of the promised land and of Israel as God’s inheritance.²³ Particularly notable is the way the language could be transferred to the eschatological hope of share in the resurrection and/or life beyond death in the eternal life of heaven (Dan. 12:13; Wis. 5:5; Shemoneh ‘Esreh 13; cf. 1 Enoch 48:7). Most striking of all are the parallels in the DSS: 1QS 11:7–8: “God has given them (wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, power, and glory) to his chosen ones as an everlasting possession and has caused them to inherit the lot of the saints”; 1QH 11:10–12: “For the sake of your glory you have purified man of sin that he may be holy for you ... that he may be one [with] the children of your truth and partake of the lot of your saints.”²⁴

The thought is so close that it must help illuminate the meaning here. “Light” here presumably denotes the light of heaven, that transcendent illumination that alone gives clarity of vision, including clarity of self-perception (e.g., John 1:4–5; 3:19–21; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:13–14; 1 John 1:5, 7; 2:8). Those who have received this inheritance in the light²⁵ and live accordingly can be called “sons/children of the light” (as in Luke 16:8; John 12:36; 1 Thes. 5:15); the Qumran covenanters understood themselves in the same way. In both cases, the antithesis is explicit with the “sons of darkness,” that is, those who by self-deception or demonic deception fail to understand the true nature of things (see further on 1:13).

There is some dispute, however, as to who is intended by the phrase “the saints in the light.” They could be angels (as may well be intended in Wis. 5:5 and 1QS 11:7–8),²⁶ for “saints/holy ones” can be used of angels (BAGD s.v. ἅγιος 1bβ). And if the passage already has in view the claim to share in the worship of angels indicated in 2:18, the inference would be that, despite the disparagement of (some of) their fellow citizens in Colossae (2:18), the readers were already qualified to share with the angels their common inheritance (Lincoln, Paradise 119–20; Sappington 199).²⁷ On the other hand, it is doubtful whether “the saints” in Paul ever refer to any other than human saints (including 1 Thes. 3:13 and 2 Thes. 1:10). The closest parallels are

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certainly to be understood in that sense (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Dan. 12:3; 1 Enoch 1:8; 5:7; 104:2; 2 Baruch 51:5, 10; Polycarp, Philippians 12:2). The thought, then, may rather be of heaven as the shared inheritance of the (human) saints, since both at Qumran and in the early Christian gatherings the joy of shared worship was understood as a foretaste of heaven (see further on 2:18). Certainly the closest parallels in the New Testament (just cited) imply a strong measure of realized eschatology. Either way, there is a strong sense of an inestimable privilege, previously understood as Israel's alone, and of a hope for choice companionship and social identity that will extend beyond death and whose quality can be experienced already in this mortal life.

1:13 ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ. The note of realized eschatology becomes even stronger in the next two clauses, for what is described here would elsewhere be thought of as reserved for the end of history/time. The first verb, *ῥύομαι* (“rescue, deliver”), where it is used of spiritual deliverance elsewhere in the New Testament, normally has such a final sense (Matt. 6:13—in the final testing; Rom. 7:24 = 8:23; 11:26; 1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:18). To be noted also here is the fact that the deliverer is God (Findeis 366–68; so by implication in Rom. 7:24 = 8:11; but Jesus in Rom. 11:26; 1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:18), strengthening the echo of God's equally decisive act of deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt (e.g., Exod. 6:6; 14:30; Deut. 13:5; Judg. 6:9; Psalms of Solomon 9:1) already present in this context.²⁸ More striking still is the fact that elsewhere in the Pauline corpus talk of full sharing in the kingdom of God is always future (1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Thes. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; the formulaic phrase “inherit the kingdom of God” in 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; cf. Eph. 5:5). There is nothing quite like this claim that believers in Christ Jesus have already (aorist tense) been transferred into the kingdom, like a whole people transported from their traditional territory to settle in a new region (Josephus, Antiquities 9.235 and 12.149 are cited appositely by several; see also on 2:12 and 3:1).²⁹

The deliverance achieved has been from “the authority (*ἐξουσία*) of darkness.” The antithesis between “light” and “darkness” is made explicit (see also on 1:12). In this context it is not simply the obvious moral antithesis familiar in Jewish wisdom (e.g., Eccl. 2:13; Wis. 17:20–18:4; though note the close parallel with Joseph and Asenath 8:10–11 and 15:12), but the eschatological dualism of apocalyptic (Amos 5:18, 20; 1 Enoch 92:4–5; 108:11–15; 2 Baruch 18:2).³⁰ Here again (as in 1:12) the parallel with Qumran's contrast between “the sons of light” and “the sons of darkness” is noticeable (1QS 1:9–10; 3:24–25; 4:7–13; 1QM, e.g., 1:1, 8–14; 13:5–16). Presumably the language was not intended to imply that deliverance from the power of darkness was complete and that transfer to the kingdom had been fully carried out. They were not yet in heaven! There is no hint in Colossians of any awareness of the danger of an overrealized eschatology (contrast 1 Cor. 4:8). The language is rather the exaggerated expression of rich spiritual experience and full confidence (hope) that what had already been

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done (aorist tense) would be completed without fail (cf. Phil. 1:6 with 3:20, and Eph. 1:3 with 1:13–14; cf. also Findeis 368–72). Taken in conjunction with 1:12 it may be a fair deduction that the Christian sense of already established privilege (1:12) was the converse of a sense of deliverance from dark powers and that reassurance of such deliverance was equally necessary to counter the overblown claims and disparaging attitudes stemming from the Colossian synagogue (2:16, 18).

The weight of ἐξουσία should also be noted. It denotes an executive authority, in this case a domination of darkness (though most take it in the sense “domain” or “dominion”; but cf. the same phrase in Luke 22:53). The implication, therefore, is not so much that the darkness has been already stripped of all its power and banished. Rather, the darkness can be legitimately and authoritatively resisted, as having had its license revoked (so Rom. 13:11–14; Eph. 5:8–11; 1 Thes. 5:4–8; 1 Pet. 2:9). Within a unitary kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24) subjects of the king can reject all other claims to final authority over them (see also 1:16 and 2:10, 15).

Does it make any difference that the kingdom here spoken of is “the kingdom of his [God’s] beloved son”? In comparison with talk of “God’s kingdom,” the idea of Christ’s kingdom occurs only infrequently in the New Testament (Matt. 13:41 and 25:31—the Son of Man; 1 Cor. 15:24–28; also 1 Clement 50:3; cf. Eph. 5:5: “the kingdom of Christ and of God”) and lacks clarity of conception (U. Luz, EDNT 1.204–5). It was partly, no doubt, a consequence of the strong Jewish expectation of a royal Messiah: the identification of Jesus as Messiah carried with it the overtone that as Messiah he reigned as king (cf. Gnllka, Kolosserbrief 49; Schweizer, Colossians 52; the influence of 2 Sam. 7:14 was important here; see Joel 3). The disentangling of this notion from that of national ruler over Israel (Mark 15:26!) was a delicate business that probably was sufficiently hazardous to inhibit Christian development of a christology of kingship (cf. John 18:35–37). The other main root must have been Ps. 110:1 (note 110:2) and the talk of thrones (plural) in Dan. 7:9—a fruitful source of speculation in Judaism of the time of the New Testament as to whom the extra throne(s) could be for (see my Partings 223–24). It was precisely the Christian claim that the full significance of Christ could be understood only if both passages were referred to him: he was the other “Lord” of Ps. 110:1 (see on 2:6); he shared sovereign rule with God (Rev. 7:17; 22:1, 3; see further on 3:1). As in 1:3, however, the thought of Christ’s kingship here is carefully hedged around: the deliverer and actor is God, and as in 1 Cor. 15:24–28, so here, it is a subordinate kingship, as implied by talk of “the kingdom of his beloved son.” Nevertheless, for Paul and Timothy it was a genuine kingship, requiring a proper submission from his servants, even if in the last analysis it is a devotion directed to God through his Son.

Perhaps the tension between the thought of Christ’s kingdom and (by implication) God’s kingdom in this text is itself a reflection of the eschatological tension characteristic of most New Testament writings. A somewhat similar tension is present in Jesus’ teaching on the

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kingdom of God as preserved in the Synoptic Gospels; for example, Jesus bids his disciples pray “May your kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10/Luke 11:2), but he also claims that in his ministry of exorcism “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28/Luke 11:20). To that extent at least we may say that Jesus in his ministry embodied or enacted with executive authority the kingly rule of God. In turn, in the Paulines, the Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Christ, is understood as the first installment of the full share (inheritance) in God’s kingdom (Rom. 8:15–17; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 15:44–50; Gal. 3:29–4:7; 5:16–21; Eph. 1:13–14). The kingdom of Christ, insofar as it is to be distinguished from the kingdom of God, is a further way of expressing the tension between what has already been accomplished (the kingdom of Christ) and what is still to be accomplished (the kingdom of God). This also means that participation in Christ’s kingship will always be experienced within the contradiction of a world that does not yet own the sovereign rule of God (hence, again, the joy and the need for patience and endurance, as in 1:11–12; see also 4:11).

This is the only time in the letter that Christ is explicitly described as God’s Son, and in the unusual formula, “Son of his love,” a Semitic form³¹ equivalent to “beloved son” (cf. Eph. 1:6: “the beloved”). The nearest equivalent comes in the Gospels’ talk of Jesus as God’s “beloved son” (Mark 1:11; 9:7; cf. 12:6; also Matt. 22:2 and Luke 22:29). The usage reflects something of the range of relationship to God that could be expressed by this category, including especially Israel, Israel’s king, or the righteous (e.g., Deut. 33:12; Neh. 13:26; Isa. 41:8; 43:4; Wis. 4:10; Sir. 17:18; Psalms of Solomon 13:8; 18:4). That is to say, the metaphor of sonship to God denoted different degrees of closeness to God or favor and acknowledgment given by God, with the added “beloved” indicating a further degree of closeness. In the case of Jesus, initially this also may have been no more than a matter of degree (believers could share in Christ’s sonship: Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 4:6–7). But very quickly a note of qualitative distinction emerged, particularly through the identification of Jesus with Wisdom (see on 1:15), heightened still further in John’s Gospel by the distinction of Christ as God’s “only or unique (μονογενής) Son,” with υἱός (“son”) reserved for Jesus. “Son” was the metaphor that most effectively “caught” the relationship between God and Jesus and so became the standard way of referring to Christ in classical christology. See further my Christology ch. 2 and Partings 245–47.

1:14 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. In the final clause of this striking sequence the focus switches directly to Christ, leading into the powerful “Christ hymn” of 1:15–20. The “in whom” (the second occurrence of the “in Christ” phrase, which is used so frequently in this letter; see on 1:2) may indicate that a more established formula is being cited or echoed here (cf. Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7). Accordingly, “we” now embraces not only Paul and Timothy and those prayed for (1:9) but all who are “in Christ.” ἔχομεν (“we have”) continues the note of realized eschatology, whereas in Rom. 8:23 and Eph. 1:14 and 4:30 the “redemption” still lies clearly in the future. In every case, however, the crucial fact is that the redemption is

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dependent solely on Christ (“in him”; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30: “God has made him [our] redemption”). So the eschatological tension could be implicit, similar to that between 1:27 (“Christ in you, the hope of glory”) and 3:4 (“When Christ who is our life appears ...”): being “in Christ” we have the (future) redemption (assured).

The word “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις), “release” (NEB/REB), “freedom” (JB/NJB) is comparatively rare, but would be well enough known to denote the ransom of a captive or prisoner of war from slavery (BAGD s.v.). Understandably, the antithesis between light and darkness (1:12–13) could be readily translated into the idea of those who belonged to the light held as prisoners or slaves by an alien power. Hence such exhortations as Rom. 6:13 and 13:12, in which the reality of the eschatological tension (that which needs yet to be done as the outworking of what has already been accomplished) becomes clear. Given the clear echo of the settlement of the promised land in 1:12, the compound word would probably evoke thought of Israel’s ransom from slavery in Egypt and from captivity in Babylon, which were usually described with the uncompounded verb λυτροῦν (“deliver, ransom,” e.g., Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; Isa. 43:1, 14; 44:22–24; 51:11; 52:3). In that case the great acts of Israel’s redemption are being understood typologically as foreshadowing the eschatological redemption of Gentile as well as Jew to share in the new promised land (“the kingdom of God’s beloved Son”).³²

In many ways the most astonishing feature of this passage is the final phrase, which further describes the “redemption” as “the forgiveness of sins,” that is, pardon for failure, expunging of offense from memory and conscience. The idea and language were familiar enough in the wider Greek world (e.g., BAGD s.v. ἄφεσις; R. Bultmann, TDNT 1.509), and of course it was wholly familiar in Jewish thought. This latter point perhaps needs some emphasis since it has sometimes been suggested that Jesus brought forgiveness to a legalistic Judaism to which the theology and experience of forgiveness had become foreign (see, e.g., details in my Partings 44–51). But forgiveness was at the heart of the sacrificial cult centered in Jerusalem (note, e.g., the repeated refrain in Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; see further J. S. Kselman, ABD 2.831–33). And forgiveness continued to be a regular theme in the Judaism of Paul’s time.³³ Equally it was a familiar theme in early Christianity (e.g., Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Heb. 9:22; 10:18; Jas. 5:15; 1 John 1:9; Barnabas 6:11; 16:8; Hermas, Mandates 4.3.1).

The surprising feature is rather that forgiveness of sins seems to be a very minor element in Paul’s theology and gospel (only in a quotation in Rom. 4:7 in the undisputed Paulines). The related theme of repentance fares only a little better (Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:9–10; 12:21). This lack of interest in such prominent features of Jewish theology (repentance and forgiveness) has caused great puzzlement to many scholars attempting to understand Paul from a Jewish perspective (e.g., Moore, Judaism 3.151). The usual deduction made is that Paul’s metaphor of “justification” and his theology of being “in Christ” absorbed within them such alternative ways of describing the blessings of the gospel—though even so their absence remains a

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puzzle. That the phrase occurs here, and in very close parallel in Eph. 1:7, adds strength to the view that this is the work of a close disciple of Paul, glossing a more familiar Pauline motif and anxious, *inter alia*, to relate Pauline thought more closely to the other main streams of Christian (and Jewish) thinking.³⁴ At all events, the phrase serves as a reminder of how easily translatable are the more common Pauline categories into the more traditional Jewish ones.

The one step clearly taken beyond Jewish thinking on forgiveness is the location of forgiveness no longer in the cult, or even simply in directness of prayer to God, but once again “in Christ.” As particularly in Galatians, it is the possibility of Gentiles being “in Christ” that brings them within the sphere of God’s gracious forgiveness. “In Christ” is the key to all.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REB *Revised English Bible*

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

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

²² “A Stoic in the stocks would have borne the discomfort calmly and uncomplainingly, but would he at the same time

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have been heard ‘singing hymns to God,’ as Paul and Silas did in the Philippian town jail (Acts 16:25)?” (Bruce, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians 48).

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

²³ Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; 12:12; 18:1; 32:9; Josh. 14:3–4; 18:6–7; 19:9, 49, 51; Jer. 10:16; 12:9–10; 51:19; Sir. 24:12; 44:23; 45:22; cf. 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kgs. 12:16. See further W. Foerster and J. Herrmann, TDNT 3.759–61, 769–76; J. D. Hester, Paul’s Concept of Inheritance (SJT Occasional Papers 14; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968).

DSS Dead Sea Scrolls

²⁴ For Qumran’s more predestinarian use of the same language see again Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 35–36.

²⁵ “In the light” probably goes with the whole phrase, not just with “the saints” (see Lohmeyer 39 n. 3).

²⁶ So recently Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 36; Gnilka, Kolosserbrief 47; Pokorný 52; Wolter 65. But see Schweizer, Colossians 51; Benoit, “Col. 1:12”; O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon 26–27; Bruce, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians 49–50; Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 79–80.

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

²⁷ Compare, and contrast, R. P. Martin, Colossians and Philemon 54: “At a single blow he dispels this veneration of the angelic powers [Col. 2:18] by assuring the Colossians that they have attained a place shared by the angels” (cf. Dibelius, Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon 9).

²⁸ For the typological significance of the liberation from Egypt in Jewish thought see, e.g., Str-B 4.860–64.

²⁹ Hence Lightfoot’s paraphrase: “He transplanted us thence, and settled us as free colonists and citizens in the kingdom of His Son.”

³⁰ See also Lohmeyer 48 n. 2. The thought is not Gnostic as such, but the strong “already” emphasis of the passage no doubt gave scope to later Gnostic ideas (cf. Lightfoot 141; Gnilka, Kolosserbrief 48, 50; Pokorný 55).

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

³¹ BDF §165; questioned by Dibelius, Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon 9.

NEB New English Bible

REB Revised English Bible

JB Jerusalem Bible

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NJB New Jerusalem Bible

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

³² For the older debate as to whether the idea of payment of a ransom price is implicit in the use of ἀπολύτρωσις here, see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 43 (yes) and D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (SNTSMS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 73–74 (no). See also K. Kertelge, EDNT 1.138–40.

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

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

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

³³ See, e.g., 1QS 11:11–14; CD 3:18; 1QH 4:37; Psalms of Solomon 9:7; Testament of Job 42:8; Testament of Abraham 14:12, 14; Joseph and Asenath 11:18; Shemoneh’ Eshre 6; see also Sanders, Paul index s.v. “forgiveness”; J. H. Charlesworth, ABD 2.833–35.

³⁴ Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 81–82, notes the close parallel here (1:12–14) with Acts 26:18 (darkness, light, authority, forgiveness of sins, lot, saints) and wonders whether it points to Lukan authorship for Colossians. Percy, *Probleme* 85–86, however, notes that ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν has a liturgical ring more suited to the passage and that Paul was presumably familiar with the Lord’s Prayer. See also Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians* 54 n. 68; Wolter 69 (“an early Christian tradition which ... reflects the saving effect of baptism”).

Sacra Pagina Series:⁵

1/10. being strengthened with all the strength, in accordance with his glorious might:

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

for all endurance and patience: “Endurance” (hypomonē) means fortitude and perseverance

⁵Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 17, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 49–52, 54–57.

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

while joyfully: A more literal translation of the phrase would be “with joy” (see NAB). It has been rendered here as “while joyfully” (as in the NRSV) because the phrase fits more naturally with the following verse: “while joyfully giving thanks.” A very similar construction is found in Phil 1:4. Lohse views vv. 12–14 as a summons to give thanks that has been influenced by traditional liturgical language of prayer, thanksgiving, and celebration. He believes that vv. 12–14 have been placed before the Christ-hymn to serve as a type of introit, introducing the hymn sung by the community. The singing of the hymn by the community should open with the sound of joy (cf. 1 Thess 5:16–18; Phil 4:4–6; see Lohse 32–33). On the relationship between the Christ-hymn of 1:15–20 and this section see also the notes on 1:13 below.

1/11. giving thanks to the Father: Giving thanks is the final participle describing the characteristics of walking in a manner that is worthy of the Lord (v. 10). It has sometimes been judged to be the equivalent of an imperative: “Give thanks with joy” (see Lohse 32; Taylor and Reumann 122–23). The interests of the thanksgiving in 1:3–8 are reiterated here. This verse is subject to a variety of variant readings (see Metzger 620). These seem to have been caused by the unusual designation of God simply as “the Father” (*tō patri*) when Christ has not been named. This led some copyists to modify the phrase, adding either “of Christ” (*tou Christou*), or in some cases “God” (*[tō] theō*).

- ▶ who has made you fit to share: As is made clear by the alternate readings proposed by the NRSV there are two textual variants to consider here. The unusual expression “made fit” (*hikanoō*) is strongly attested (e.g., *P*⁴⁶ A C Dc K L P), but the alternate term “called” (*kaleō*) is also contained in several Western manuscripts (e.g., *D*^{*} F G 33 436 1175 *it*^{d,g} *cop*^{sa} *goth arm eth*). The unusual use of the phrase “to make fit” or “to qualify” may have led copyists to choose the more common term. In the NT *hikanoō* is found elsewhere only in 2 Cor 3:6. In addition, several manuscripts refer to “us” (e.g., A C D G K P Ψ 33 614 Byz Lect *it vg syr*^{p,h} *cop*^{bo} *al*) rather than “you” (e.g., x B 1739 *syrhmg copsa goth arm eth*), but the substitution was probably the result of an attempt to harmonize v. 12 with v. 13 (see Metzger 620).

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

1/12. who delivered us out of the power of darkness: Verses 13–14 are sometimes taken together with vv. 15–20 (see REB; NJB). They are in fact closely related to the christological hymn of vv. 15–20. With these verses the focus is shifted toward the Son and away from the Father in the first instance, but vv. 15–20 have often been viewed as an independent unit (see below). Moreover, vv. 13–14 continue the interests of previous verses in spelling out the grounds for offering thanksgiving to the Father, and the reference to “darkness” in v. 13 clearly offers a parallel to the focus on light in the previous verse. Thus vv. 13–14 are best read as closely related to vv. 9–12, but acting as transitional verses in relation to the next section (this sense of transition is clearly visible in v. 14). The notion of deliverance here recalls the Exodus (Exod 6:6; 14:30; Judg 6:9, 13) and God’s rescue of God’s people generally (e.g., Judg 8:4; Ps 77:11–15). The preposition ek is usually rendered in this case as “from” (from the power of darkness). Yet “out of the power of darkness” captures more forcefully the sense of rescue and deliverance from an existence that is devoid of hope. Ek in this case refers to “situations and circumstances out of which someone is brought” (BAGD 234). There is a very strong sense of transference from one realm to the other. The term (exousia) translated here as “power” is a central concept in Pauline thought. It is used elsewhere clearly to establish Christ’s reign; Christ conquers all other powers—even those that rule in the spiritual world (cf. 1:16; 2:10, 15). Exousia can carry a wide variety of meanings in the NT, including publicly recognized power that sets one apart as an authority (such as in the case of apostolic authority; cf. 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). In 1:13 the term should be read

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in relation to the concept of kingdom. It refers to the realm or domain in which power is exercised (BAGD 278). This domain is characterized by darkness (on the similarity between this language and concepts in the QL see the notes on 1:12). That this “power of darkness” is meant as the most negative and menacing of all dominions is made clear by the use of the same expression in Luke 22:53, which offers Jesus’ reaction to those who wish to arrest him: “When I was with you day after day in the Temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!” (NRSV).

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

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

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“redemption through his blood,” harmonizing the text with Eph 1:7.

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

-----INTERPRETATION-----

...

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

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

It is interesting to compare the use of the term “to walk” (or “to live”) in 1 Thess 4:1–12 with the usage in Col 1:10. The former passage begins with general exhortations to live (*peripateō*) and to please God (1 Thess 4:1) that resemble those in Col 1:10. Throughout 1 Thess 4:1–12 the ethical standards of the community are defined with reference to the life of nonbelievers. Even marriage between believers is described with a view to the standards of the nonbelieving world (1 Thess 4:4–5; see the alternate translation of the Greek text in the notes on 4:4 in NRSV). The

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

As illustrated by the discussion in the notes on 1:10, the reference to good works probably also should be understood as pertaining not only to works (or deeds) that are part of the interaction between community members, but also to works involving interaction between believers and nonbelievers. In the deutero-Pauline letters the authors seem particularly aware of the visibility of good works, their potential for revealing commitment and for demonstrating the value of faith (e.g., Col 3:17; Eph 2:10; for full discussion of several parallel texts see Lohse 29–30). In the Pastoral Epistles “good works” are an attribute of pious women (1 Tim 5:10). There is good reason to believe that in these documents the interest in directing the behavior of women is in response to public criticism of the behavior of believing women (see M. Y. MacDonald [1996] 154–78). In contrast, the error of false teachers is revealed, for they are unfit for any good work (Titus 1:16). Similarly, the previous life of the Colossians involved doing evil deeds (Col 1:21). As the Pauline communities developed beyond the first generation of their existence they were troubled both by internal deviance and by increasing hostility from outsiders. A broad reference to the model conduct of Christians in daily life such as is contained in the phrase “every good work” needs to be understood in light of this background. The author’s prayer for the Colossians is that they may be strengthened by an all-powerful God and be granted patience and endurance. That the deeds of community members are gaining a new significance in an increasingly tense atmosphere (cf. Col 4:5–6) is further suggested by the development of the household code (3:18–4:1), which introduces into Pauline Christianity a series of rule-like ethical exhortations governing daily life.

The prayer for the empowerment of the Colossians in v. 11 is followed immediately by a thanksgiving for what the all-powerful God has accomplished in Christ in vv. 12–14. These verses recall baptism and give thanks for the new citizenship of believers; believers have been transferred into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. Verses 12–14 may in fact constitute a

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doxology that was once part of a baptismal liturgy. The themes of authority and empowerment continue in these verses from v. 11 on, even if the language is not explicit. Believers have been rescued and have received redemption. God is the ultimate authority. Such language may well have conjured up images of release from bondage (see the notes on 1:14) and spoken powerfully to the slave members (cf. 3:22–25) of the community (see also the notes on 2:14, 15).

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

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

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NRSV New Revised Standard Version

- ▶ NAB New American Bible
- ▶ NRSV New Revised Standard Version
- ▶ NRSV New Revised Standard Version

1QS Rule of the Community

1QH Thanksgiving Hymns

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

1 Enoch Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew Enoch

1QS Rule of the Community

1. Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

1. Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

QL Qumran Literature

REB Revised English Bible

NJB New Jerusalem Bible

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

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NRSV New Revised Standard Version

AnBib *Analecta biblica*

MSSNTS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

Lexham Research Commentaries:⁶

⁶Derek R. Brown, *Colossians*, ed. Douglas Mangum, *Lexham Research Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Col 1:1–14.

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Dunn (1996, 53) suggests that Col 1:3 serves as the basis for both Paul's thanksgiving section (Col 1:3–8) and prayer (Col 1:9–14). Paul begins his thanksgiving section by thanking God for the faith and love of the Colossian believers (Col 1:4–6). In Colossians 1:7–8 Paul discusses the role of his fellow worker, Epaphras, in establishing and ministering to the Colossian community (compare Col 4:12). Paul's prayer focuses on the continuing growth of the Colossian believers. In particular, he prays that they will grow in their knowledge of God (Col 1:9–10) and be strengthened by God to endure whatever comes their way (Col 1:11–12). The prayer then gives thanks to God for the gift of inheritance—redemption from the domain of darkness and deliverance into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13–14).

Structure

- 1/1. Salutation (Col 1:1–2)
- 1/2. The Writers of the Letter (Col 1:1)
- 1/3. The Recipients of the letter (Col 1:2)
- 1/4. Thanksgiving (Col 1:3–8)
- 1/5. Statement of Thanksgiving (Col 1:3)
- 1/6. Thanksgiving Continued (Col 1:4–8)
- 1/7. Intercessory Prayer (Col 1:9–14)
- 1/8. Prayer for Knowledge (Col 1:9–10)
- 1/9. Prayer for Strength (Col 1:11)
- 1/10. Thanks to the Father (Col 1:12–14)

Place within the Book

Many commentators, such as Davids (2008, 245) and Dunn (1996, 41), view the entire section of Col 1:3–23 as the exordium (“introduction”) of the letter. Barth and Blanke (1994, 41–42), however, view Col 1:3–11 and Col 1:12–2:5 as the first two of four main sections of the letter. Melick (1991, 185) includes Col 1:1–14 within an even larger literary unit of the letter. He places all of Col 1:3–3:4 in a single section focusing on “the preeminence of Christ in Christian Theology.” Vaughan (1981, 170–71) separates Col 1:1–14 and Col 1:15–23, though by thematic grouping: the former section includes the letter's introductory material, and the latter is devoted to “the supremacy of Christ.”

Regarding the relationship of Col 1:1–14 to the rest of the letter, the most pressing issue is explaining its location immediately before the famous hymn in Col 1:15–20. Bruce (1984, 55–56) claims the references to the kingdom of God's beloved Son in Col 1:13 lead into the statement on the Son's role within creation and reconciliation in Col 1:15–20. Other interpreters prefer

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to view Col 1:15–20 more separately from its preceding section since it was, in all likelihood, a hymn or poem incorporated into the letter (see Hendriksen 1964, 66 and Moo 2008, 107–108).

Issues at a Glance

- The Word of Truth
 - ▶ • The Domain of Darkness and the Kingdom of the Beloved Son
 - ▶ • Key Word Study: Klēros, “Inheritance”
 - ▶ • Key Word Study: Rhyomai, “To Rescue”

The Word of Truth

Paul begins his prayer by giving thanks for the faith of the Colossians, who have been “bearing fruit” since the day they heard “the word of truth, the gospel” (tō logō tēs alētheias tou euangeliou; Col 1:5). As Wall (1993, 47–49) points out, “the word of truth” translates the Hebraism that could be rendered “God’s true word” (see Psa 119:43). He describes the OT concept of God’s word as the revealed message in Torah. Paul uses similar language throughout his letters to refer to the revealed message of the gospel (see 1 Cor 14:36; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Thess 1:8).

The following questions are worth consideration at this point: What is “the word of truth?” Does Paul use similar expressions in Colossians or elsewhere in his letters? How does it relate to “the gospel”—is it the same thing (see Barth and Blanke 1994, 155–56) or should we translate the phrase as “the word of truth of the gospel” (see Lohse 1971, 18–19)?

- ▶ • Anders describes “the word of truth” (the gospel) as the source of the Colossian believers’ growth (Col 1:5–6). He considers “the word of truth” to be the gospel, which he further defines as the message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, which has solved the problem of sin.

“Colossians 1:5” Holman New Testament Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians

- ▶ • Bird considers “the word of truth” to be in apposition to “the gospel.” He thus translates the entire phrase as “the word of truth: the gospel.” He suggests that within the context of Colossians, “the word of truth” is to be contrasted with the empty deceit and human tradition associated with the philosophy opposed by Paul (Col 2:8).

“Colossians 1:3–8” New Covenant Commentary: Colossians and Philemon

- ▶ • Dunn prefers to retain the sense of the original Greek wording—“the word of the truth

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of the gospel.” He appeals to similar phrases in Gal 2:5 and Gal 2:14 in support of this reading (compare Col 1:25–27).

“Colossians 1:5” NIGTC: The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon

- Lohse draws attention to similar phrases used by Paul—“word of truth” (Eph 1:13), the “word of God” (1 Cor 14:36); the “word of the Lord” (1 Thess 1:8; 2 Thess 3:2); “the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19), “the word of life” (Phil 2:16), and “the word of Christ” (Col 3:16). Each of these phrases, Lohse argues, refers to the “good news,” which is made known by “apostolic proclamation.”

“Colossians 1:5” Hermeneia: Colossians and Philemon

- O’Brien acknowledges the OT background to the expression “the word of truth” but argues that Paul’s use of it was prompted by the “Colossian heretics” and their false teaching. The gospel helps believers bear fruit and come to fullness in Christ (Col 1:5–6; 2:9–10); by contrast, the teaching of the false teachers in Colossae is described as “empty deceit” (Col 2:8).

“Colossians 1:5” WBC: Colossians, Philemon

- Wright explains the relationship between “the word of truth” and “the gospel” by describing the latter as “the announcement ... whose importance lies in the truth of its content.” In his view, the gospel is not primarily an invitation or “a technique for changing people’s lives”; rather, it is a command to be obeyed. He also points out that Paul introduces the entire phrase—“the word of truth, the gospel”—using a single word: “hope” (elpis; Col 1:5; see also Col 1:23, 27).

“Colossians 1:5” TNTC: Colossians and Philemon

The Domain of Darkness and the Kingdom of the Beloved Son

In Colossians 1:13–14 Paul describes salvation as the act in which God delivers (rhyomai; compare 2 Cor 1:10) believers out of “the domain of darkness” (tēs exousias tou skotous) and transfers them into “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (tēn basileian tou huiou tēs agapēs autou). The language of deliverance recalls the imagery of God’s redemption of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt (e.g., Exod 6:6; 12:27; Deut 13:5). Bird (2009, 44) suggests that Paul’s metaphor is also reminiscent of Isaiah’s reiteration of the biblical exodus motif (see Isa 9:1–2; 42:6–7, 16; 58:10; 60:1–3). But what are “the domain of darkness” and “the kingdom of His beloved Son”? Some scholars, such as Wright (1986, 65), interpret “the domain of darkness” as a reference to Satan’s rule over sinful humanity. Others define the phrase as a realm in which darkness flexes its power (see Lohse 1971, 37). Discussions of the phrase “the kingdom

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of His beloved Son” focus on whether Paul views the kingdom as a present or future reality. Scholars also debate whether these two phrases refer to the same event. That is, did God both deliver believers out of “the domain of darkness” by transferring them into “the kingdom of His beloved Son,” or are these separate, but still related, events?

- Bird suggests that Paul’s language in Col 1:13–14 is rooted in the apostle’s apocalyptic outlook, in which “malevolent spiritual forces” are active in the present age (see Gal 1:4; Col 2:15). In his view, Paul’s framework of salvation recalls the exodus imagery of the OT (e.g., Exod 14:30; Isa 42:6–7; 60:1–3). He interprets the “kingdom” as a principally future reality that affects the present primarily through the forgiveness of sins.

“Colossians 1:9–14” New Covenant Commentary: Colossians and Philemon

- Bruce dismisses the importance of Zoroastrianism and Qumranic theology for interpreting the dualism of Col 1:13–14. In his view, “the dominion of darkness”—here and in Luke 22:53—refers to the “sinister forces” of the world to whom the Colossian believers were tempted to pay homage. Bruce agrees with Bird that Paul’s notion of the kingdom of God’s beloved Son is an example of realized eschatology. The full reality of the kingdom remains in the future, though it has already become effective in believers.

“Colossians 1:13” NICNT: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians

- According to Dunn, the idea that believers in Christ Jesus have already (aorist tense) been transferred into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son is exceptional since Paul typically speaks of the kingdom as a future reality (see 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1). Against Bruce, he finds the language of Col 1:13–14 and the theology of the Qumran writings to be comparable. He also includes a worthwhile discussion of the kingdom belonging to the Son rather than the Father in Col 1:13.

“Colossians 1:13” NIGTC: The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon

- In Hendriksen’s view, Col 1:13–14 summarizes God’s work of redemption. God rescued believers from “the domain of darkness,” the sphere in which Satan rules over “human hearts” and other spiritual forces, and transfers them to “the kingdom of the Son of his love,” where believers already partake in God’s promised glory.

“Colossians 1:13” Baker New Testament Commentary: Colossians and Philemon

- Lohse draws attention to similar language of deliverance in the literature of the Qumran community. He implies there is a conceptual overlap between “the domain of darkness” in Col 1:13 and the phrases “dominion of Belial” (mmsht bly’l; e.g., 1QS 1:23)

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and “dominion of wickedness” (mmslt rsh’h; e.g., 1QM 17:5). Furthermore, Christ’s kingdom (basileia) resembles statements about God’s reign in the Qumran writings (e.g., 1QM 6:6; 12:7). He suggests that the aorist tense of the verbs “delivered” (errysato) and “transferred” (metestēsen) indicate baptism as the means through which God’s actions are accomplished.

“Colossians 1:13” Hermenia: Colossians and Philemon

- ▶ • Melick’s commentary on this issue compares Col 1:13–14 to Acts 26:18, which uses similar language to describe salvation. In his view, however, Colossians differs from Acts in that it uses “darkness” (skotos) where Acts says “Satan.” (It should be noted that not all take “darkness” as a reference to Satan.) He describes the kingdom of Christ as more of a “spiritual dimension” than a geographical place.

“Colossians 1:13–14” NAC: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

- ▶ • Instead of drawing comparisons to relevant literature outside the NT, Still notes the similar language found elsewhere in Paul’s letters (e.g., Rom 13:12; Eph 5:8; Phil 2:15; 1 Thess 5:5) and in the Johannine literature (e.g., John 1:5; 12:35–36; 1 John 1:5–7). He does not offer a precise definition of “the dominion of darkness”; he refers to it simply as “the orb of darkness” out of which God rescues believers.

“Colossians 1:13” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Ephesians—Philemon (Revised Edition)

- ▶ • Wall connects the “dominion of darkness” to sin more than the figure of Satan. In his view, God’s “rescue operation” delivers believers from their sinfulness and their spiritual struggle against “invisible forces” (including Satan). For Wall, the “kingdom of God’s beloved Son” is the “church’s destination as it is liberated from the evil kingdom.” He follows several commentators in viewing Christ’s association as the fulfillment of God’s promise to David about his eternal kingdom in 2 Sam 7:8–17.

“God’s Rescue Operation (Colossians 1:13)” The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Colossians & Philemon

Key Word Studies

Klēros, “Inheritance.” In Colossians 1:11–12 Paul prays for the Colossian believers to be strengthened and prepared to give thanks to God, who enabled them “to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.” The noun klēros occurs 11 times in the NT. Its cognate terms, klēronomia (“inheritance”) and klēronomeō (“to inherit”), are used dozens of times throughout the NT, including in Col 3:24. Wall (1993, 55) notes that both “inheritance” (klēros)

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and “share” (meris) are used in descriptions of the promised land in the OT (e.g., Num 18:20; Deut 32:9).

He suggests the significance of this metaphor in Paul’s opening prayer in Colossians is the function of land and salvation as a gift from God. Arnold (2002, 378) points out that the book of Daniel looked forward to a future allotted inheritance (klēros; Dan 12:13 LXX). He states that the Qumran community also anticipated an eschatological inheritance. In Colossians 1:12 Paul applies this theological concept of inheritance to the allotment of believers. God will give an “inheritance”—redemption in Christ (see Melick 1991, 205–6)—to His “chosen people” (Col 3:12).

“Klēros” The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

“Klēros” The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament

“Klēros” New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

“Klēros” The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament

“Klēros” Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

Rhyomai, “To Rescue.” The verb rhyomai means “to rescue” or “to deliver.” It is used 17 times in the NT and well over 100 times in the Septuagint (e.g., Matt 6:13; Rom 7:24; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Pet 2:9; see also LXX: Exod 6:6; Judg 8:34; Psa 118:170). Paul uses the term several times in his letters. Several of the occurrences, including Col 1:13, describe salvation in terms God’s act of “rescuing” or “deliverance” of believers.

In Romans 11:26, for example, Paul cites the words of Isa 59:20 LXX when he looks to God as “the deliverer” (ho rhyomenos) who will come out of Zion to save Israel. In 2 Corinthians 1:10 Paul uses the verb three times in a single verse as he appeals to God’s past and present act of “rescuing” as the basis for hope in His future “rescuing” of believers. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul refers to Jesus as the one who “rescues” (ton rhyomenon) us from the coming wrath. As O’Brien (1998, 27) and Wright (1984, 65–66) point out, Paul’s use of the term in Col 1:13 is probably influenced by the OT depiction of God as the deliverer or rescuer of His people.

“Rhyomai” The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

“Rhyomai” The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament

“Rhyomai” New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

“Rhyomai” The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament

“Rhyomai” Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

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Application Overview

One of the central theological ideas of both Paul’s opening thanksgiving section and the letter as a whole is the word of truth, or “the gospel” (Col 1:5). Elsewhere in the letter, Paul refers to this message as “the word of God” (Col 1:25) and “the word of Christ”. In short, this “word” is none other than the “good news” (euangelion), as Paul states in Col 1:5; it is the proclamation that God has reconciled all things to Himself through Christ (Col 1:20–21). Paul’s references to “the word of truth” in Colossians illustrate its central role in the lives of believers—then and now. The “word of truth” defines believers as a community established on the basis of the gospel. It encourages fellow believers, such as Paul and Timothy, when they hear about its works in the lives of others. As it takes root in people’s lives, it bears fruit to the entire world (Col 1:6). As a message of truth, it stands against all forms of empty philosophy (Col 2:8). It gives hope to believers, who know their future will be with God (Col 1:4). And when it becomes embedded into the fabric of a believing community, the word of Christ leads to edification, gratitude, and praise of God (Col 3:16).

apposition A pair of adjacent nouns that refer to the same person or thing. One noun is an appositive for the other.

NIGTC New International Greek Testament Commentary

WBC Word Biblical Commentary

TNTC Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

apocalyptic A worldview that anticipates God’s intervention in human history to save His people and destroy their enemies. It arose in oppressed Jewish and Christian groups and was often accompanied by the expectation of the establishment of the kingdom of God—a just, utopian society wherein peace, justice, and righteousness prevail.

Zoroastrianism A Persian religion founded by the prophet Zoroaster in the late second millennium BC. The religion was popular in the Persian Empire. It features a dualism between good and evil deities.

Qumranic An archaeological site near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The site was inhabited in the first century BC and mid-first century AD.

eschatology The theology of last things, the end of the age, or a period of time.

NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament

Qumran An archaeological site near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The site was inhabited in the first century BC and mid-first century AD.

NIGTC New International Greek Testament Commentary

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NAC New American Commentary

eschatological Pertaining to the theology of last things, the end of the age, or a period of time.

Septuagint The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (Genesis—Malachi) begun around 250 BC. Sometimes abbreviated with the Roman numeral for 70 (LXX) based on the tradition that 70 translators participated.

Hermeneia:⁷

Thanksgiving and Hymn

Colossians 1:12–20*

1.12 With joy give thanks to the Father, who has authorized you to participate in the lot of the holy ones in the light.

- ▶ 13 He has delivered us from the tyrannical rule of darkness and transferred us into the domain of his beloved Son's rule,
- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- ▶ 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn before all creation;
- ▶ 16 for in him all things have been created in the heavens and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions, powers or principalities, all things are created through him and for him;
- ▶ 17 and he is before all things, and in him all things are established,
- ▶ 18 and he is the head of the body, that is, of the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, in order that he might be the first in all things;
- ▶ 19 for in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell
- ▶ 20 and through him to reconcile all things to him, making peace through the blood of his cross, through him, whether on earth or in the heavens.

Without pause, the intercession changes into a summons to give thanks. Although the words “with joy give thanks” (μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες) are loosely attached to the preceding, like the participles “bearing fruit and growing” (καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι) and “being strengthened” (δυναμούμενοι) in 1:10f*, they express a new thought in their context. The subject is no longer the conduct of life of the believers; rather the community is now urged to praise God¹ with thanksgiving, as they are reminded of the saving action of God extolled in the confession. This summons is made in vss 12–14* utilizing traditional phrases recognizable not only by the participial style, τῷ ἱκανώσαντι (v 12* “who has been authorizing us”), and the

⁷Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 32–40.

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relative style, ὃς ἐρρύσατο (v 13* “he [who] has delivered us”), ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν (v 14* “in whom we have”), but also by the appearance of a series of terms not used otherwise, either in Col or in the corpus Paulinum. The word “to authorize” (ἰκανόω) reoccurs only in 2 Cor 3:6*, and there it is used for the apostolic ministry. The noun “part” (μερίς) comes up again only in 2 Cor 6:15*, a section which was hardly composed by Paul (2 Cor 6:14–7:1*) but probably goes back to pre-Pauline tradition.² The word κληῖρος (lot), and the phrases ἅγιοι ἐν τῷ φωτί (saints in light), βασιλεία τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ (kingdom of his beloved son) are without parallels in the Pauline letters. The Greek word ἐξουσία is otherwise not used with the meaning of “(domain of) tyrannical rule” (1:13*); in 1:16* and 2:10* it signifies the cosmic powers and principalities. The word ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption) used in the sense of “the forgiveness of sins” (ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) is part of the theological language of the primitive Christian community. This can be seen in the sentences of confessional type in Rom 3:24f*; 1 Cor 1:30* as well as Eph 1:7*, 14*; 4:30*.

The reasons for the summons to give thanks to the Father are given in the participial phrase τῷ ἰκανώσαντιύμᾶς (1:12* “who has authorized you”) and in the relative sentence ὃς ἐρρύσατο (1:13* “he [who] has delivered”). The reference to the redemption wrought by Christ (1:14*) makes the transition to the Christological statements which are more broadly developed in the hymn. Vss 12–14* thus are placed before the Christ-hymn as a sort of introit which introduces the solemn hymn sung by the community.³

- ▶ • 12* The sound of joy ought to open the singing of this hymn—that is, the words μετὰ χαρᾶς (“with joy”) are not to be drawn into the previous sentence, but are to be connected to the εὐχαριστοῦντες (“give thanks”). Just as prayers are said with joy (cf. Phil 1:4*), the praise of the community should be with jubilation: “rejoice with unutterable joy” (ἀγαλλιᾶσθε χαρᾷ ἀνεκλαλήτῳ 1 Pt 1:8*, cf. 4:13*). As a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22*), “joy” (χαρά) fills the life of the community and expresses itself in the “rejoicing” (ἀγαλλίασις) by which God is thanked for keeping his promises and inaugurating salvation (Acts 2:46*). This thankful praise to God is borne along by eschatological joy: “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances” (Πάντοτε χαίrete, ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε 1 Thess 5:16–18*); “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice ... in everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (χαίrete ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίrete ... ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν Phil 4:4–6*).⁴

The words “with joy give thanks” (μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες)⁵ are directed to the whole community and therefore cannot be viewed as a connecting link to the prayer of thanksgiving, which opens the letter with the apostle’s thanks to God for the good condition of the community.⁶

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Paul never closes the intercessions in his letters with thanksgiving or with a summons to it.⁷ It is not impossible to construct a connection between the apostle's prayer and the summons "with joy give thanks" (μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες) by supplying the intermediary thought that the good condition of the community had necessarily to be expressed in a prayer of thanksgiving;⁸ after all, there is no longer any mention of the condition of the community. Rather, the community is asked to receive the word and to offer a hymn of praise to God the Father for his eschatological act of salvation, which he has rendered to them and to all the world.⁹

The verb εὐχαριστεῖν (to give thanks) does not appear often in the LXX, and does so only in books which lack a Hebrew original.¹⁰ In the Psalms the summons to thanksgiving is given by the hiphil form of יָדָה (to know), and this form is usually translated in the LXX as ἐξομολογεῖσθαι (to confess, to praise) as in the LXX Ps 135:1*, 2*, 3*, 26*; 137:1*, 2*, 4*; etc. The noun form תוֹדָה becomes ἐξομολόγησις (confession, praise) as in LXX Josh 7:19*; Ps 41:4*; 92:4*; 95:6*; etc. Later, in the linguistic usage of Hellenistic Judaism, ἐξομολογεῖσθαι (to confess, praise) was replaced by εὐχαριστεῖν (to give thanks). Thus Philo almost always uses the latter verb as the expression for thanks offered to God.¹¹ In view of this transition from ἐξομολογεῖσθαι to εὐχαριστεῖν, Origen can state that "to say 'I confess' is the same as saying 'I give thanks'" (Orat. 6 τὸ ἐξομολογοῦμαι ἴσον ἐστὶ τῷ εὐχαριστῶ) [Trans.]. The Greek εὐχαριστεῖν thus corresponds to the Hebrew יָדָה in the hiphil, which served to introduce the song of thanks and praise.

The Hodayoth, hymns of praise of the Qumran community, begin with a stereotyped and frequently used opening "I thank you, O Lord, for..." (יִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ). Thus 1 QH II, 20 continues "for you have placed my soul in the bundle of the living" and v 31 has "for you have (fastened) your eye upon me." Also, 1 QH III, 19 has "for you have redeemed my soul from the Pit." The one praying speaks in the first person singular, addresses God as his Lord, and then bases his laudatory prayer of thanks by making reference to God's action. If these introductory phrases are translated into Greek, they become εὐχαριστῶ (ἐξομολογοῦμαι) σοι, κύριε, ὅτι.¹² Of course the whole community is able to join in this praise; thus there is the first person plural "we praise your name" (1 Q 34, 3, 1, 6 and also cf. 1 QS I, 24; CD XX, 28). In the place of the כִּי-ὅτι (because...) clauses, a relative clause (ὅτι) can also give the reason for the thanksgiving: "let us give thanks to the Lord our God who is putting us to the test as he did our forefathers" (εὐχαριστήσωμεν κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, ὅτι πειράζει ἡμᾶς κατὰ καὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν Jdth 8:25*).

The Christian community expresses its praise of God in formulations which were shaped by Judaism. Thus the hymn of the twenty-four elders in the book of Revelation opens with these words, "We give thanks to you, Lord God almighty, who is and who was, that you have taken your great power and begun to reign" (εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δυνάμιν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας Rev 11:17*). In the eucharistic

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prayers of the Didache the form is “we give thanks to you, O Holy Father” (εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, πάτερ ἅγιε 10:2*), and “above all we give thanks to you because you are mighty” (πρὸ πάντων εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, ὅτι δυνατὸς εἶ 10:4*). Unlike the form of the Hodayoth of the Qumran community, in these Christian texts it is not an individual “I,” but rather the “we” of the community which is calling on God the Father. Beyond this, however, the praise and thanks given to God are rendered in the same words as in Jewish prayers.¹³

The same from of a summons to praise¹⁴ which was taken over from Judaism is also the basis for the words “with joy give thanks to the father” (μετὰ χαρὰς εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρί).¹⁵ The Father¹⁶ is praised because he has effected salvation and redemption in Christ—as the participial phrase τῷ ἰκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς (1:12* “who has authorized you”) and the relative clause ὃς ἐρρύσατο (1:13* “who has delivered us”) show by way of an additional explanation.¹⁷ Even though there is one instance in the Hodayoth where the author of the prayer says that his father does not know him and his mother abandoned him to God, and continues: “You are a father to all (the sons) of your truth” (1 QH IX, 35), nevertheless no other passage of the writings of the Qumran community calls God “Father.” In the introductory words of the Hymns of Thanksgiving he is always called “Lord.” The Christian community, however, prays to God as the Father.¹⁸ As Father of Jesus Christ (1:3*), he is our Father (1:2*), to whom “thanksgiving” (εὐχαριστία) is given through the Kyrios Jesus Christ (3:17*). The use of the aorist participle in the Greek τῷ ἰκανώσαντι (“who has authorized”) points to a definite act of God. The community is reminded that he has authorized “you to participate in the lot of the holy ones in light” (εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί).¹⁹

The Greek nouns “part” and “lot” (μερίς – κλήρος) are close to each other in meaning and are often used together in the Old Testament. Thus, μερίς (“share,” “part”) is usually the translation of חֵלֶק, sometimes also for חֶלֶת. Also κλήρος (“lot”) can stand for חֶלֶת, but as a rule it is the translation for גִּזְרָה, which is never translated as μερίς. The tribe of Levi did not receive a “portion and lot” (Deut 10:9* חֵלֶק וְחֶלֶת—LXX μερίς καὶ κλήρος) as did its brothers when the land was distributed (cf. Deut 12:12*; 14:27*, 29*; 8:1*). The two concepts חֵלֶק (part) and חֶלֶת (lot) are often used to describe the part or share received in the apportionment of the land (Deut 32:9*; Josh 19:9*).²⁰ Both μερίς and κλήρος designate what is apportioned and thus can be employed with transferred meaning to indicate that which is determined as each man’s portion—be it reward or punishment (cf. Isa 57:6*; Jer 13:25*). Particularly they indicate participation in the salvation accomplished by God. The pious man can rejoice that “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance” (LXX Ps 15:5* κύριος ἡ μερίς τῆς κληρονομίας μου). Once the inheritance in the promised Land was taken as a visible demonstration of participation in the fulfillment of the promise; now men are similarly divided according to the portion which falls to them. With this meaning, the terms חֵלֶק and חֶלֶת are often used in the writings of the Qumran community.²¹ Men have a portion in the realms of two spirits (1 QS IV, 15), in that of the spirit of truth and that of the spirit of perversity. They conduct their lives and actions according to each

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man's portion (1 QS IV, 16 “according to the lot of each man” שיא תלחג יפל; cf. also IV, 24). God has established both spirits, set hatred between them, and determined the portion or lot of each man. On one side is the lot of Belial (1 QS II, 5 לעילב לרוג),²² of perversity (1 QS IV, 24), of darkness (1 QM I, 11; XIII, 5), and of the sons of darkness (1 QM I, 1). On the other is the lot of God (1 QS II, 2 לא לרוג),²³ of truth (1 QM XIII, 12), and of light (1 QM XIII, 9; CD XIII, 12). Thus the opposition is stated, “For they are the lot of darkness, whereas the lot of God is that of (eternal) light” (1 QM XIII, 5f [Trans.]). The side on which man is placed is determined by God's election. To those whom he has chosen, God “has granted ... a share in the lot of the Holy Ones (לרוגב מליחניו) (מישודק) and has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven for a Council of the Community” (1 QS XI, 7f [Trans.]). Although the term מישודק (holy ones, saints) is used several times as a self-description by the Qumran community,²⁴ this cannot be its meaning in this context. In both halves of the parallel structure of the sentences there is a correspondence between “the Holy Ones” and “the Sons of Heaven.” Thus the “Holy Ones” are the angels in heaven,²⁵ with whom the community of the elect on earth will be joined by God's merciful act.²⁶

The “holy ones” (ἅγιοι) are the angels, and the Christian community has been authorized to participate in their “portion of the lot” (μερὶς τοῦ κληῖρου)—this is unmistakably clear from the parallel statements from the Qumran community.²⁷ So the host of those chosen by God is joined to the angels and they are likewise called “Holy Ones.” As God's possession, they are holy ones (cf. 1:2* “saints”) who will receive the heavenly inheritance. In contrast to the darkness which rules the godless world, the light is truth, redemption, salvation and the nearness of God. Light (φῶς) thus characterizes the domain in which God has placed his own by his action.²⁸ The terms “part” and “lot” are joined together in the phrase “to participate in the lot” and this expresses the same thought as was already indicated by the reference to the content of “hope” which is stored up in heaven for the saints (1:5*). Here again the concept does not have temporal—eschatological connotations, but rather a spatial orientation.²⁹ By his unfathomable mercy, God has now already made his own capable of participating in the heavenly inheritance with the holy ones, and also capable of conducting themselves in the light.³⁰

- ▶ • 13* Sharing the inheritance of the holy ones in light, however, means that God has delivered us from the domain of the power of darkness and placed us in the domain of the rule of his beloved Son. v 13*, composed of two corresponding lines, adds a substantiating explanation to v 12*. It switches from the second person plural used in the summons of v 12* to the first person plural. In a credal statement the community pronounces that it has been freed by God's redeeming act.³¹ The Greek ρύεσθαι (to save, rescue, deliver) is usually the LXX translation of the Hebrew hiphil of לצנ, and it describes God's helping and saving intervention.³² He delivered his people from the hands of the Egyptians (Exod 14:30*; Judg 6:9*, 13*), from bondage (Exod 6:6*), and from the hands of all its foes (Judg

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8:34*). This deliverance occurs according to his great mercy (Neh 9:28*), according to his mercy (LXX Ps 32:18f*), for his name's sake (LXX Ps 78:9*). Just as he assisted the whole of his people, so also he shows his saving help to the pious individual by delivering him from the hand of his persecutor (2 Sam 12:7*) and by assisting him against his foes (LXX Ps 7:2*). The Qumran community also spoke its praises of the liberating act of God: the host of those who follow the teacher of righteousness are saved by him from the house of Judgment (1 QpHab VIII, 2), but idols are not able to save their worshippers on the day of judgment (1 QpHab XII, 14). The covenant of God assures all those who live according to its commandments that he will save them from all snares of the Pit (CD XIV, 2). Those praying praise God in the words “You have redeemed my soul from the hand of the mighty” (1 QH II, 35), and “You have redeemed my soul from the Pit” (1 QH III, 19).

The Christian community prays to God “deliver us from evil” (Mt 6:13* ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ) and awaits its Lord “who delivers us from the wrath to come” (τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης 1 Thess 1:10*). The anxious question “who will deliver me from this body of death?” (τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου Rom 7:24*) is answered by the confession in Col 1:13*, God “has delivered us from the power of darkness” (ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκούτους). The Greek ἐξουσία corresponds to the Hebrew concept *מְלִכְוּת* and designates the “domain of power.”³³ Thus the Qumran texts speak of the “dominion of Belial” (לעילב תלשממ) which now exercises its power over the sons of darkness (1 QS I, 18, 23f; II, 19; 1 QM XIV, 9). It can also be called the “dominion of his malevolence” (ותמטשמ תלשממ 1 QS III, 23) or the “dominion of perversity” (הלוע תלשממ, 1 QS IV, 19) or even the “dominion of wickedness” (העשר תלשממ, 1 QM XVII, 5f).³⁴ The two realms to which men belong are characterized by the contrast of light and darkness—on one side the lot of Belial and the sons of darkness, on the other the lot of the Holy Ones and the sons of light.³⁵ By contrasting the terms “light” (φῶς) and “darkness” (σκότος),³⁶ the Christian confession also indicates that a change of dominion has taken place³⁷ which is absolutely determinative for the life of the believer.³⁸

Much like a mighty king who is able to remove whole peoples from their ancestral homes and to transplant them to another realm,³⁹ so God is described as taking the community from the power of darkness⁴⁰ and transferring it “to the domain of the rule of his beloved Son” (εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ).⁴¹ The word βασιλεία (rule, domain of rule), the counterpart of the previous word ἐξουσία (power), corresponds to the Hebrew *תּוֹכְלָמ*. According to 1 QM VI, 6, kindly rule will belong to the God of Israel, who is terrible in the glory of his rule (תּוֹכְלָמ, 1 QM XII 7). The “covenant of kingly rule over his people” (ומע תּוֹכְלָמ תּירב) is given to the scion of David according to divine promise for everlasting generations (4 Q Patriarchal Blessings, 4). In the age of salvation, Israel will receive rule and exercise it (1 Q Sb V, 21; 1 QM XIX, 8). The eschatological concept “the kingdom of heaven” (מִימְלָכָה תּוֹכְלָמ) is taken up in the preaching of Jesus

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and given unprecedented urgency: God's rule is coming, it is at hand (Mk 1:15*, par.). Wherever Paul mentions the "rule of God" (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) in his letters, the futuristic meaning of the concept is presupposed, just as throughout primitive Christian proclamation. The future kingdom of God and the inheriting of the "kingdom" are repeatedly mentioned,⁴² but only in 1 Cor 15:23–28* does Paul speak of Christ's kingly rule. Christ, who is now raised and exalted, must reign until he puts all enemies under his feet. At the end, however, Christ shall give the "rule" to God so that God may be all in all. Thus the "rule" of Christ has temporal limits and the objective of preparing the way for the rule of God which will endure forever.⁴³ In contrast to this, Col opposes the "power of darkness" (ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους) to the "rule" of the beloved Son, without mentioning a temporal limit. The domain of Christ's rule into which the faithful have been transferred mediates salvation to them here and now, for they have already been raised with Christ (2:12*), resurrected with him for a new life (3:1f*). There is no waiting for the future consummation; rather, what 3:11* states applies to the salvation now proclaimed and appointed: "Christ is all and in all" (πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὁ Χριστός).

The hebraizing Greek construction ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ ("the son of his loved," i.e. "his beloved son")⁴⁴ corresponds to the usual expression ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἀγαπητός (Mk 1:11*, par.; 9:7*, par.; 12:6*, par.) or ἠγαπημένος (Eph 1:6* "the Beloved").⁴⁵ As the heavenly voice in the baptismal story proclaims, God has revealed Christ as his beloved Son (Mk 1:11*, par). The resurrected Christ is appointed Son of God (Rom 1:4*) and has been enthroned at God's right hand (Rom 8:34*; Col 3:1*; Acts 2:34f*; etc.). The aorist forms ἐρρύσατο (delivered) and μετέστησεν (transferred) point to baptism as the event through which the change from one dominion to another has taken place, in that we have been wrested from the power of darkness and placed in the "kingdom" of the beloved Son of God.⁴⁶ This does not mean that those baptized have been taken up into a transcendent realm of light.⁴⁷ There is no mention of an enthusiastic anticipation of the consummation. Rather, just as darkness designates those who are lost, light characterizes the rule of Christ,⁴⁸ which here and now shapes the life and conduct of those who are baptized.⁴⁹

- ▶ • 14* The relative clause, "in whom we have" (ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν)⁵⁰ speaks of the new life which we have received in Christ. The word ἀπολύτρωσις ("redemption"),⁵¹ which was seldom used in Greek at this time,⁵² designates liberation from imprisonment and bondage.⁵³ In the New Testament the term is used with an eschatological sense when there is mention of the hope of the "redemption of our bodies" (ἀπολύτρωσις τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Rom 8:23*), or of the "day of redemption" (Eph 4:30* ἡμέρα ἀπολυτρώσεως, cf. also Eph 1:14*). Most often, however, the "redemption" is recognized as having already taken place: Christ has become our "redemption" (1 Cor 1:30*), and "redemption" means nothing other than "forgiveness of sins" (ἄφεσις τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν Col 1:14*; Eph 1:7*).⁵⁴ Normally,

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however, Paul seldom speaks of the forgiveness of sins. He understands *ἁμαρτία* (sin) as a power which found entrance into the world through Adam's deed (Rom 5:12*) and since then has exercised its tyranny over men. Its power, however, was broken by Christ's cross (Rom 8:3*), for he was made to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21*). Where there is mention of the forgiveness of sins in the Pauline letters,⁵⁵ it is a matter of a common Christian expression.⁵⁶ Rom 3:24* is based on a Jewish-Christian creedal statement which Paul takes up in order to substantiate and develop his understanding of the "righteousness of God" (*δικαιοσύνηθεοῦ*).⁵⁷ God has accomplished "redemption" in Christ. The "passing over former sins" (*πάρεσις τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων* Rom 3:25*)⁵⁸ is guaranteed by the expiatory death of Christ. Reference to his vicarious death is also made in Eph 1:7*, "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (*ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων*).⁵⁹ Yet the forgiveness of sins is received in baptism. In the baptism of John was expectation of the future "forgiveness of sins" (*ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν*) on the day of judgment which was drawing near (Mk 1:4*; *par*). In primitive Christian baptismal practice, however, the "forgiveness of sins" was granted directly (Acts 2:38*).⁶⁰ Thus, in the book of Acts the forgiveness of sins can be cited repeatedly as the content of salvation.⁶¹ By defining "redemption" as "forgiveness of sins," in agreement with the common Christian understanding, the summons to praise clearly refers to baptism.⁶² This, in turn, indicates in what sense the following hymn is to be understood.⁶³ All speculations about knowledge of higher worlds are confronted by the assertion that nothing can surpass nor supplement the forgiveness of sins. This is so because the sovereign rule of Christ is present where there is forgiveness of sins; and with forgiveness of sins everything, life and blessings everlasting, has in fact been granted.

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- ▶ 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.
 - ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
 - ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
 - ▶ 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
 - ▶ 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.
 - ▶ 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
 - ▶ 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.
 - ▶ 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

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- ▶ 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:12–20 (NRSV)

- ▶ 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.
- ▶ 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

Colossians 1:10–11 (NRSV)

¹ In Jewish texts the participle often appears with an imperatival meaning. Cf. David Daube, “Participle and Imperative in I Peter,” in Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 21947 = 31949), 467–88; David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 2, 1952 (London: University of London, Athlone, 1956), 90–105; Eduard Lohse, “Paränese and Kerygma im 1. Petrusbrief,” *ZNW* 45 (1954): 75f. In primitive Christian exhortation the participle is repeatedly used in this sense. Cf., e.g., Rom 12:9* ἀποστουχοῦντες τὸ πονηρὸν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ (hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good!). Since the participle εὐχαριστοῦντες (give thanks) is only loosely attached to the preceding verses, the translation as an imperative is completely justified. Cf. also the liturgical context of 1 QS I, 18ff; 18f has מִי יִרְבֵּב מִיִּלְחָוּ סִינְהוּכָה וְיִהְיֶה (‘‘The priests and the Levites shall bless the God of salvation’’); 19f has מִי יִרְבֵּב מִיִּרְבֵּב סִינְהוּכָה לִוְכוּ (‘‘And all those entering the Covenant shall say’’); 21f has ... סִי יִרְבֵּב מִיִּרְבֵּב סִינְהוּכָה (‘‘And the priests shall recite ... and shall declare’’); 22 has מִיִּרְבֵּב מִיִּלְחָוּ (‘‘And the Levites shall recite’’); 24 has לִוְכוּ מִיִּרְבֵּב סִינְהוּכָה (‘‘all those entering the covenant shall confes’’).

- ▶ 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:12–14 (NRSV)

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

Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)

- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:14 (NRSV)

- ▶ 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but

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the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (NRSV)

- ▶ 15 What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever?

2 Corinthians 6:15 (NRSV)

- ▶ 14 Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?
- ▶ 15 What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever?
- ▶ 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- ▶ 17 Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you,
- ▶ 18 and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”
- ▶ 1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 (NRSV)

² Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1*,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 271–80.

- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)

- ▶ 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:16 (NRSV)

- ▶ 10 and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

Colossians 2:10 (NRSV)

- ▶ 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
- ▶ 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;

Romans 3:24–25 (NRSV)

- ▶ 30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and

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sanctification and redemption,

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NRSV)

- ▶ 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

- ▶ 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:14 (NRSV)

- ▶ 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30 (NRSV)

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

Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)
- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:14 (NRSV)

- ▶ 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:12–14 (NRSV)

³ Cf. Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig: 1913 = Darmstadt: 41956), 250–54; Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, tr. W. J. Montague, SBT 41 (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), 152f; Günther Bornkamm, *Aufsätze* 2, 196f; Eduard Lohse, "Christologie und Ethik," 165. Cf. also below, p. 40, n. 63.

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

Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

- ▶ 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,

Philippians 1:4 (NRSV)

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- ▶ 8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,

1 Peter 1:8 (NRSV)

- ▶ 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:13 (NRSV)

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

Galatians 5:22 (NRSV)

- ▶ 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
- ▶ Acts 2:46 (NRSV)
- ▶ 16 Rejoice always,
- ▶ 17 pray without ceasing,
- ▶ 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NRSV)

- ▶ 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
- ▶ 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
- ▶ 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4:4–6 (NRSV)

- ▶ ⁴ Cf. also Phil 1:3f* "I give thanks ... making prayer with joy" (εὐχαριστῶ ... μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος).

⁵ The insertions of καὶ (and) after μετὰ χαρᾶς ("with joy") and of ἅμα (at the same time) after εὐχαριστοῦντες ("give thanks") in the mss p46 and B are secondary textual expansions. Cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 425.²

⁶ The secondary reading ἡμᾶς (us) in A C A D G pm also would not achieve a connection. Cf. below p. 35, n. 19.

⁷ Correctly observed by Lohmeyer, ad loc.

⁸ Thus Dibelius-Greeven, ad loc., in that they explain that Paul understood the prayer of thanksgiving as "infused prayer," oratio infusa.

⁹ Cf. James M. Robinson, "Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums" in Apophoreta: Festschrift

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für Ernst Haenchen, BZNW 30 (Berlin: 1964), 194–235. Also, Fritzlothar Mand, “Die Eigenständigkeit der Danklieder des Psalters als Bekenntnislieder,” ZAW 70 (1958): 185–99; Günther Bornkamm, “Lobpreis Bekenntnis und Opfer,” in *Apophoreta*, 46–63.

¹⁰ E.g., Jdth 8:25*; Wisd Sol 18:2*; 2 Macc 1:11*; 10:7a*; 12:31*; 3 Macc 7:16*.

* 1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136:1 (NRSV)

* 2 O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136:2 (NRSV)

* 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;

Psalm 136:3 (NRSV)

* 26 O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136:26 (NRSV)

* 1 Of David. I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;

Psalm 138:1 (NRSV)

* 2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

Psalm 138:2 (NRSV)

* 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

Psalm 138:4 (NRSV)

- ▶ 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.”
- ▶ Joshua 7:19 (NRSV)
- ▶ 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, “Where is your God?”
- ▶ Psalm 42:3 (NRSV)
- ▶ 4 More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!
- ▶ Psalm 93:4 (NRSV)
- ▶ 6 Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

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- ▶ Psalm 96:6 (NRSV)
- ▶ 11 Cf. Robinson, “Hodayot-Formel,” 198f. The songs which the Therapeutae sing are called “songs of thanksgiving” (οἱ εὐχαριστήριοι ὕμνοι) in Philo, Vit. Cont. 87; cf. also Ebr. 94 and 105.

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- ▶ 1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving
- ▶ 1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving
- ▶ 12 Cf. Robinson, “Hodayot-Formel,” 208.
- ▶ 1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

CD The Cairo Genizah Damascus Document

- ▶ 25 In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors.
- ▶ Judith 8:25 (NRSV)
- ▶ 17 singing, “We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.
- ▶ Revelation 11:17 (NRSV)
- ▶ 2 He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,
- ▶ Revelation 10:2 (NRSV)
- ▶ 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.”
- ▶ Revelation 10:4 (NRSV)

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 210f. Further examples are cited there; one of these may be quoted in full: Const. Ap. 8, 38, 1, “We give thanks to you for all things, Master and Ruler of All, that you have not taken away your mercies” (εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι περὶ πάντων, δέσποταπαντοκράτορ, ὅτι οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπες τὰ ἔλεή σου) [adapted from ANF 7, 475].

¹⁴ Cf. Theodoret, *ad loc.*, who explains the verb εὐχαριστεῖν by means of ὑμνεῖν (to sing hymns): “we sing hymns (of thanks) to the benevolent Master that he has made us, who are unworthy, to share the light of the holy ones” [Trans.] (ὕμνοῦμεν δὲ τὸν φιλόανθρωπον δεσπότην, ὅτι ἡμᾶς ἀναξίους ὄντας κοινωνοὺς ἀπέφηνε τοῦ τῶν ἁγίων φωτός).

¹⁵ Cf. Robinson, “Hodayot-Formel,” 230–33.

¹⁶ The texts κ * (G) 69 it vg^{el} sy^p insert θεῷ (to God) before πατρί (“to the Father”); and 104 pm offer the reading τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί (to God and to the Father).

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

Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

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- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)

¹⁷ Cf. Nils A. Dahl, “Anamnesis,” ST 1 (1947): 86f, who certainly connects the concept “to give thanks” (εὐχαριστεῖν) too quickly with the celebration of the Eucharist.

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

¹⁸ The words “the Father” appear without apposition in phrases which have received their stamp in the liturgy, e.g., Gal 4:6*; Rom 8:15*; Phil 2:11*, as well as in creedal sentences, e.g., 1 Cor 8:6*; Rom 6:4*.

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

- ▶ Colossians 1:3 (NRSV)
- ▶ 2 To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.
- ▶ Colossians 1:2 (NRSV)
- ▶ 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- ▶ Colossians 3:17 (NRSV)

¹⁹ The variant ἡμᾶς (us) in A C A D G pm is an assimilation to the first person plural of the confessional style preserved in vss 13* and 14*. The mss. D G 33 pe it alter ἱκανώσαντι (“qualified”) to read καλέσαντι (called), and B has both καλέσαντι καὶ ἱκανώσαντι. The verb ἱκανοῦν appears again in the NT only in 2 Cor 3:6*, concerning the qualification of the apostle for his ministry. For ἱκανός (qualified, worthy) cf. 1 Cor 15:9* and 2 Cor 3:5*. In the LXX only the passive from ἱκανοῦσθαι “to be made worthy” appears, as indeed outside the NT the passive is generally used. Cf. Bauer, s.v.

- ▶ 9 Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God promised him.)

Deuteronomy 10:9 (NRSV)

- ▶ 12 And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).

Deuteronomy 12:12 (NRSV)

- ▶ 27 As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you.

Deuteronomy 14:27 (NRSV)

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- ▶ 29 the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

Deuteronomy 14:29 (NRSV)

- ▶ 1 This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

Deuteronomy 8:1 (NRSV)

- ▶ 9 the Lord's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share.

Deuteronomy 32:9 (NRSV)

- ▶ 9 The inheritance of the tribe of Simeon formed part of the territory of Judah; because the portion of the tribe of Judah was too large for them, the tribe of Simeon obtained an inheritance within their inheritance.

Joshua 19:9 (NRSV)

²⁰ For the connection between “part” and “lot” (μερίς – κληρος) cf. further LXX Gen 31:14*; Num 18:20*; and also Acts 8:21* “you have neither part nor lot” (οὐκ ἔστιν σοι μερίς οὐδὲ κληρος). Further examples are in Werner Foerster, TDNT 3, 759–61.

- ▶ 6 Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I be appeased for these things?

Isaiah 57:6 (NRSV)

- ▶ 25 This is your lot, the portion I have measured out to you, says the Lord, because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies.
- ▶ Jeremiah 13:25 (NRSV)
- ▶ 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
- ▶ Psalm 16:5 (NRSV)

²¹ Cf. Lohse, “Christologie und Ethik,” 165.

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

²² Also 1 QM I, 5; IV, 2; XIII, 2.

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

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- ▶ 1 QM Milḥamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness
- ▶ 1 QM Milḥamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness
- ▶ 1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

²³ Also 1 QM XIII, 5; XV, 1; XVII, 7.

- ▶ 1 QM Milḥamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness
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- ▶ 1 QM Milḥamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness

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

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²⁴ Cf. 1 QM III, 5; VI, 6; X, 10; XVI, 1; etc. Cf. above, p. 8, n. 17.

²⁵ Cf. Martin Noth, “The Holy Ones of the Most High” in *The Laws of the Pentateuch*, tr. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 215–28; Christianus Henricus Wilhelmus Brekelmans, “The Saints of the most High and their Kingdom,” *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 14 (1965): 305–29; Robert Hanhart, “Die Heiligen des Höchsten,” *Hebräische Wortforschung, Festschrift für W. Baumgartner, Supplement to VT* 16 (Leiden: 1967), 90–101.

²⁶ Cf. also Wisd Sol 5:5*. The godless, full of remorse, ask concerning the righteous one, “Why has he the been numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the holy ones?” (πῶς κατελογίσθη ἐν υἱοῖς θεοῦ καὶ ἐν ἁγίοις ὁ κληρὸς αὐτοῦ ἐστίν). For the rabbinic word usage, cf. Billerbeck 3, 625.

²⁷ Cf. also Eph 1:18*; Acts 20:32*; 26:18*; and also Ernst Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi: Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit*, BHT 9 (Tübingen: 1933), 142, 147; as well as Lohmeyer, ad loc.

* 2 To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Colossians 1:2 (NRSV)

²⁸ The words “in the light” (ἐν τῷ φωτί) do not belong only to the preceding word, but rather to the whole phrase.

* 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel

Colossians 1:5 (NRSV)

²⁹ Cf. Abbott, Dibelius-Greeven, ad loc.

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- ³⁰ The word “light” (φῶς) does not here mean the “transcendent realm of salvation where God dwells” (thus Conzelmann, ad loc.), but simply the domain into which God has transferred the saints and which, therefore, determines their conduct of life here and now. Cf. the parallels in the texts of Qumran.
- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)
- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)
- ▶ 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- ▶ Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)
- ▶ 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- ▶ Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

³¹ The subject of the relative clause (ὅς) is God. This clearly distinguishes vss 13f* from the relative clauses of vss 15* and 18*, in which Christ is the subject of the relative clauses.

³² Cf. Wilhelm Kasch, TDNT 6, 998–1003.

- ▶ 30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.
- ▶ Exodus 14:30 (NRSV)
- ▶ 9 and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land;
- ▶ Judges 6:9 (NRSV)
- ▶ 13 Gideon answered him, “But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.”
- ▶ Judges 6:13 (NRSV)
- ▶ 6 Say therefore to the Israelites, ‘I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6 (NRSV)

- ▶ 34 The Israelites did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hand of all their enemies on every side;

Judges 8:34 (NRSV)

- ▶ 28 But after they had rest, they again did evil before you, and you abandoned them to the hands of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them; yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many

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times you rescued them according to your mercies.

Nehemiah 9:28 (NRSV)

- ▶ 18 Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,
- ▶ 19 to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Psalms 33:18–19 (NRSV)

- ▶ 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.

Psalms 79:9 (NRSV)

- ▶ 7 Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul;

2 Samuel 12:7 (NRSV)

- ▶ 1 A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjaminite. O Lord my God, in you I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,

Psalms 7:1 (NRSV)

1 QpHab Peshar Habakkuk, the Commentary on Habakkuk

1 QpHab Peshar Habakkuk, the Commentary on Habakkuk

CD The Cairo Genizah Damascus Document

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

- ▶ 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.
- ▶ Matthew 6:13 (NRSV)
- ▶ 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.
- ▶ 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NRSV)
- ▶ 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?
- ▶ Romans 7:24 (NRSV)
- ▶ 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- ▶ Colossians 1:13 (NRSV)

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³³ Cf. LXX 4 Kg. 20:13*; Ps 113:2*; 135:8f*; Isa 39:2*; Jer 28(51): 28*; etc.

- ▶ 1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community
- ▶ 1 QM Milhamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness
- ▶ 1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community
- ▶ 1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community
- ▶ 1 QM Milhamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness

³⁴ The connection מלכות חושך = ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους (dominion of darkness) appears in 1 QH XII, 6; it is not, however, used there in a figurative sense, for the one praying declares that he wishes to praise God “at the beginning of the dominion of darkness,” i.e., in the evening.

³⁵ For Belial and darkness, cf. 1 QS II, 5; 1 QM I, 1, 5, 11; IV, 2; XIII, 2; etc. For the Holy Ones and light, cf. 1 QS I, 9; II, 16; XI, 7f; 1 QH XI, 11f; etc.

³⁶ Cf. Hans Conzelmann, TWNT 7, 424–46, esp. 443.

³⁷ Lk 22:53* also uses the words “the power of darkness” (ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους). At his arrest Jesus says to those taking him “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (αὕτη ἐστὶν ὑμῶν ἡ ὥρα καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους).

³⁸ Cf. 2 Cor 6:14* “What fellowship has light with darkness?” (τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος); 1 Pt 2:9* “... who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς); Eph 5:8* “... for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ); and 1 Clem 59:2 “through whom (i.e., Christ) he called us from darkness into light” (δι’ οὗ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς). Concerning this subject, cf. below p. 38, n. 49.

³⁹ Cf. Josephus, Ant. 9, 235, who uses the same Greek verb. The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser took captive the populace of areas of Palestine which he had conquered and “transported them into his own kingdom” (μετέστεσεν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ βασιλείαν).

⁴⁰ Cf. Chrysostom, ad loc., who explains “from the power” (τῆς ἐξουσίας) by the words “from the tyranny” (τῆς τυραννίδος).

⁴¹ The Greek verb μεθιστάναι signifies the transferring from one place to another, cf. 1 Cor 13:2* “to remove mountains” (ὄρη μεθιστάναι) and cf. also Acts 19:26*. It may also mean transferring in the sense of removing (Lk 16:4*; Acts 13:22*). But it does not mean a “lifting up” or a “being carried off” (contra Lohmeyer, ad loc., who has “entrücken”).

1 QM Milhamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness

1 QM Milhamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness

Q Qumran documents:

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- ▶ 1 QM Milḥamah, the War of the Children of Light against the Children of Darkness
- ▶ 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Mark 1:15 (NRSV)

1. parallel.

⁴² Cf. 1 Thess 2:12*; Gal 5:21*; 1 Cor 6:9f*; 15:50*; 2 Thess 1:5*; and also 1 Cor 4:20*; Rom 14:17*. In Col 4:11* “kingdom of God” (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) is used as a fixed formula, “fellow workers for the kingdom of God” (σύνεργοι εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). Eph 5:5* mentions the “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (κληρονομία ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ).

- ▶ 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.
- ▶ 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.
- ▶ 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.
- ▶ 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
- ▶ 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him.
- ▶ *28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

1 Corinthians 15:23–28 (NRSV)

⁴³ The “rule” of Christ is “as it were, an already present, representative ‘forerunner’ of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (rule of God) and is exercised by the exalted Christ.” Since according to apocalyptic ideas the messianic interregnum can only begin at the Parousia, “the βασιλεία of 1 Cor 15:24* cannot be identified with it,” Hans-Alwin Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreiches bei Paulus*, *ATHANT* 51 (Zürich: 1967), 99 [Trans.].

- ▶ 12 when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2:12 (NRSV)

- ▶ 1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
- ▶ 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth,

Colossians 3:1–2 (NRSV)

- ▶ 11 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave

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and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Colossians 3:11 (NRSV)

⁴⁴This is clearly a Semiticism (cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 165) and not a poetic Attic manner of expression which “had come down into the market place” (thus Dibelius-Greeven, ad loc.; from J.H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 1, Prolegomena [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 31919], 74).

- ▶ 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”
- ▶ Mark 1:11 (NRSV)
- ▶ 7 And he stood up and went to his home.
- ▶ Matthew 9:7 (NRSV)
- ▶ 6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’
- ▶ Mark 12:6 (NRSV)

1. parallel.

- ▶ 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
- ▶ Ephesians 1:6 (NRSV)

⁴⁵The beloved Son is the only son, cf. Gen 22:2*. Further examples are cited by Lohmeyer, ad loc. Eduard Schweizer, “Dying and Rising with Christ,” *NTS* 14 (1967–68): 5, n. 3, considers the possibility that the expression “the beloved son” could have been taken “from a first line of the hymn quoted in 1:15–20*”; “for ... it occurs rather frequently in Egyptian texts ... together with the concept of the image of God (v. 15*).” Cf. below, p. 41, n. 64.

- ▶ 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Mark 1:11 (NRSV)

- ▶ 4 and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Romans 1:4 (NRSV)

- ▶ 34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Romans 8:34 (NRSV)

- ▶ 1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1 (NRSV)

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- ▶ 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,
- ▶ 35 until I make your enemies your footstool.’

Acts 2:34–35 (NRSV)

4 Cf. Käsemann, *Essays*, 158–61; Bornkamm, *Aufsätze* 2, 190f; and Eduard Schweizer, *TWNT* 8, 370.

6 Cf. Käsemann, *Essays*, 158–61; Bornkamm, *Aufsätze* 2, 190f; and Eduard Schweizer, *TWNT* 8, 370.

⁴⁷ Contra Lohmeyer, Conzelmann, *ad loc.*

⁴⁸ This meaning for the concepts of light and darkness is assured by the parallels from the Qumran texts. This should not be taken to mean that the author of Col had direct contact with the writings or the tradition of the Qumran community. Rather, certain concepts and ideas from the teaching of this community had been accepted in the Hellenistic synagogue—cf. the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs!—and in this way also became known to the Christian community. Cf. below, note 49 and Braun, *Qumran* 1, p 226.

⁴⁹ In Acts 26:18* almost the same words are used to formulate the commission given to Paul outside Damascus: to open the eyes of the Gentiles, “that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀποσκότους εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ). This sentence elucidates the turning from darkness to light as a turning from “the power of Satan” (ἐξουσία τοῦ σατανᾶ) to God. Whoever has turned to him receives, as a member of the community of salvation, a share among the saints through faith in Christ. This means he receives forgiveness of sins. The use of the contrast between the concepts of light and darkness in connection with the conversion to the God of Israel is already known from the Hellenistic synagogue, as Joseph and Asenath shows in 8:9 (49:19–21) “Lord God of my father Israel, the Most High and mighty God who brings all things to life and calls from the darkness to the light and from error to truth and from death to life ...” (κύριε ὁ θεὸς τοῦ πατρὸς μου Ἰσραὴλ, ὁ ὕψιστος καὶ δυνατὸς θεός, ὁ ζωοποιήσας τὰ πάντα καὶ καλέσας ἀπὸ τοῦ σκότους εἰς τὸ φῶς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς πλάνης εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν). Again 15:12 (62:11–13) has “Blessed is the Lord your God who sent you to deliver me from the darkness and to bring me from the foundations of the abyss itself into the light” (εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεός σου, ὁ ἐξαποστείλας σε τοῦ ῥύσασθαί με ἐκ τοῦ σκότους καὶ ἀναγαγεῖν με ἀπὸ τῶν θεμελίων αὐτῆς τῆς ἀβύσσου εἰς τὸ φῶς). (Trans. adapted from E. W. Brooks, *Joseph and Asenath, Translations of Early Documents, Series 2, Hellenistic-Jewish Texts* [London: SPCK, 1918].) Cf. also Christoph Burchard, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Asenath, Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 8 (Tübingen: 1965), 102, n. 3.

* 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:14 (NRSV)

⁵⁰ The ms. B reads ἔσχομεν (we had) and thereby assimilates with the aorist in v 13*.

⁵¹ Cf. Friedrich Büchsel, *TDNT* 4, 351–56.

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⁵² Examples for the use of ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption) begin to appear only from the second and first century B.C. onward, and in the LXX it is used only in Dan 4:34* for the “redemption” of Nebuchadnezzar from his insanity. Cf. Büchsel, TDNT 4, 351; and Bauer, s.v. For the subject matter, cf. also Test Zeb 9:8 “He shall redeem all the captivity of the sons of men from Beliar” (αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται πᾶσαν αἰχμαλωσίαν υἱῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκ τοῦ Βελίαρ); Test Joseph 18:2 “And you shall be redeemed by the Lord from all evil” [Trans.] (ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ λυτρωθήσεσθε διὰ κυρίου). The Qumran community understood itself to be “the people whom God redeemed” [Trans.] (עם לא תודפ סע) 1 QM I, 12) or to be the “poor whom you have redeemed” (הכתודפ ינויבא) 1 QM IX, 9). Cf. also 1 QM XIV, 5, 10; XV, 1; and XVII, 6.

⁵³ Examples in Büchsel and Bauer, see preceding note.

* 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:23 (NRSV)

* 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

- ▶ Ephesians 4:30 (NRSV)
- ▶ 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.
- ▶ Ephesians 1:14 (NRSV)
- ▶ 30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 1:30 (NRSV)
- ▶ 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- ▶ Colossians 1:14 (NRSV)
- ▶ 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace
- ▶ Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

⁵⁴ There is here no connection with the practice of freeing a slave from captivity. Deissmann, LAE, p. 330, however, points to the freeing of slaves in antiquity. On this matter, cf. Werner Elert, “Redemptio ab hostibus,” ThLZ 72 (1947): 265–70.

- ▶ 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—
- ▶ Romans 5:12 (NRSV)
- ▶ 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
- ▶ Romans 8:3 (NRSV)

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- ▶ 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NRSV)

⁵⁵ Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, TDNT 1, 511–12.

⁵⁶ Primitive Christian usage on this subject took up the language of the OT and of Judaism. There are many passages in the writings of the Qumran community which mention the forgiveness of sins (אשנ, חלס) or the atonement (רפכ). Cf. 1 QS I, 23–26; II, 8; III, 6–12; IX, 4; XI, 14; CD II, 4f; III, 18; IV, 9f; XIV, 19; 1 QH IV, 37; VII, 35; IX, 13, 34; X, 21; XI, 9, 31; XIV, 24; XVI, 16; XVII, 12, 15, 18; etc. For rabbinic evidence see Billerbeck 1, 113f and 421.

* 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 3:24 (NRSV)

⁵⁷ Cf. Ernst Käsemann, “Zum Verständnis von Römer 3, 24–26” in Aufsätze 1, 96–100; also Eduard Lohse, Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi, FRLANT 46 (Göttingen: 1955), 149–54.

* 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;

Romans 3:25 (NRSV)

⁵⁸ The word πάρεσις (passing over) does not mean something like “overlooking,” but has the same sense as ἄφεσις, i.e., forgiveness, Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, TDNT 1, 511.

* 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

Ephesians 1:7 (NRSV)

⁵⁹ Several late witnesses insert the words “through his blood” (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ), from Eph 1:7*, in Col 1:14* (35 1912 al vgel syh).

* 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:4 (NRSV)

* 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38 (NRSV)

⁶⁰ The phrases of a creedal type in Rev 1:5* also refer to baptism: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ). Cf. Eduard Lohse, Die

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Offenbarung des Johannes, NTD 11 (Göttingen: 21966), 16; and Peter von der Osten-Sacken, “Christologie, Homologie, Taufe—Ein Beitrag zu Ape Joh 1:5f*,” ZNW 58 (1967): 255–66.

⁶¹ E.g., Acts 5:31*; 10:43*; 13:38*; 26:18*; also Mt 26:28*; Lk 1:77*; 24:47*; Heb 9:22*; 10:18*.

⁶² There is certainly no allusion to the Jewish Day of Atonement as Lohmeyer, 43–46; 52f, would like to find. Cf. below pp. 45f. This thought plays an important role in the epistle to the Hebrews, but not in this passage, where the concepts “redemption” and “forgiveness of sins” were taken from the primitive Christian tradition.

⁴³ Käsemann, Essays, 158–67, prefers to see the whole context, vss 12–20*, as a baptismal liturgy. Karl-Gottfried Eckart, “Exegetische Beobachtungen zu Kol. 1:9–20*,” Theologia Viatorum 7 (1959–60): 87–106, also wishes to incorporate vss 9–11* into the baptismal liturgy, which then consists of three parts: the exhortation (1:9–11*), the responsory which is the adjunct confession of the one baptized (1:13f*), and the Christ-hymn (1:15–20*). It is, however, difficult to speak of a liturgy. Vss 9–12* express the intercession of the apostle. Vss 12–14* deal with the event of baptism—and also take up traditional phrases—but they do not form any continuous liturgical context. Cf. also Leonhard Fendt, ThLZ 76 (1951): 532; Dibelius-Greeven, 11; Bornkamm, Aufsätze 2, 196, n. 19a; Eduard Schweizer, Neotestamentica: deutsche und englische Aufsätze 1951–1963; German and English Essays 1951–1963 (Zürich: 1963), 293, n. 1; Reinhard Deichgräber, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen, Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 5 (Göttingen: 1967), 78–82. Bornkamm notes correctly that “One must be satisfied with the statement that the content of 1:12–14* is the event of baptism and that 1:15–20* is allied with it.” Although Käsemann asserts “The writer of the letter evidently found vv 13–14* already connected with the hymn” (Essays, altered by trans. p. 153), it is quite uncertain whether this connection already existed in the oral tradition. For there is a difference in the concepts and terminology used by the two passages, and also a change in style (v 13* has a relative clause in the style of a confession; vss 15–20* lack the word “we” introducing the community as speaking, and the “you” by which it is addressed). It is more probable that the author of the letter joined various pieces of tradition together and, by means of the entire context he produced, indicated how the Christ-hymn ought to be understood.

GERMAN:

Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament:⁸

1.11. Dem vorherigen ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ — θεοῦ coordinirt. — ἐν πάσῃ δυν. δυναμ.) ἐν instrumental: mittelst jedweder (sittlichen) Kraft (durch deren Verleihung von Gott) gekräftiget werdend. δυναμῶν (Lobeck ad Phryn. p. 605.) findet sich nicht bei Griechen und nur hier u. Hebr. 11, 34. Lachm. im N. T., bei den LXX.: Cohel. 10, 10. Dan. 9, 27. Ps. 68, 31. Aq. Hiob 36, 9. Ps. 64, 4. Paulus gebraucht sonst ἐνδυναμοῦν. — κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξ. αὐτ.) gemäss der Gewalt seiner Majestät; dieser göttlichen Gewalt (s. über κράτος z. Eph. 1, 19.), durch deren mächtigen

⁸Heinr. Aug. Wilh. Meyer, Kritisch Exegetisches Handbuch Über Die Briefe Pauli an Die Philipper, Kolosser Und an Philemon, Dritte, verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage., vol. 9, Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht's Verlag, 1865), 193–198.

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Einfluss jene Kräftigung ihnen zu Theil werden soll, soll sie auch entsprechend sein, womit die hohe Stärke und Wirksamkeit derselben charakterisirt ist (anders ist κατά Eph. 1, 19.). τὸ κράτος τ. δόξ. αὐτ. ist nicht seine herrliche Macht (Luther, Castal., Beza u. M. auch Flatt u. Bähr; vrgl. Heinr.: „κράτος magnum et invictum“), wovor schon αὐτοῦ hätte warnen sollen, sondern τὸ κράτος ist die betreffende Eigenschaft der göttlichen Majestät (des herrlichen Wesens Gottes). Vrgl. Eph. 3, 16. Das κράτος ist nicht die Herrlichkeit Gottes (Böhmer), sondern diese hat jenes, — und die δόξα ist nicht auf eine einzelne Seite der göttlichen Grösse (Grot.: Macht; Huther: Liebe), sondern auf ihr glorreiches Ganze zu beziehen. Vrgl. z. Rom. 6, 4. — εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομ. κ. μακροθ.) in Bezug auf jedwede Ausdauer (in Bedrängniss, Verfolgung, Versuchung u. dergl., vrgl. Rom. 5, 3. 2. Kor. 1, 6. 6, 4. Jak. 1, 3 f. Luk. 8, 15. Rom. 2, 7. al.) und Langmuth (gegen die Beleidiger und Verfolger), d. i. um durch jene göttliche Kräftigung diese Tugenden in aller Weise ausüben zu können. Die Unterscheidung des Chrys.: μακροθυμεῖ τις πρὸς ἐκείνους οὐς δυνατὸν καὶ ἀμύνασθαι· ὑπομένει δὲ, οὐς οὐ δύναται ἀμύνασθαι, ist willkürlich. S. dagegen z. B. Hebr. 12, 2. 3. Eben so willkürlich Schenkel: jenes gehe auf die Dauer, ὑπομονή auf die Grösse des Leidens. Andere anders; aber man beachte, dass μακροθυμία, dessen Gegentheil ὀξύθυμία (Eur. Andr. 729. Jak. 1, 19.) und ὀξύθυμῆσις ist (Artem. 4, 69.), immer im N. T. auf das Verhältniss zu Beleidigern sich bezieht. Vrgl. 3, 12. Gal. 5, 22. Rom. 2, 4. Eph. 4, 2. Jak. 5, 10. — μετὰ χαρᾶς) wird von Theodoret., Luther, Beza, Castal., Calvin, Grot., Calov., Bengel, Heinr. u. V. auch Olsh., Bähr, Steiger, de Wette, B. Crus., Dalmer mit πᾶσαν ὑπομ. κ. μακροθ. verbunden, so dass die wahre, freudige Geduld (vrgl. V. 24.) bezeichnet werde. Allein der Gleichbau der Rede (s. z. V. 10.), in welcher auch den vorigen beiden Participien eine präpositionelle Bestimmung voranging, zeigt die Verbindung mit dem Folgenden (Syr., Chrys., Oecum., Theophyl., Erasm., Estius u. M. auch Lachm., Tisch., Böhm., Huther, Ewald) so natürlich, dass sie nicht ohne Willkür zu verlassen ist. Auch geht ja dabei der Gedanke der freudigen Geduld, welcher allerdings apostolisch ist (Rom. 5, 3. 1. Petr. 1, 6. Rom. 12, 12. vrgl. Matth. 5, 12.), nicht verloren, wenn zu der Geduld die freudige Danksagung hinzutritt.

1.12. Indem ihr mit Freudigkeit danksaget u. s. w., — eine dritte begleitende Bestimmung zu περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως etc. V. 10., den beiden vorherigen coordinirt, nicht mit οὐ πανόμεθα etc. zu verbinden (Chrys., Theophyl., Calvin: „iterum redit ad gratulationem“; Calov., Böhmer, B. Crus.). — τῷ πατρὶ) Jesu Christi; vrgl. V. 13. — τῷ ἰκανώσαντι etc.) darin liegt der Gegenstand des Dankes, quippe qui etc. Befähiget hat uns (ἡμᾶς geht auf die Briefsteller und Leser, sofern sie Christen sind) Gott zum Antheile am Messiasheil durch das Licht, indem er uns statt der Finsterniss, welche uns vorher beherrschte, vermittelt des Evangeliums die ἀλήθεια zuführte, deren Licht das unterscheidende Element und fruchtbare Princip (Eph. 5, 9.) der christlichen Verfassung ist in intellectueller und ethischer Beziehung (Act. 26, 18.), daher Christen Kinder des Lichtes sind (Eph. 5, 8. 1. Thess. 5, 5. Luk. 16, 8.). Vrgl. Rom. 13, 12. 2. Kor. 6, 14. 1. Petr. 2, 9. In Christo war das Licht zur persönlichen Erscheinung gekommen (Joh. 1, 4 ff. 3, 9. al.), als persönliche Offenbarung des göttlichen Wesens selbst (1. Joh. 1, 5.), und das Evangelium war

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das Mittel seiner Mittheilung (Eph. 3, 9. Hebr. 6, 4. 2. Kor. 4, 4. al.) an die Menschen, welche ohne diese Erleuchtung zum Messiasheile unfähig waren (Eph. 2, 1 ff. 4, 18. 5, 11. 6, 12. 1. Thess. 5, 4. al.). An's Ende ist die instrumentale Bestimmung ἐν τῷ φωτί gerückt, um mit besonderem Nachdrucke hervortreten, daher auch der folgende Relativsatz grade auf dieses Moment sich bezieht (Kühner II. p. 625.). Mit Unrecht hat man gegen unsere Fassung (welche schon Chrys., Oecum., Theophyl. befolgen, vrgl. Estius u. M. auch Flatt u. Steig.) eingewendet, P. müsste statt φῶς: πνεῦμα gesetzt haben (s. Olsh.); ἱκανοῦν ἐν τῷ φωτί ist ja nichts Anderes als das nach seiner sittlichen Wirksamkeit gedachte καλεῖν εἰς τὸ φῶς (1. Petr. 2, 9.), und der Erfolg davon auf Seiten des Menschen ist das εἶναι φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ (Eph. 5, 8.) oder das εἶναι υἰὸν τοῦ φωτός (1. Thess. 5, 5. Joh. 12, 36.). Eine Kraft aber ist das Licht; denn es ist τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς (Joh. 8, 12.), hat seine Waffen (Rom. 13, 12.), schafft seine Früchte (Eph. 5, 9.), wirkt das christliche ἐλέγχειν (Eph. 5, 13.), Ausdauer im Leidenskampfe (Hebr. 10, 32.) u. s. w. Gewöhnlich verbindet man mit κλήρου, so dass der κληρὸς τῶν ἁγίων als im Lichte bestehend oder befindlich, als Lichtreich bezeichnet werde, wobei man an dessen Herrlichkeit (Beza u. M. auch Böhmer, Huther, Schenkel), oder an dessen Reinheit und Vollkommenheit (de Wette, vrgl. Olsh. u. Dalmer) denkt. Allein wenngleich der anschliessende Artikel (τοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτί) fehlen kann, um den κληρὸς ἐν τῷ φωτί zu Einer Vorstellung zu verschmelzen, so steht doch dieser Verbindung entgegen, dass der κληρὸς τῶν ἁγίων nicht den zeitlichen Christenstand, sondern das Messiasreich bezeichnet (vrgl. V. 13. τὴν βασιλ. τοῦ υἱοῦ), daher nicht ἐν τῷ φωτι, sondern etwa ἐν τῇ δόξῃ, ἐν τῇ ζωῇ, ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς oder dergl. eine passende Bestimmung von κληρὸς wäre, welches indess schon durch τῶν ἁγίων seine bestimmte Bezeichnung hat (vrgl. Eph. 1, 18. Act. 20, 32. 26, 18.). Eben so wenig, da τ. μερίδα seine Bestimmung (Antheil am κληρὸς) bereits hat, ist ἐν τῷ φωτί von τὴν μερίδα abhängig zu machen, man mag nun ἐν örtlich fassen (Beng.: „Lux est regnum Dei, habentque fideles in hoc regno partem beatam“), oder wie Act. 8, 21. (Ewald). Vrgl. schon Theodoret.: κοινωνοὺς ἀπέφηνε τοῦ τῶν ἁγίων φωτός, — Der κληρὸς, dessen Inhaber die Christen sind (τῶν ἁγίων), vor der Parusie ideal, dann real, ist theokratische Bezeichnung (κληρ.) des Messianischen Reichsbesitzes (s. z. Gal. 3, 18. Eph. 1, 11), und die μερὶς (μερίδα) τοῦ κληροῦ ist der Antheil der Einzelnen an demselben. Vrgl. Sir. 44, 23. κληρὸς gebraucht P. nur hier, sonst κληρονομία. Vrgl. jedoch Act. 26, 18.

1.13. Nähere Erläuterung der vorher mit τῷ ἱκανώσαντι — φωτί ausgedrückten göttlichen Wohlthat. Dieser Vers bildet den Uebergang, durch welchen P. auf die Belehrungen von Christo geführt wird, die er zu geben vorhat. — ἐκ τῆς ἔξους. τοῦ σκότ. aus der Gewalt, welche die Finsterniss hat. Letztere, als die bestimmende Macht der nichtchristlichen Menschheit (des κόσμος, welcher vom Teufel beherrscht ist, Eph. 2, 2.), ist personificirt; ihr Wesen ist die Negation der intellectuellen und ethischen göttlichen ἀλήθεια, und die Position des Gegentheils. Vrgl. Act. 26, 18. Rom. 13, 12. Eph. 5, 8. 6, 12. al. Geschehen ist der Act des ἐρρύσατο durch die Bekehrung zu Christo, welche Gottes Werk ist, Rom. 8, 29 f. Eph. 2, 4 ff. Man beachte übrigens, dass der Ausdruck ἐκ τ. ἔξους. τ. σκότους als Correlat von ἐν τῷ φωτί V. 12. gewählt ist. — καὶ

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μετέστησεν) Die Sache ist örtlich (εἰς ἕτερον τόπον, Plat. Legg. 6. p. 762. B.) zu denken, so dass die Befreiung aus der Macht der Finsterniss mit der Hinwegversetzung in das Reich u. s. w. verbunden erscheint. Vrgl. Plat. Pol. 7. p. 518. A.: ἔκ τε φωτὸς εἰς σκότος μεθισταμένων καὶ ἐκ σκότους εἰς φῶς. — εἰς τὴν βασιλ. etc.) d. i. in das Messiasreich, Eph. 5, 5. 2. Petr. 1, 11.; denn diess und nichts Anderes ist ἡ βασιλεία Χριστοῦ (τοῦ θεοῦ, τῶν οὐρανῶν) an allen Stellen des N. T. (auch 1. Kor. 4, 20. Rom. 14, 17.). Vrgl. z. Matth. 3, 2. 6, 10. Der Aor. μετέστ. ist daraus zu erklären, dass die Sache proleptisch (τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν Rom. 8, 24.) wie etwas bereits Vollzogenes (vrgl. z. ἐδόξασε Rom. 8, 30.) gedacht ist. So gewiss, und zwar vermöge der Lebensgemeinschaft mit ihrem Herrn (Eph. 2, 6.), ist den Erlöseten das nahe Reich, als wären sie schon hineinversetzt. Die Erklärung von der christlichen Kirche (so noch Heinr., Bähr, Huther u. d. Meisten), dem κόσμος entgegengesetzt, ist eben so unhistorisch, als die von dem inwendigen, ethischen Reiche (s. bes. Olsh., nach falscher Fassung von Luk. 17, 21.). — τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ) dem wesentlichen Sinne nach zwar nichts Anderes als τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ (Matth. 3, 17. 17, 5. al.) oder τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ αὐτοῦ (Matth. 12, 18. Mark. 12, 6.), aber die Eigenschaft individualisirender hervorhebend (Winer p. 211 f. Buttm. p. 141.): des Sohnes seiner Liebe, d. i. des Sohnes, welcher der Gegenstand seiner Liebe ist, Genit. subj. Vrgl. Gen. 35, 18.: υἱὸς ὀδύνης μου. Ganz parallel ist Eph. 1, 6 f.: ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν etc. Augustin. de trin. 15, 19. fasste als Genit. orig., so dass mit der ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ die göttliche substantia bezeichnet werde*). So wieder Olsh., nach welchem der Ausdruck dem Johanneischen μονογενῆς entspricht. Ganz ohne Analogie der neutestamentlichen Vorstellungsweise, nach welcher nicht die Zeugung, sondern die Sendung des Sohnes auf die göttliche Liebe bezogen wird, und die Liebe nicht das Wesen (im metaphysischen Sinne), sondern die wesentliche Gesinnung (das Wesen im ethischen Sinne) Gottes ist, auch 1. Joh. 4, 8. 16. Sonach könnte erklärt werden: des Sohnes, welchen seine Liebe gesandt hat, wenn diess vom Contexte dargeboten wäre, was aber um so weniger der Fall ist, da sich die Rede auf den erhöhten Christus, welcher herrscht (βασιλείαν), bezieht. Der Ausdruck selbst, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπ. αὐτοῦ, findet sich im N. T. nur hier, konnte aber, zur Charakterisirung des Gegentheils von dem seinem Wesen nach der göttlichen Liebe grade entgegenstehenden, gottverhassten Elemente des σκότος, nicht passender und gefühlsinniger gewählt werden. Die Ansicht, es solle angedeutet werden, dass der Antheil am Reiche die υἰοθεσία mit sich bringe (Huther, de Wette), trägt ein und greift dem Folgenden vor.

1.14. Nicht Vorbedingung der υἰοθεσία (de Wette); nicht das Gut, dessen die Christen in dem Reiche des Sohnes Gottes theilhaftig sind (Huther, wogegen aber ist, dass die βασιλεία nicht das Reich der Kirche bezeichnet), auch nicht Merkmal der geschehenen Errettung aus der Finsterniss (Ritschl in d. Jahrb. f. Deutsche Theol. 1863. p. 513.), da ja diese Errettung mit der Versetzung in das Reich nothwendig zusammenfällt; sondern fortdauerndes (ἔχομεν, habemus, nicht accepimus) Verhältniss, in welchem jene Versetzung in das Reich Gottes ursächlich beruht. Die Loskaufung (von der Sündenstrafe, s. das erklärende τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν

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ἀμαρτ.) haben wir in Christo, sofern er sich selbst durch Vergießung seines Blutes*) zum λύτρον gegeben hat (Matth. 20, 28. Mark. 10, 45. 1. Tim. 2, 6.), und diese durch sein ἰλαστήριον (Rom. 3, 21 ff.) bewirkte Erlösung fortwährend in Bestand und Wirksamkeit bleibt. Daher: ἐν ᾧ, welches angiebt, worin das subjective ἔχομεν objectiv begründet ist, als in dessen causa meritoria, Rom. 3, 24. Uebrigens vrgl. z. Eph. 1, 7., aus welcher St. διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ als richtige Glosse in die unsrige gekommen ist.

* Entgegengesetzt findet Theodor. Mopsv. in dem Ausdrucke, Christus sei οὐ φύσει Gottes Sohn, ἀλλ' ἀγάπη τῆς υἰοθεσίας.

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* Dieses vergossene Blut ist die τιμή, für welche wir erkaufte sind. S. z. 1. Kor. 6, 20. Gal. 3, 13. 4, 5. Um so weniger hat man von der eigentlichen Bedeutung von ἀπολύτρωσις abzusehen und es von der Befreiung von den Sünden, als Gegentheil des fortwährenden Sündigens (Ritschl), zu nehmen. Vrgl. 1. Petr. 1, 18 f.

) Dieses vergossene Blut ist die τιμή, für welche wir erkaufte sind. S. z. 1. Kor. 6, 20. Gal. 3, 13. 4, 5. Um so weniger hat man von der eigentlichen Bedeutung von ἀπολύτρωσις abzusehen und es von der Befreiung von den Sünden, als Gegentheil des fortwährenden Sündigens (Ritschl), zu nehmen. Vrgl. 1. Petr. 1, 18 f.

Erklärung Des Briefes Pauli:⁹

1.12 durch εὐχαριστοῦντες, dankbares Gedächtniss und Anerkennen des bereits von Gott Erhaltenen, das eben Friede und Freude wirkt. — τῷ ἰκανώσαντι) auch 2 Kor. 3, 6, durch den im Evangelium hervorgebrachten Glaubens-, Liebes- und Hoffnungsstand (V. 4 f. vgl. Eph. 1, 11–14) mit dem Zweck und Erfolg eines bestimmten, individuellen Antheils (μερίδα) von dem Erbtheil der Heiligen (κλήρου) vgl. Eph. 1, 11. 14. 18. — ἐν τῷ φωτί) Gegensatz zu σκότος V. 13, vgl. Eph. 5, 8, eben daher ein schon gegenwärtiger Zustand. Die Beziehung ist doppelseitig, auf ἰκανώσαντι und κληρος wie ἐν σοφίᾳ V. 9. Licht ist das Element, in welchem Gott tüchtig macht zu seinem Erbe, und der Zustand der Erbkinder. Act. 26, 18. 1 Petr. 2, 9. Eph. 5, 8. 1 Joh. 1, 5–8.

1.13. τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ) der Sohn, dem seine Liebe innerlich ist als dem Geliebten und in dem er liebt. Joh. 17, 26. Eph. 1, 6.

1.14. s. Eph. 1, 7. διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ ist unechter Zusatz aus Eph., aber zur Vollendung des

⁹Johann Tobias Beck and Julius Lindenmeyer, Erklärung Des Briefes Pauli an Die Epheser Nebst Anmerkungen Zum Brief Pauli an Die Kolosser (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1891), 251.

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Begriffs nöthiges Moment.

Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament:¹⁰

1,11 Die dritte Bitte des Apostels lautet, dass die Heiligen »gekräftigt« würden »mit aller Kraft nach der Macht seiner Herrlichkeit«. (Man beachte die Reihenfolge: erfüllt, V. 9; fruchtbringend, V. 10; gekräftigt, V. 11.) Das christliche Leben kann nicht aus rein menschlicher Kraft geführt werden. Man braucht dazu geistliche Kraft. Deshalb möchte Paulus, dass die Gläubigen die Kraft des auferstandenen Sohnes Gottes kennenlernen. Er wünscht sich weiter, dass sie diese Kraft »nach der Macht seiner Herrlichkeit« erfahren. Die Bitte lautet hier nicht, dass diese Macht aus seiner Herrlichkeit kommen solle, sondern »nach« ihr, d. h. entsprechend dieser Herrlichkeit. »Seine Herrlichkeit« ist grenzenlos, und dies ist genau der Geltungsbereich dieses Gebets. Peake schreibt: »Die Ausrüstung mit Macht geschieht nicht nur einfach proportional zu den Bedürfnissen des Empfängers, sondern entsprechend den göttlichen Möglichkeiten.«⁶

Weshalb wollte Paulus, dass die Christen diese Kraft hätten? Damit sie hinausgehen und spektakuläre Wunder vollbringen könnten? Damit sie die Toten auferwecken, die Kranken heilen und die Dämonen austreiben sollten? Und wieder lautet die Antwort: »Nein«. Diese Kraft wird gebraucht, damit das Kind Gottes alles »Ausharren und alle Langmut, mit Freuden« habe. Das sollten wir ganz sorgfältig beachten! In einem Teil der Christenheit heute wird großer Wert auf sogenannte Wunder gelegt, etwa auf die Zungenrede, die Krankenheilung und andere aufsehenerregende Vorkommnisse. Doch es gibt in unserem Zeitalter ein noch größeres Wunder als all dies: Ein Kind Gottes, das inmitten von Versuchungen geduldig und dankbar sein Leid erträgt!

In 1. Korinther 13,4 wird Langmut mit Freundlichkeit zusammen gesehen, hier ist die »Freude« damit verbunden. Wir leiden, weil wir nicht unserem Anteil am Seufzen der Kreatur entgehen können. Um darin die innere »Freude« und Freundlichkeit anderen gegenüber zu behalten, brauchen wir Gottes Kraft. Das ist Sieg im Leben des Christen. Der Unterschied zwischen »Ausharren« und »Langmut« ist einmal als der Unterschied definiert worden, ob man etwas einfach nur klaglos erträgt oder ohne Vergeltungsabsichten erduldet. Gottes Gnade hat eines ihrer höchsten Ziele im Leben desjenigen Gläubigen erreicht, der geduldig leiden und Gott noch inmitten heftigster Versuchung preisen kann.

1,12 »Danksagend« bezieht sich in diesem Vers auf die Kolosser, nicht auf Paulus (im Gr. steht hier der Plural). Paulus bittet darum, dass sie nicht nur mit aller Kraft gestärkt werden, sondern auch einen dankbaren Geist erhalten und niemals vergessen, »dem Vater« ihren Dank auszusprechen, der sie »fähig gemacht« hat »zum Anteil am Erbe der Heiligen im Licht«. Als Söhne Adams könnten wir die Herrlichkeit des Himmels überhaupt nicht ertragen. Wenn

¹⁰William MacDonald, Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament, trans. Christiane Eichler, 7. Auflage. (Bielefeld: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, 2018), 994–996.

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unerlöste Menschen irgendwie in den Himmel gebracht würden, dann könnten sie ihn nicht genießen, sondern wären äußerst unglücklich. Um den Himmel schätzen zu können, braucht man eine bestimmte Eignung. Auch als Gläubige haben wir persönlich keine Eignung für den Himmel. Der einzige Anspruch auf die Herrlichkeit, den wir haben, findet sich in der Person unseres Herrn Jesus Christus.

Aus Gnaden! Hier gilt kein Verdienen,
die eignen Werke fallen hin;
der Mittler, der im Fleisch erschienen,
hat diese Ehre zum Gewinn,
dass uns sein Tod das Heil gebracht
und uns aus Gnaden selig macht.

Christian Ludwig Scheidt

Wenn Gott jemanden rettet, dann gibt er dieser Person sofort die Eignung für den Himmel. Diese Eignung ist Christus selbst. Sie ist durch nichts zu verbessern. Noch nicht einmal ein langes Leben des Gehorsams und des Dienstes hier auf Erden lässt jemanden geeigneter für den Himmel sein, als er es am Tag seiner Bekehrung war. Unser Anspruch auf die Herrlichkeit gründet sich in Jesu Blut. Während das Erbe »im Licht« ist und in den Himmeln aufbewahrt wird (vgl. 1. Petr 1,4), haben wir Gläubigen hier auf Erden den Heiligen Geist als »Garantie für unser Erbe«. Deshalb können wir uns über das freuen, was vor uns liegt, während wir schon jetzt die »Erstlingsfrüchte des Geistes« genießen.

1,13 Indem Gott uns »zum Anteil am Erbe der Heiligen im Licht ... fähig gemacht« hat, hat er »uns errettet aus der Macht der Finsternis und versetzt in das Reich des Sohnes seiner Liebe« (vgl. 1. Joh 2,11). Das kann man anhand der Erfahrung der Kinder Israel veranschaulichen, die im 2. Buch Mose aufgezeichnet ist. Sie hatten in Ägypten gewohnt und unter der Knute der dortigen Sklaventreiber geseufzt. Durch wunderbares göttliches Eingreifen befreite Gott sie aus dieser fürchterlichen Knechtschaft und führte sie durch die Wüste ins Gelobte Land. In ähnlicher Weise waren wir als Sünder Knechte Satans, doch durch Christus sind wir aus seinen Klauen »errettet« und nun Bürger des Reiches Christi. Satans Reich ist ein Reich der »Finsternis«, wo es kein Licht gibt, keine Wärme und keine Freude, während das Reich Christi ein Reich der »Liebe« ist. Damit ist gemeint, dass es dort all das gibt, was man in Satans Reich vergeblich sucht.

Das »Reich« Christi zeigt sich in der Schrift unter verschiedenen Aspekten. Als Jesus erstmalig auf die Erde kam, bot er dem Volk Israel ein Reich im wörtlichen Sinne an. Die Juden wollten

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Befreiung von den römischen Unterdrückern, doch sie wollten sich nicht von ihren Sünden abkehren. Christus konnte jedoch nur über ein Volk herrschen, das in einer angemessenen geistlichen Beziehung zu ihm lebte. Als den Angehörigen des Volkes dies verdeutlicht wurde, verwarfen sie ihren König und kreuzigten ihn. Seitdem ist der Herr Jesus in den Himmel zurückgekehrt, und das Reich besteht nun in seiner verborgenen Gestalt (Matth 13). Dies bedeutet, dass das Reich jetzt nicht sichtbar erscheint. Der König ist abwesend. Doch alle, die den Herrn Jesus Christus in unserem gegenwärtigen Zeitalter annehmen, erkennen ihn als ihren rechtmäßigen Herrscher an und werden somit Bürger seines Reiches. Eines Tages wird der Herr Jesus auf die Erde zurückkehren, sein Reich mit Jerusalem als Hauptstadt aufrichten und tausend Jahre lang herrschen. Am Ende dieser Zeit wird Christus alle seine Feinde unter seine Füße legen und dann das Reich Gott dem Vater übergeben. Damit wird das Reich eingeleitet, das sich durch ewige Zeiten erstrecken wird.

1,14 Nachdem er das Reich des Sohnes der Liebe Gottes erwähnt hat, beginnt Paulus mit einem der großartigsten Abschnitte des Wortes Gottes über die Person und das Werk des Herrn Jesus. Wir wissen nicht, ob er sein Gebet schon beendet hat, oder ob es sich noch auf diese Verse erstreckt, die wir nun genauer betrachten wollen. Doch das ist von untergeordneter Bedeutung, denn auch wenn die folgenden Verse kein reines Gebet sind, so enthalten sie zweifellos nichts als Anbetung.

Sturz hat darauf hingewiesen, dass »in diesem erstaunlichen Abschnitt, der Jesus Christus mehr erhebt als jeder andere, der Name unseres Herrn kein einziges Mal auf irgendeine Weise vorkommt«. Während das im gewissen Sinne bemerkenswert ist, brauchen wir uns darüber nicht zu wundern. Denn auf wen sonst als auf unseren hochgelobten Heiland könnte jemals die Beschreibung passen, die uns hier gegeben wird? Der Abschnitt erinnert uns an Marias Frage an den Gärtner: »Herr, wenn du ihn weggetragen (hast), so sage mir, wo du ihn hingelegt hast! Und ich werde ihn wegholen« (Joh 20,15). Sie nannte seinen Namen nicht. Sie hatte nur einen Einzigen im Sinn.

Christus wird zuerst als der Eine vorgestellt, in dem wir »die Erlösung⁷, die Vergebung der Sünden« haben. »Erlösung« beschreibt die Tat, wodurch wir vom Sklavenmarkt der Sünde erkaufte worden sind. Der Herr Jesus steckte uns gewissermaßen ein Preisschild an. Wie hoch schätzte er uns? Er sagte im Grunde: »Sie sind mir so wertvoll, dass ich bereit bin, mein Blut zu vergießen, um sie zu erkaufen.« Weil wir um einen solch hohen Preis erkaufte worden sind, sollte es für uns klar sein, dass wir nicht länger uns selbst gehören. Deshalb sollten wir unser Leben nicht so führen, wie es uns gefällt. Diesbezüglich sei Borden zitiert, der an der Yale University studiert hatte. (Gemeint ist William Whiting Borden, [1887–1913], der als Missionar unter Muslimen arbeiten wollte und während der Reise auf das Missionsfeld bereits im 26. Lebensjahr heimging.) Er hat darauf hingewiesen, dass wir, wenn wir unser Leben nehmen und mit ihm nach unserem Belieben verfahren, uns etwas aneignen, das uns nicht gehört, und

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deshalb Diebe sind.

Christus hat uns nicht nur erlöst, er hat uns auch die »Vergebung der Sünden« geschenkt. Das heißt, dass Gott die Schulden vergeben hat, die unsere Sünden verursacht haben. Der Herr Jesus Christus hat die Strafe am Kreuz bezahlt, und sie muss niemals wieder bezahlt werden. Die Rechnung ist beglichen, und Gott hat uns nicht nur vergeben, sondern er hat unsere Sünden so weit von uns weggenommen, wie der Osten vom Westen ist (Ps 103,12).

⁶ (1,11) A. S. Peake, »Colossians«, The Expositor's Greek Testament, Bd. 3, S. 499.

⁷ (1,14) Die Worte »durch sein Blut« (Schl 2000) erscheinen in der Parallelstelle in Epheser 1,7. Sie sind hier jedoch weder in den ältesten Manuskripten (NA) noch im Mehrheitstext der griechischen Handschriften zu finden.

Wuppertaler Studienbibel:¹¹

Daß sie nicht nur mühsam mit den ihr gestellten Aufgaben fertig wird, sondern „mit aller Stärke gestärkt“ dasteht, das zeigt sich besonders darin, daß sie auch unter Arbeit, Kampf und Last eine fröhlich dankende Gemeinde bleibt und „mit Freuden dem Vater dankt“. Wie kann sie das? Sie hat immer und auf jeden Fall reichen Grund zum Danken, weil ihr Leben durch Gott völlig verwandelt ist. Das zeigt sich mächtig an allen drei Zeiten, in die unsere Lebenszeit sich gliedert, an Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft.

Dunkel liegt die Zukunft vor den Menschen. Wohl übermalt er dies Dunkel mit seinen Hoffnungen und Erwartungen, aber er weiß es im Grunde nur zu gut, wie seine Illusionen immer wieder in Enttäuschung enden. Und hinter all seinen Plänen wartet auf ihn das Altern, der Verfall, das Sterben, das große Dunkel, das Nichts. Für „uns“ aber ist es total anders geworden. Wir haben eine leuchtende Zukunft, denn dort liegt „das Erbe der Heiligen im Licht“.⁸ Wir haben es uns nicht ausgedacht, wir müssen es uns nicht mit ungewissen Mühen erringen oder verdienen. Wir haben den völlig gewissen „Anteil“ daran, weil Gott selbst uns „tauglich gemacht hat“ dazu. Paulus kennt eine klare und bestimmte Heilsgewißheit und hält sie offenbar nicht für „pharisäisch“. Er ist auch offenbar nicht der Meinung, daß dieser Anteil am Erbe der Heiligen durch das kommende Weltgericht ein sehr fraglicher sei. Er stellt fest, daß eine Gemeinde der Glaubenden sich mit jubelnder Dankbarkeit zu diesem Licherbe tauglich gemacht wissen darf. Darum brauchen wir auch nicht mehr angstvoll und gierig zu sehen, wo es in dieser Welt etwas zu „erben“ gibt. Wir sind aus dem Neiden, Jagen und Streiten befreit und können mit jeder Geduld und jeder Langmut verzichten, entbehren und fortgeben. Ist das nicht zum Danken?

Aber das Christentum ist nicht etwa „Vertröstung aufs Jenseits“. Anders und neu wurde auch

¹¹Werner de Boor, Die Briefe Des Paulus an Die Philipper Und Die Kolosser, Wuppertaler Studienbibel (Holzgerlingen: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2018), 173–176.

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unsere Gegenwart, dieser so entscheidende haarfeine Strich, der zwischen dem liegt, was schon wieder vergangen, und dem, was noch nächster Augenblick der Zukunft ist. In diesem „Jetzt“ geschehen unsere Taten und fallen unsere Entscheidungen. „Jetzt“ spreche ich das gute oder unguete Wort, „jetzt“ tue ich die hilfreiche oder schädliche Tat, „jetzt“ versäume ich den unwiederbringlichen Augenblick. Von Natur stehen wir dabei alle im „Machtbereich der Finsternis“, so wahr der Teufel der „Fürst dieser Welt“, ja der „Gott dieses Äons“ ist. In der Ausnutzung des Jetzt, in unseren Gedanken und Worten, Taten und Unterlassungen sind wir Sklaven des Feindes. Wer sich selbst wirklich kennengelernt hat, weiß, daß das nicht eine empörende Verleumdung des Menschen, sondern schreckliche Wahrheit ist. Diese Sklaverei braucht durchaus nicht derb und roh zu sein, sie hat ihre feinen und „edlen“ Formen. Sie kennt goldene Ketten und Fesseln, die unsichtbar auch auf den Höhen von Wissenschaft, Kunst und Sittlichkeit ihre Opfer unzerreißbar binden. Wir müssen hier auch in besonderer Weise an das Netz von Aberglauben und Zauberei denken, in dem gerade heute die modernen Menschen in Scharen gefangen sind. Kartenlegen, Horoskop, Astrologie, Wahrsagerei, Besprechen, Spiritismus, die Glücksfigur in Auto und Flugzeug – gerade auch das ist „Machtbereich der Finsternis“.

Kein eigenes Wollen und Ringen, keine verzweifelten Anstrengungen, keine bitteren Tränen und guten Vorsätze machen uns frei. Gerade der redliche und tapfere Kämpfer erfährt die Wahrheit von Rö 7, 19. Mit Vollmacht müssen wir „dem Machtbereich der Finsternis entrissen“⁹ werden. Das hat Gott getan! Aber nicht um uns nun uns selbst zu überlassen. Wie wenig wäre uns damit geholfen. Nein, Er hat uns „unter die Herrschaft des Sohnes Seiner Liebe versetzt“. Welch ein Existenzwandel ist das! Und das ist nicht eine vage Möglichkeit, nicht eine unsichere Zukunftsaussicht, das ist Realität! Christwerden ist ein realer völliger Herrschaftswechsel. So schildert Paulus in Apg 26, 18 vor dem König Agrippa die Bekehrung der Menschen als das Ziel des Auftrages, den er von Jesus erhalten hat. Wie wunderbar, nicht mehr dem kalten, grausamen Feinde fronen zu müssen, sondern dem geliebten Sohn Gottes dienen zu dürfen. Das gibt ein ganz neues fruchtbares und gesegnetes „Jetzt“. Unerschöpflich und täglich neu steigt dafür der frohe Dank zum Vater empor!

Aber schleppe ich nicht die Last meiner Vergangenheit unabänderlich mit? Es ist das Eigentümliche dieser Zeitform, daß sie wirklich „vorbei“ ist, daß wir sie nur noch in Bildern der Erinnerung haben. Aber eben darum ist sie auch unabänderlich, unverbesserlich. Und was dort hinten in der Vergangenheit liegt, das wirkt noch aufs stärkste in unser Leben hinein nach. Das merken wir besonders an unserer – Schuld! Welche Last von Schuld schleppt jeder Mensch aus seiner Vergangenheit mit. Gerade der moderne Nervenarzt und Psychologe weiß es, wieviel „Nervosität“, wieviel Mißstimmung, Schwermut und Krankheit Folge dieses Lastenschleppens ist. Ich kann aber diese Last auch nicht selber abwerfen. Alles Vergessenwollen der Schuld wird höchstens ein „Verdrängen“, und eben dies führt erst recht zu schweren nervlichen und seelischen Störungen. Wer aber zu jenem „Sohn Seiner Liebe“ kam, der erfährt es, daß wir in Ihm

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„die Erlösung, die Vergebung der Sünden haben“. Welch ein unaussprechliches, befreiendes Geschenk! Frage die berühmtesten Wissenschaftler der Welt, ob sie ein Mittel zur Befreiung von der Schuld kennen, frage die großen Künstler, ob sie Schuld aus dem Gewissen wegmusizieren oder wegmalen oder wegdenken können; frage die Reichen und Mächtigen dieser Erde, ob die Last der Schuld vor Goldschätzen oder Panzerarmeen weicht – du fragst vergeblich. In Jesus findest du, wonach dein Herz dürstet, und du findest es nicht nur als Möglichkeit, als unbestimmte Vertröstung, sondern als ganze, selige Wirklichkeit jetzt und hier: „in dem wir ... haben!“ Ist das nicht Grund zum Loben und Danken, auch in der schwersten Lage, auch am dunkelsten Tag? Und erwächst nicht daraus wieder „alle Geduld“, „alle Langmut“, die andere so aufnehmen kann, wie Christus uns aufgenommen hat?

Damit ist Paulus bereits zu dem Thema übergegangen, das ihm gerade im Blick auf die Fragen und Irrungen in Kolossä von entscheidender Bedeutung ist. Wollen die Kolosser ein klares eigenes Urteil gewinnen über die „Heiligungsbestrebungen“, die eifrig an sie herangetragen werden und die ihnen ein „vollkommeneres“ Christentum verheißen, dann müssen sie sehen.

⁸ Anm. Zunächst war Kanaan, das „gelobte Land“, das „Erbe“, das vor dem Volk auf der Wüstenwanderung lag, das „Land, da Milch und Honig fließt“ (5 Mo 12, 10). Die Leviten und Priester aber dürfen es schon lernen, auf einen Anteil an diesem irdischen Erbgut zu verzichten und ihr „Erbe“ weit höher zu suchen: in dem lebendigen Gott selbst (5 Mo 10, 9; 18, 1. 2; Hes 44, 28). Gott aber ist strahlendes Licht, vor dem Sonne und Mond erbleichen (Jes 2, 5; 60, 1. 2; 60, 19). Die neutestamentliche Gemeinde als ein wahres Volk von Priestern begehrt keine irdischen Erfüllungen mehr, sondern sieht vor sich das „Erbe der Heiligen im Licht“.

⁹ Anm. Dieses „der entrissen hat“ steht mit dem gleichen Wort wie hier in der griechischen Übersetzung des Alten Testaments an den Stellen, an denen wir in unserer Lutherbibel „Erlöser“ lesen; Jes 44, 6; 47, 4; 48, 17; 49, 7. 26; 54, 5. Auch an Stellen wie Ps 18, 17. 20 finden wir dasselbe Verbum. Die Errettung Israels aus Ägypten ist das große alttestamentliche Vorbild.

Die Bibel Im Überblick:¹²

2. Kolosser 1–2: Was Christus für die Gläubigen und für die Versammlung ist
3. 1,1–8 Einleitung: Gruß 1.2; Dank für den Glauben und die Liebe der Kolosser 2–5a; das Wort der Wahrheit des Evangeliums bei den Kolossern 5b–8
4. 1,9–23 Die Herrlichkeit und Größe Christi: Bitte um Erkenntnis Seines Willens und um Wachstum in der Erkenntnis Gottes 9–11; Dank dem Vater für die Segnungen der Errettung (V. 13: „der Sohn seiner Liebe“) 12–14; der Platz des ewigen Sohnes in der

¹²Arend Remmers, Die Bibel Im Überblick, leicht bearbeitete Auflage. (Hückeswagen: Christliche Schriftenverbreitung, 2016), 439–440.

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Schöpfung 15; der Sohn als Schöpfer aller Dinge 16; der Sohn als Erhalter aller Dinge 17; der verherrlichte Mensch als „Haupt des Leibes“ (der Versammlung), als „Anfang“ und als „Erstgeborener aus den Toten“ hat in allem den Vorrang 18; die ganze Fülle der Gottheit in Christus bewirkte die Versöhnung aller Dinge (nicht aller Menschen!) durch das Blut Seines Kreuzes 19.20; die Glaubenden sind versöhnt und heilig und untadelig vor Gott 21.22; Verantwortung (Paulus als Diener des Evangeliums) 23.

French:

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3.1.5 - Fortifiés pour endurer les souffrances avec joie: 1v11

Pour réaliser ces choses et faire des progrès, il faut une force spirituelle et non humaine. La connaissance de Dieu nous révèle que cette force est en lui ; elle vient d'en haut, du lieu même de la gloire, où la puissance de Dieu a placé Christ, après l'avoir ressuscité d'entre les morts (Éph. 1:1, 20).

Cette puissance divine infinie est vue comme détenue par Christ, qui la confie au croyant sur la terre. Le langage de l'apôtre est ici particulièrement fort: «fortifiés en toute force (*), la «puissance de sa gloire» (ou sa glorieuse puissance), «toute patience». Il n'y a aucune limite aux effets de cette puissance divine. Comment peut-elle s'exercer dans de faibles créatures comme nous? Précisément par l'opération de la puissance de Christ, celle-là même qui fortifiait son apôtre en toutes choses, même dans ses liens (Phil. 3:21; 4:13).

(*) Il semble qu'il s'agisse ici de la force du Seigneur, celle qui nous est nécessaire pour marcher d'une manière digne de lui.

La force est donnée pour la patience et la constance (ou longanimité, c'est-à-dire la patience à supporter les souffrances). Il ne s'agit pas d'accomplir de grandes actions d'éclat devant les hommes, mais de tenir ferme dans le chemin de la foi. La patience n'est ni de l'indifférence, ni de la résignation, ni du fatalisme; mais elle exprime la vraie force morale pour attendre de Dieu seul la délivrance (Lam. 3:26). Peut-être celle-ci n'arrivera-t-elle qu'au retour du Seigneur (Jac. 5:7).

«Avec joie»: et pourtant, dans ce chemin de patience et d'endurance, la joie du ciel nous est promise au milieu des souffrances. C'est la joie même de Christ, que personne ne peut nous ôter (Jean 15:11 ; 16:22-24 ; 17:13). C'est ainsi que se complète le beau tableau moral de la vie de Christ révélée dans les siens sur la terre.

3.2 - La prière de Paul (2): Colossiens 1:12-14

3.2.1 - Les actions de grâces rendues au Père: 1v12, 13

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Alors, l'apôtre remonte aux sources mêmes de cette vie de Christ, pour rendre grâces au Père. Sa prière pour les Colossiens devient ainsi l'occasion de développer l'exposé le plus complet des gloires de Christ et des résultats de son œuvre. Nous rendons grâces au Père pour ce qu'il a fait (Nom. 23:23; Ps. 22:31). Trois précieux motifs de reconnaissance sont mentionnés:

1. La participation à l'héritage des saints dans la lumière. Ce privilège n'est pas futur; c'est une part (*) présente, qui découle d'une œuvre déjà accomplie. Nous en goûtons les effets dans la lumière, la nature même de Dieu (1 Jean 1:5).

(*) Le mot traduit ici par «lot» est rendu par «part» ou «portion», en Actes 26:18, pour exprimer la même pensée. Il s'agit d'une bénédiction partagée, celle de l'héritage (Éph. 1:18), et non pas de l'appartenance à un groupe particulier de personnes. Le mot «lot» désignait autrefois la terre donnée à chaque tribu d'Israël, comme une partie de l'héritage commun (Jos. 14:1-9). Pour les chrétiens, maintenant, l'héritage est dans la lumière du ciel.

2. La délivrance du pouvoir des ténèbres. Autrefois, nous étions dans les ténèbres (Act 26:18; Éph. 6:12), le domaine moral où règne Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). L'œuvre de Christ nous en a délivrés: c'est le thème de la louange.

3. L'entrée dans le royaume du Fils de l'amour du Père. L'œuvre de Christ envers nous est complète. Arrachés à un lieu de souillure, nous avons été transportés dans un lieu de sainteté et de bonheur, le royaume du Fils de Dieu. Mais si Dieu est lumière, il est aussi amour dans sa nature (1 Jean 4:8,16). Aussi le royaume est-il celui du «Fils de son amour», expression admirable qu'on ne trouve qu'ici dans toute l'Écriture. Le royaume est appelé ailleurs comme royaume des cieux, ou de Dieu, ou du Christ, ou encore du Fils de l'homme. Mais ici, le titre du royaume dans lequel la grâce de Dieu nous donne une place est lié à la relation éternelle du Fils unique avec son Père (Prov. 8:30). En résumé, nous avons une part dans la lumière de Dieu et une place dans le royaume du Fils de l'amour du Père. Nous sommes introduits ensemble dans la demeure de l'amour et de la lumière pour y contempler les grâces et les beautés de celui qui en est le centre et l'ornement de toute éternité. Dans ce palais, tout rend gloire au Fils!

3.2.2 - La rédemption et la rémission des péchés en Christ

Voici les deux fondements des bénédictions précédentes: la rédemption et la rémission des péchés.

La rédemption est l'œuvre par laquelle Dieu rachète l'homme pécheur et le délivre du joug de l'esclavage. Elle est dans le Christ Jésus, et par son sang (Rom. 3:24, 25; Éph. 1:7; 1 Pi. 1:18,19). Le croyant est ainsi délivré de toutes les servitudes: celles de Satan, de la loi, du péché, du monde et de la mort.

La Parole parle de la rédemption (ou du rachat) de l'âme et du corps du croyant (Rom. 8:23).

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La rédemption n'est ni temporelle, ni passagère; elle est pour l'éternité (Héb. 9:11, 12). La rédemption est donc une délivrance du pouvoir des ténèbres, jusqu'à l'entrée dans le royaume du Fils de l'amour du Père.

La rémission des péchés est le pardon accordé au croyant par le moyen de la foi en Christ; ses péchés ne lui sont plus imputés, car ils ont été portés par Christ à la croix. La rémission est définitive; elle est aussi en Christ et par son sang (Act 5:31; Héb. 9:22)

3.2.3 - Introduction aux gloires et aux dignités de Christ

L'apôtre, ayant introduit le Fils comme objet suprême de l'amour du Père, semble interrompre sa prière pour se concentrer sur les gloires et les dignités de Christ, dans les deux créations (voir tableau en fin de section suivante). Il n'est désormais plus question de nous, jusqu'au verset 21. Tout est ramené à Christ, la Tête du corps, que les Colossiens avaient un peu perdu de vue. Il est le Créateur, comme il est le rédempteur. Chef de la première création, il est aussi le commencement de la nouvelle. Venu comme homme sur la terre pour accomplir la rédemption (1v14), il demeure à jamais l'Homme glorifié dans le ciel. D'existence éternelle (1v17), il a été manifesté dans le temps, pour vivre selon la puissance d'une vie impérissable (Héb. 7:16).

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Colossiens 1:12-23

Le vrai christianisme n'est pas une religion, un ensemble de vérités auxquelles on adhère. C'est la connaissance expérimentale de quelqu'un. Le christianisme, c'est Christ connu et vécu. Nous avons été mis en relation avec une personne incomparable: le Fils de l'amour du Père. Il nous a donné un lot dans la lumière, une place dans le royaume, la rédemption, la rémission des péchés, la paix, que Christ a faite par son propre sang (v. 20). Mais ce qui fait la grandeur d'une telle œuvre, c'est la grandeur de Celui qui l'a accomplie. Et l'apôtre énumère comme d'une seule haleine les gloires de ce Bien-aimé: ce qu'Il est, ce qu'Il est devenu, ce qu'Il a fait de nous. Il affirme sa double primauté: sur l'univers créé et sur l'Assemblée, son double titre de Premier-né de toute la création (c'est-à-dire d'Héritier universel) et de Premier-né d'entre les morts. Par Lui la vie est sortie du néant en création. Et elle est aussi sortie du tombeau en rédemption. Il est le Créateur de toutes choses dans les cieux et sur la terre (v. 16). Il est le Réconciliateur de toutes choses sur la terre et dans les cieux (v. 20). Il est enfin le Dominateur qui doit tenir la première place en toutes choses. Dans les cieux, sur la terre et dans notre cœur (v. 18).

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Dans le chemin de l'obéissance et de la patience se trouve aussi la joie, en dépit de tout ce que nous avons à supporter, une joie qui vient d'en haut, la joie que Jésus goûtait dans sa communion constante avec son Père, la joie dont il dit: «Je vous ai dit ces choses, afin que ma joie soit en vous, et que votre joie soit accomplie» (Jean 15:11; 17:13). C'est une joie qui découle de la certitude que Jésus vit dans la gloire, que nous avons le glorieux privilège de demander au Père en son nom tout ce qui concerne les besoins de nos âmes; c'est une joie qui, résidant dans la connaissance de ce glorieux Sauveur, ne peut nous être ôtée (Jean 16:22-24). Nous pouvons ainsi comprendre ces exhortations réitérées de l'apôtre à nous réjouir dans le Seigneur, à être toujours joyeux (Phil. 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16), l'affirmation de Pierre: «Croyant en lui, vous vous réjouissez d'une joie ineffable et glorieuse» (1 Pierre 1:8), et la déclaration de Jean, que dans la communion du Père et du Fils, notre joie est accomplie (1 Jean 1:4).

Merveilleuse chose que la vie de Dieu dans le chrétien, vie bienheureuse lorsqu'elle est réalisée, témoignage puissant à sa force glorieuse opérant dans les âmes.

(v. 12) — Une vraie connaissance de Dieu et du sentiment de sa force glorieuse agissant en nous, pour nous faire poursuivre avec patience et constance notre course chrétienne selon la connaissance de la volonté de Dieu, produit la joie, et cette joie trouve son expression dans les actions de grâces. Elles sont l'effusion nécessaire d'un cœur qui goûte ce que Dieu a fait pour lui. Nous rendons «grâces au Père, qui nous a rendus capables de participer au lot des saints dans la lumière». Remarquons d'abord qu'il n'est pas dit «nous rendra capables». Il ne s'agit pas d'une chose à atteindre, et où l'on ferait des progrès, mais d'une position qui nous a été donnée, d'une grâce qui nous a été accordée et que nous possédons: «Il nous a rendus capables»: c'est un fait. Aussi Dieu est-il introduit ici, sous son nom de Père. S'agit-il de notre marche et de notre responsabilité, nous avons affaire avec Dieu, nous croissons par la connaissance de Dieu. Mais s'il est question de notre relation avec lui, c'est la grâce, et Dieu est présenté comme Père. C'est ainsi qu'il est écrit: «Voyez de quel amour le Père nous a fait don, que nous soyons appelés enfants de Dieu» (1 Jean 3:1).

La grâce dont il est parlé ici, c'est «de participer au lot des saints dans la lumière». «Dieu est lumière» (1 Jean 1:5); c'est le domaine où il habite; excluant toutes ténèbres. Cette lumière, c'est la sainteté et la pureté parfaites, en dehors de toute souillure, manifestant en même temps tout ce qui est ou non conforme à sa nature. Or, on ne peut être en relation avec Dieu que dans cette lumière (1 Jean 1:6, 7); et pour cela, il faut être «saint», à part comme lui de la souillure. Le «lot», la part des saints est dans la lumière, en Dieu lui-même. Qui pourrait se vanter d'y atteindre? Dieu seul, par sa toute-puissance, pourrait nous en rendre capables ou dignes, et il l'a fait dans sa grâce. Notre part, à chacun de nous, est là; nous sommes avec les saints là où Dieu se trouve, dans la lumière. C'est la région céleste et bienheureuse, où nous avons le privilège de demeurer et de nous mouvoir. Qu'il nous soit donné de le réaliser.

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(v. 13) — Ce n'est pas là que nous étions dans notre état naturel. Nous nous trouvions sous le «pouvoir des ténèbres», sous l'empire et la domination de Satan (voyez Actes 26:18, et Éph. 6:12), qui est le prince de ces ténèbres (2 Cor. 4:4). Les ténèbres où Satan agit et exerce son pouvoir sur l'homme devenu son esclave par le péché, sont en contraste frappant avec la lumière où Dieu habite, qui est sa nature même, et où il donne par grâce une part aux saints. Il a agi envers eux dans sa grâce infinie et, intervenant dans sa toute-puissance, il les a «délivrés» de la puissance sous laquelle ils étaient. Du domaine où Satan règne, brisant leurs liens et ouvrant la porte de leur obscur cachot, il les a introduits dans le domaine de la lumière. Apprécions-nous comme nous le devons cette grâce immense?

Mais il y a plus encore. «Dieu est amour» aussi bien que «lumière», et le domaine de la lumière est aussi celui de l'amour. Nous ayant «délivrés du pouvoir des ténèbres, il nous a transportés dans le royaume du Fils de son amour». C'est encore un fait, c'est une position dans laquelle nous ont placés sa souveraine grâce et sa puissance. C'est une chose sur laquelle nous ne saurions trop insister pour la joie et la paix de nos âmes: une part dans la lumière, une place dans le royaume du Fils de son amour. Tout vient du Père, nous a été conféré par lui.

«Transportés» indique comme un effort de la puissance qui nous délivre, qui nous arrache au pouvoir de l'ennemi, et qui, lui ayant ravi sa proie, l'emporte bien loin de son atteinte, dans un lieu où son pouvoir vient se briser. Nous y sommes sous la garde d'un amour tout puissant. Ainsi que quelqu'un l'a dit: «Ce n'est pas là une règle judaïque pour l'homme; c'est une opération de la puissance de Dieu, qui nous traite comme étant complètement et par nature esclaves de Satan et des ténèbres, et nous place par un acte de cette puissance dans une position et une relation toutes nouvelles à l'égard de lui-même».

Remarquons que nous retrouvons bien ici en principe ce qui est exprimé en Éph. 1:4, 5, et 2:1-6. Mais là c'est la chose elle-même telle qu'elle est dans la pensée de Dieu, selon ses conseils; dans les Colossiens, c'est le fait que nous y avons part.

«Le royaume du Fils de son amour»; c'est la seule fois que cette expression se trouve dans le Nouveau Testament. Le royaume est présenté sous différents aspects dans l'Écriture. C'est le royaume des cieux, le royaume de Dieu, le royaume du Père, le royaume du Fils de l'homme. Dans ce dernier cas, il s'agit de la manifestation glorieuse du Seigneur Jésus pour juger et gouverner la terre (Apoc. 11:15; Matt. 25:31, etc.). Ici, dans notre verset, nous voyons la relation éternelle du Seigneur avec le Père, comme son Fils unique, de même essence que lui, et l'Objet de son amour ineffable. Le royaume est la sphère actuelle, invisible et céleste, où cette relation est manifestée et où elle est connue de ceux qui y sont introduits, qui y ont été transportés. C'est la Personne adorable du Fils qui nous y est présentée comme les délices éternelles du Père; c'est plus que la gloire, ou bien c'en est la partie la plus élevée, la plus excellente, c'est l'amour du sein du Père, se déversant sur son Fils. Et c'est là où nous sommes amenés, pour

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que nous le contemptions et l'adorions. Combien cela rattache le cœur à Jésus, et affranchit du monde et des ordonnances! C'est à ce Fils de l'amour du Père que les Colossiens étaient unis, et que nous le sommes! Nous sommes dans le royaume de l'amour; où cet amour règne, où il domine tout, où il est la règle et la loi; nous appartenons à ce royaume bienheureux. Puisse nous en goûter les délices, apprécier toujours plus la position que la grâce nous a donnée en nous y plaçant.

(v. 14) — «En qui nous avons la rédemption, la rémission des péchés». Voilà la base sur laquelle, en justice, nous avons pu être rendus capables d'avoir notre part dans la lumière et une entrée et une place dans le royaume du Fils de l'amour du Père. La rédemption est en même temps la manifestation de l'amour divin envers nous. Cette rédemption, ce rachat, a été accomplie par lui, le Fils, par l'œuvre de la croix, et quant à son efficacité et à ses fruits permanents, elle est et demeure en lui. Le résultat personnel en est «la rémission des péchés». Pardonnés en vertu de la rédemption accomplie, nous avons part au lot des saints dans la lumière, nous sommes délivrés de la puissance de Satan et placés dans le royaume du Fils, où l'amour a sa pleine et souveraine manifestation. Quelle grâce!

Spanish:

Un Comentario Textual Al Nuevo Testamento Griego:¹³

1:12 τῷ πατρί {B}

Este versículo presenta una interesante madeja de lecturas variantes (véanse también los comentarios siguientes). La lectura que explica mejor el origen de las otras es τῷ πατρί, que cuenta con el apoyo de un grupo diversificado de testigos (P61 A C* D K P Ψ 33 81* 1739* it^{b, d, mon} vg sir^h cop^{sa}, bo got arm et). Sin duda, lo extraño de referirse a Dios simplemente como ὁ πατήρ, sin que en el contexto inmediato se haya mencionado a Cristo, habrá conducido a los copistas a añadir τοῦ Χριστοῦ (330 451 2492), o (τῷ) θεῷ, en aposición (x it^g sir^p Speculum) o en relación con καί (C3 81^c 88 104 614 1739^{mg} 2495 al). Digno de mención es el hecho de que P⁴⁶ y B coincidan en poner ἅμα antes de τῷ πατρί.

1:12 ἰκανώσαντι {B}

En lugar de ἰκανώσαντι, lectura que cuenta con el sólido apoyo de P⁴⁶ x A C D^c K L P casi todos los mss minúsculos vg sir^{p, h} cop^{bo} al, varios testigos, principalmente occidentales (D* F G 33 436 1175 it^{d, g} cop^{sa} got arm et), tienen la lectura καλέσαντι. Esta última lectura puede haberse originado por un accidente de transcripción (ya que es fácil confundir τωικανωσαντι con τωκαλεσαντι), o por la sustitución deliberada de una expresión conocida por una menos

⁸Bruce M. Metzger, *Un Comentario Textual Al Nuevo Testamento Griego*, cuarta edición revisada. (Stuttgart; New York: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 549–550.

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conocida (en el Nuevo Testamento hay un solo caso más de ἰκανόω, y se encuentra en 2 Co 3:6). La lectura de B es una combinación temprana de ambas variantes (καλέσαντι καὶ ἰκανώσαντι).

1:12 ὑμᾶς {B}

La mayoría del Comité consideró que ἡμᾶς (A C D G K P Ψ 33 614 Biz Lect it vg sir^{p,h} cop^{bo} al) es una asimilación con el v. 13, y por lo tanto prefirió ὑμᾶς (⋈ B 1739 sir^{hmg} cop^{sa} got arm et).

1:14 ἀπολύτρωσιν {A}

Textus Receptus, que sigue a varios testigos de carácter secundario, toma de Ef 1:7 la frase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, y la interpola. Si la frase hubiera estado presente en el texto original, no habría habido ninguna razón para que los escribas la omitieran.

{B} indica que el texto es casi seguro

- sir syr(iac)
- got goth(ic)
- et eth(iopic)
- sir syr(iac)
- al alia (otros testigos)

4/1. indica que el texto es casi seguro

- mss manuscritos
- sir syr(iac)
- al alia (otros testigos)
- got goth(ic)
- et eth(iopic)

4/2. indica que el texto es casi seguro

Biz Bizantino

- sir syr(iac)
- al alia (otros testigos)
- sir syr(iac)
- got goth(ic)

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▸ et eth(iopic)

4/3. significa que el texto es confiable

Conozca Su Biblia:¹⁴

B. Acción de gracias y oración (1:3–14)

La carta continúa con una acción de gracias (1:3–8) y oración por los colosenses (1:9–14). Estas partes de la carta tienen la función de introducción (exordium). Pablo alude en esta introducción a los temas a tratar en el resto de la carta. A continuación presentamos estos temas, y comentamos brevemente sobre éstos y dónde los encontramos en otras parte de la carta. (Lo que aparece en letra negrita se refiere a la sección que estudiamos ahora, y las otras referencias señalan otros lugares de la epístola donde cada tema aparece).

1. El señorío y la obra de Cristo (1:3, 13–14; 1:15–22; 2:9–15, 19; 3:1–3, 11)

Pablo menciona el tema del señorío y la obra de Cristo al inicio de su acción de gracias al referirse a Dios como «Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo» (1:3)—aunque ya en su saludo característico de desear gracia y paz lo había mencionado. Estratégicamente Pablo establece el señorío de Cristo desde el inicio de su carta, ya que es este el punto más importante a tratar. Recordemos que uno de los errores que las falsas enseñanzas promovían en la iglesia de Colosas era el no reconocer la supremacía de Cristo. Encontramos este tema nuevamente en la parte final del exordium, donde Pablo declara que Dios nos libró del poder de las tinieblas y nos trasladó «al reino de su amado Hijo, en quien tenemos redención por su sangre, el perdón de pecados» (1:13–14). La palabra «trasladar» conlleva la idea de un rey victorioso que traslada al pueblo conquistado a su reino. Aquí el reino es de Cristo. Es más común que Pablo hable del «reino de Dios» en sus cartas (Ro 14:17; 1 Co 6:9, 15:50; Gl 5:21), aunque en 1 Corintios 15:24–28 habla del reino de Cristo, que finalmente entregará al Padre. La base para este traslado al reino es la persona de Cristo y su obra redentora, no alguna filosofía. Es por esto que en los versículos que siguen a la introducción Pablo trata este tema ampliamente, al presentar un himno a Cristo que habla de su obra reconciliadora y de su preeminencia (1:15–20). Pablo vuelve a retomar el tema de la supremacía de Cristo en el capítulo 2 (2:9–15), después de amonestarlos para que no sean engañados con «filosofías y huecas sutilezas» (2:8). Asimismo, al presentarle a la iglesia una serie de exhortaciones éticas (3:5–4:1), las introduce primero haciendo un llamado a poner «la mira en las cosas de arriba» (3:1) y estableciendo nuevamente la preeminencia de Cristo y su obra en la persona creyente (3:1–4).

2. La fe, el amor y la esperanza en Cristo (1:4, 8; 1:23, 27; 2:5–6, 12; 3:4, 14, 24)

¹⁴Awilda González-Tejera, *Filipenses, Colosenses, 1Y2 Tesalonicenses, Filemón*, Conozca Su Biblia (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 49–54.

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Pablo introduce los temas del amor, la fe y la esperanza en Cristo desde el inicio en su acción de gracias. Es característico en Pablo presentar estos tres elementos juntos (1 Co 13:13; Gl 5:5-6; Ef 4:2-5). Pablo conocía de la fe y el amor de esta iglesia. Recordemos que Epafras le ha informado sobre los colosenses (1:8). Nótese que esta fe es «en Cristo» (1:3). Esto habla de en quién está fundamentada la fe y de la verticalidad de esa fe. El amor es para «todos los santos» (1:4), lo que indica una relación horizontal. Se puede decir que la verticalidad de la persona creyente en su fe y relación con Dios le lleva a una respuesta práctica en su relación con las demás personas. Lo que causa este amor y fe en los colosenses es la esperanza que «está guardada en los cielos» (1:5). Esta frase denota seguridad de la gloria venidera. La esperanza es Cristo (1:27; 3:4) y está en los cielos porque Cristo está ahí a la diestra de Dios (3:1).

En el v. 4 Pablo vuelve a reconocer la fe de sus destinatarios. Aunque Pablo aplaude la fe y esperanza de los colosenses, más adelante les exhorta a permanecer firmes en ellas (1:23) y a vestirse de amor (3:14). Este llamado a la firmeza en la esperanza, fe y amor tiene relación directa con lo que amenaza a la iglesia. Posiblemente las falsas enseñanzas que estaban penetrando en la iglesia intentaban robar o negar estos aspectos del mensaje del evangelio, y Pablo quiere dejar claro que el evangelio centrado en Cristo da seguridad.

3. La palabra verdadera del evangelio (1:5; 1:23, 25; 3:16; 4:3)

La palabra verdadera del evangelio había llegado a los colosenses. Nótese que Pablo usa el adjetivo «verdadera» (1:5) para describir la palabra del evangelio. La idea veterotestamentaria de que los mandamientos de Dios son verdaderos (Sal 119:43, 142, 160) está presente aquí. El evangelio es el verdadero mensaje. Esto está en contraposición con las falsas doctrinas y filosofías que amenazan a la iglesia. La «gracia de Dios en verdad» (1:6) que oyeron se refiere nuevamente a la palabra del evangelio. Observemos que esta gracia es «en verdad», repitiéndose la idea de que la palabra es verdadera. Los colosenses habían recibido esta palabra a través de Epafras, del cual Pablo dice que es «consiervo» y «ministro» (1:8). Estos términos son los que Pablo usa para referirse a sí mismo y a quienes trabajan con él. Al reconocer a Epafras de esta forma, confirma que el evangelio presentado por él a los colosenses tiene la aprobación apostólica, lo que implica a su vez tener la aprobación divina. Para Pablo es crítico que los colosenses entiendan que han recibido la palabra de verdad, ya que hay quienes quieren engañarles con enseñanzas falsas.

Por cuanto el evangelio es la palabra verdadera ha producido fruto en los colosenses. Pablo personifica esta palabra cuando dice que «lleva fruto y crece» (1:6) desde el día en que los colosenses la oyeron. Con la imagen agrícola de «llevar fruto», Pablo les muestra lo que ya ha ocurrido en sus vidas. Por lo tanto, cuando más adelante les inste a llevar fruto y seguir creciendo en el conocimiento de Dios (1:9-10; 2:2; 3:10), esta iglesia podrá comprender que esto es alcanzable por cuanto la palabra del evangelio ya está produciendo frutos en sus vidas.

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Aquí en Colosenses «llevar fruto» debe referirse al desarrollo de las virtudes cristianas (1:10), que es una de las formas en que Pablo usa esta imagen. El llevar fruto también puede referirse a traer otras personas al evangelio.

4/4. El crecimiento en el conocimiento de la gracia y voluntad de Dios, (1:6, 1:9–10; 1:27; 2:2; 3:10; 4:3–4), y en sabiduría e inteligencia espiritual (1:9; 1:28; 2:3, 19; 3:16; 4:5)

Los temas del conocimiento y la sabiduría espiritual aparecen repetidamente en esta carta. Precisamente porque Pablo está hablando acerca de personas que quieren engañar a la iglesia con conocimiento falso es que este tema es predominante. Pablo afirma lo que los colosenses ya tenían: habían conocido «la gracia de Dios en verdad» (1:6). Como hemos visto, esto lo dice en relación al evangelio (1:5). El mensaje que han recibido es el verdadero, y se centra en la gracia de Dios que es verdadera. Además, Pablo ora para que los colosenses puedan tener conocimiento, sabiduría e inteligencia (1:9–10). Frente al «conocimiento» de las falsas filosofías, Pablo habla del conocimiento de la voluntad de Dios y de sabiduría espiritual (no terrenal o humana).

Estos temas se repiten cuando habla de su ministerio (1:25–2:3; 4:3–4) y del crecimiento que da Dios al cuerpo (2:19). Además, el tema de la sabiduría lo encontramos nuevamente en las exhortaciones éticas (3:16; 4:5), y también el del conocimiento (3:10). El verdadero conocimiento y la verdadera sabiduría conducen a vivir como agrada a Dios. En el trasfondo veterotestamentario el conocimiento de Dios lleva a obedecer sus mandamientos. En el Antiguo Testamento el conocimiento y la sabiduría se relacionan con la obediencia práctica. Pablo afirma este mismo principio en su carta.

5. El andar como es digno del Señor (1:10; 2:6–8, 20–23; 3:1–4:1, 5)

El tema de andar como es digno del Señor es característico de Pablo (como vimos en la carta a los Filipenses), y en esta carta está directamente relacionado con los temas del conocimiento, la sabiduría y la inteligencia. Los vv. 1:9–10 indican que cuando hay este conocimiento y sabiduría es posible andar como es digno y así agradar al Señor. Este tema se repite cuando Pablo les llama a andar en el Señor «arraigados en él, sobreedificados en él y confirmados en la fe» (2:6–7). A su vez el agradar al Señor tiene implicaciones éticas. Es por esto que Pablo les da a sus destinatarios una serie de exhortaciones prácticas (3:5–4:1, 5).

6. El ser fortalecidos con poder (1:11; 1:29; 2:6)

Este tópico se presenta en el contexto del tema del conocimiento y sabiduría. Cuando hay conocimiento y sabiduría la persona creyente es fortalecida con poder, y esto «conforme a la potencia» (1:11) de la gloria de Dios. El conocimiento de la voluntad de Dios equipa con poder divino para vivir la vida cristiana. A su vez, el poder de Dios operando en la persona creyente

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le habilita para perseverar y tener paciencia y gozo (1:11–12), aún más en las circunstancias presentes de los colosenses y en su espera de la herencia por recibir (1:12). La frase la «herencia de los santos» (1:12) puede ser una referencia a la promesa a los israelitas de heredar la tierra prometida, y Pablo usa esta idea para hablar de la herencia en Cristo. También puede ser una metáfora de cuando al retirarse de sus labores, a los soldados romanos se les concedían terrenos por causa de la labor realizada. Dios concede una herencia no merecida o ganada, y esta herencia no es terrenal, sino celestial.

En esta introducción a la carta, Pablo presenta el tema de la fortaleza en el poder de Dios en oposición al poder de las tinieblas, del cual la persona creyente ha sido librada (1:13). Además, en el v. 1:29, al hablar de su ministerio, el apóstol afirma que él trabaja según la fuerza de Dios, quien actúa poderosamente en él, presentándose a sí mismo como ejemplo. Pablo quiere que los colosenses estén equipados y fortalecidos en Dios para enfrentar las falsas enseñanzas y para vivir la vida cristiana.

7. La liberación del poder de las tinieblas (1:13; 2:14–15; 3:5–9)

La temática de liberación del poder de las tinieblas se presenta en contraposición con la obra de Cristo (1:13). La obra de Dios no es sólo esperanza, sino que comienza con la liberación del dominio de las tinieblas. Esta liberación implica recibir redención y el perdón de pecados (1:14). Este tema se ve nuevamente cuando Pablo habla de la obra de Cristo (2:14–15) en el contexto de amonestación sobre las filosofías que estaban penetrando en la iglesia (2:8), y en el contexto de exhortaciones éticas cuando llama a los colosenses a hacer morir lo terrenal en sus vidas (3:5–10). El ser liberado del poder de las tinieblas debe afectar positivamente tanto el intelecto o conocimiento como la conducta.

8. El dar gracias (1:3; 1:12; 2:7; 3:15; 4:2)

Además de iniciar la introducción a la carta con una acción de gracias (1:3), Pablo menciona este tema nuevamente en otras cuatro ocasiones. En la misma introducción Pablo ora para que los colosenses puedan dar «gracias al Padre» por hacerles «participantes de la herencia de los santos en luz» (1:12). Es por esto que los colosenses deben tener una actitud de agradecimiento por la obra de Dios en sus vidas y por la herencia en Cristo que Dios les ha concedido. Más adelante, al exhortar a los colosenses a andar arraigados en Jesucristo, Pablo les insta a abundar en acciones de gracias (2:7). En la sección de exhortaciones éticas les pide que sean agradecidos (3:15), y casi finalizando su escrito les insta a perseverar en la oración con acción de gracias (4:2).

Podemos decir que los temas que Pablo presenta en esta introducción a su carta muestran la importancia de establecer claramente la preeminencia y el valor de la obra de Cristo, lo cual es fundamental para confrontar las filosofías y falsas doctrinas que amenazan a la iglesia.

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Pablo claramente habla de la palabra del evangelio y lo que ésta hace en la persona creyente, llevándole a crecer en conocimiento y sabiduría. Esto le ayuda a no dejarse engañar por enseñanzas falsas, a vivir la vida cristiana como es digno, y a tener fortaleza en el poder de Dios. Vemos cómo estratégicamente el apóstol introduce los temas a tratar y cómo estos están directamente relacionados con su preocupación por la iglesia y sus necesidades.

1:11 «fortalecidos con todo poder» Este es el tercer PARTICIPIO PRESENTE que significa «recibiendo todo el poder». Al igual que la salvación, la vida cristiana es un regalo sobrenatural, no un enorme esfuerzo o compromiso humano sin ayuda alguna (ver Gá 3:1–3). Los creyentes deben rendirse al Espíritu para producir vidas santas y eficaces (ver Ef 5:18). Este término siempre es usado para la fuerza sobrenatural (ver Ef 1:19; Fil 4:13).

- «según la potencia de su gloria» Esta frase describe la manera en como los creyentes deben ser «fortalecidos con todo poder». Deben rendirse al Espíritu de Dios, ¡la energía, poder y la gloria son de Él!
- «toda perseverancia y paciencia» Uno se pregunta si estas fueron usadas como sinónimos ya que tienen enfoques ligeramente diferentes. Perseverancia (hupomone) significaba una resistencia paciente y constancia, mientras que paciencia (makrothumia) significaba soportar pacientemente todo mal o sufrimiento. Ambas eran advertencias frecuentes de parte de Pablo (ver 2 Co 6:4, 6; 2 Ti 3:10). La única manera que los creyentes son capaces de producir estas dos cualidades es a través del poder de Dios. Estos términos eran usados con frecuencia para describir la manera cómo Dios trata a la humanidad caída (ver Ro 2:4; 9:22; 1 Co 6:6) y cómo los humanos redimidos deberían tratarse los unos a los otros (ver Gá 5:22–23; Ef 4:2; Col 3:12).
- «gozo» Esto se puede relacionar gramaticalmente con el v. 11 (LBLA, NTV, BJB) o v. 12 (RVR60).

1:12 «dando gracias» Este es el último de los cuatro PARTICIPIOS PRESENTES de los vv. 10–12 los cuales describen el andar dignamente como un agradecimiento constante (ver 3:17; Ef 5:20; 1 Ts 5:18). El agradecimiento es una característica de la vida llena del Espíritu.

- «al Padre» Los cristianos necesitan recordar constantemente que el enfoque del NT en el ministerio del Hijo no debería disminuir su adoración de Dios Padre. Su carácter y gracia son los que se exhiben en Jesús. Él fue quien envió y sustentó al Hijo (ver Ef 1:3–14 y 15–23).

Hay algunas variaciones en los manuscritos griegos de esta frase. Sin embargo, esta lectura tiene como soporte los antiguos manuscritos griegos P61, A, C, D, K y P al igual que la traducción Vulgata latina. Estas variaciones no afectan el sentido, verdad o confiabilidad del texto.

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«ha capacitado»

RVR60, NTV

«aptos»

NVI

«ha facultado»

BJL

«capaces»

La Carta de Pablo a Los Colosenses:¹⁵

Este término es usado solamente aquí y en 2 Corintios 3:5–6 (el adjetivo es usado en 2 Co 2:16; 3:5 y 2 Ti 2:2). Dios nos ha calificado (1) declarándonos justos en Cristo (justificación y santificación posicional) y (2) desarrollando en nosotros la imagen de Cristo (santificación progresiva).

- «nos» Los textos griegos antiguos están igualmente divididos entre «nos» y «os». El «os» pudo haber sido escrito aquí por un copista para igualar el v. 13.
- «para compartir la herencia» Herencia significa literalmente «terreno». En el AT Dios prometió a Abraham una tierra y una simiente (ver Gn 12:12). El AT se enfoca en la tierra; el NT se enfoca en la simiente. En el AT la tierra de Palestina fue dada como una herencia tribal a todos los hijos de Jacob, con excepción de los levitas porque ellos servían a Dios en un rol único (ver Nm 4:45): Dios mismo era su herencia (Nm 18:24). En cierto sentido todo el pueblo de Dios en el AT eran sacerdotes (Éx 19:4–6). Eran un real sacerdocio para acercar a todo el mundo a Dios. El pueblo de Dios en el NT es nombrado en términos del AT como sacerdotes (1 Pe 2:5, 9; Ap 1:6). Así como los levitas tenían a Dios como su herencia, de igual manera ahora lo tienen todos los creyentes del NT.
- «de los santos» Ver Tema especial: LOS SANTOS (hagios).
- «en luz» Esto era (1) una declaración ética (ver Jn 3:19), o (2) una declaración sobre la imagen de Cristo en el creyente en oposición a los demonios (ver Ef 6:12; Hch 26:18).

1:13–14 Estos versículos cumplen la función de una transición hacia el maravilloso credo cristológico de los vv. 15–20. Describe lo que Dios Padre ha hecho por los creyentes por medio del Hijo.

¹⁵Bob Utley, La Carta de Pablo a Los Colosenses Y a Filemón: Pablo Encadenado, El Evangelio Liberado: Cartas Desde La Prisión, ed. Patricia Cabral and Gisela Ramos, trans. José González, Comentario Del Intérprete Bíblico (Marshall, TX: Lecciones Bíblicas Internacional, 2015), Col 1:11–14.

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1:13 «Él nos libró» Este INDICATIVO AORISTO MEDIO (deponente) es usado en el sentido de rescatado (NTV).

- «del dominio de las tinieblas» Literalmente esto es «autoridad (exousia) de las tinieblas» (ver 1:12; Lc 22:53). La luz y las tinieblas eran usadas a menudo en el judaísmo y en los Rollos del Mar Muerto para representar los dos mundos espirituales del bien y del mal (ver Jn 3:19–21). Pablo usó este término varias veces en Colosenses (ver 1:13, 16; 2:10, 15).
- «nos trasladó» Esto es literalmente «reasentar» o «reubicar». Ambos verbos en este versículo son AORISTOS. Estas son cosas que Dios ya cumplió para los creyentes.
- «reino» Jesús usó este concepto como una realidad presente con una consumación futura. ¡El contexto enfatiza lo que los creyentes ya posee en Cristo (ver Ef 2:5–6)!

Pablo no usaba la frase exacta de Jesús «el reino de Dios» a menudo, posiblemente porque los gentiles no habrían entendido este concepto judío.

- «de su Hijo amado» Dios Padre le dio este título a Jesús en el momento de su bautismo y transfiguración (ver Mt 3:17; 17:5). Jesús es el Hijo único (monogenes, ver Jn 1:8, 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9). Los creyentes son hijos a través de Él.

1:14 «en quien tenemos» Este es un PRESENTE INDICATIVO ACTIVO. En Cristo, los creyentes tienen y continúan teniendo la bendición familiar de Dios.

- «redención» Esto pudo haber sido una alusión a los términos del AT (paduh, «liberar o redimir», y gaal, «liberar con la ayuda de un miembro de la familia» [go'el]). Jesús nos compró de la esclavitud (ver Is 53:11–12; Mr 10:45; Ef 1:7). La redención es una realidad que está presente hoy (ver Ef 1:7) y una consumación en el futuro (Ef 4:30).

Ver TEMA ESPECIAL: RESCATE-REDENCIÓN

- «el perdón de los pecados» Había varios términos griegos para «perdón». Éste (aphesis) significaba «echar fuera», lo cual era una alusión al ritual del día de expiación (ver Lv 16). El cordero expiatorio llevaba consigo simbólicamente los pecados del pueblo.

Aprendemos de las Herejías de Ireneo, 1:21:2 que algunos maestros gnósticos separaban la redención de la remisión debido a un factor de tiempo y madurez. Pablo podría estar refiriéndose a esta mentira.

La versión RVR60 agrega la frase «por su sangre», la cual fue agregada por escribas posteriores basados en el paralelo en Efesios 1:7.

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NTV La versión Nueva Traducción Viviente

BJL La Biblia de Jerusalén Latinoamericana

RVR60 La Biblia Reina-Valera 1960

A Códice Alejandrino

C Códice Efraemita

D Códice Bezae

LBLA La Biblia de las Américas

RVR60 La Biblia Reina-Valera 1960

NTV La versión Nueva Traducción Viviente

NVI La Nueva Versión Internacional

BJL La Biblia de Jerusalén Latinoamericana

NTV La versión Nueva Traducción Viviente

RVR60 La Biblia Reina-Valera 1960

LATIN:

Homilies of St. John Chrysostom:¹⁶

HOMILY II

COLOSSIANS 1:9, 10.

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding; to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

“FOR this cause.” What cause? Because we heard of your faith and love, because we have good hopes, we are hopeful to ask for future blessings also. For as in the games we cheer

¹⁶John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Colossians,” in Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. Ashworth and John Albert Broadus, vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 264–270.

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on those most who are near upon gaining the victory, just so doth Paul also most exhort those who have achieved the greater part.

“Since the day we heard it,” saith he, “we do not cease to pray for you.” Not for one day do we pray for you, nor yet for two, nor three. Herein he both shows his love, and gives them a gentle hint that they had not yet arrived at the end. For the words, “that ye may be filled,” are of this significancy. And observe, I pray, the prudence of this blessed one. He nowhere says that they are destitute of everything, but that they are deficient; everywhere the words, “that ye may be filled,” show this. And again, “unto all pleasing, in every good work” (ver. 11), and again, “strengthened with all power,” and again, “unto all patience and longsuffering”; for the constant addition of “all” bears witness to their doing well in part, though, it might be, not in all. And, “that ye may be filled,” he saith; not, “that ye may receive,” for they had received; but “that ye may be filled” with what as yet was lacking. Thus both the rebuke was given without offense, and the praise did not suffer them to sink down, and become supine, as if it had been complete. But what is, “that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will”? That through the Son we should be brought unto Him, and no more through Angels. Now that ye must be brought unto Him, ye have learnt, but it remains for you to learn this, and why He sent the Son. For had it been that we were to have been saved by Angels,¹ He would not have sent Him, would not have given Him up. “In all spiritual wisdom,” he saith, “and understanding.” For since the philosophers deceived them; I wish you, he saith, to be in spiritual wisdom, not after the wisdom of men. But if in order to know the will of God, there needs spiritual wisdom; to know His Essence what it is, there is need of continual prayers.

And Paul shows here, that since that time he has been praying, and has not yet prevailed, and yet has not desisted; for the words, “from the day we heard it,” show this. But it implies condemnation to them, if, from that time, even assisted by prayers, they had not amended themselves. “And making request,” he says, with much earnestness, for this the expression “ye knew”² shows. But it is necessary still to know somewhat besides. “To walk worthily,” he says, “of the Lord.” Here he speaks of life and its works, for so he doth also everywhere: with faith he always couples conduct. “Unto all pleasing.” And how, “all pleasing”? “Bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Seeing, saith he, He hath fully revealed Himself unto you, and seeing ye have received knowledge so great; do ye then show forth a conduct worthy of the faith; for this needeth elevated conduct, greater far than the old dispensation. For, he that hath known God, and been counted worthy to be God’s servant, yea, rather, even His Son, see how great virtue he needeth. “Strengthened with all power.” He is here speaking of trials and persecutions. We pray that ye might be filled with strength, that ye faint not for sorrow, nor despair. “According to the might of His glory.” But that ye may take up again such forwardness as it becometh the power of His glory to give. “Unto all patience and long-suffering.” What he saith is of this sort. Summarily, he saith, we pray that ye may lead a

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life of virtue, and worthy of your citizenship, and may stand firmly, being strengthened as it is reasonable to be strengthened by God. For this cause he doth not as yet touch upon doctrines, but dwells upon life, wherein he had nothing to charge them with, and having praised them where praise was due, he then comes down to accusation. And this he does everywhere: when he is about writing to any with somewhat to blame them for, and somewhat to praise, he first praises them, and then comes down to his charges. For he first conciliates the hearer, and frees his accusation from all suspicion, and shows that for his own part he could have been glad to praise them throughout; but by the necessity of the case is forced into saying what he does. And so he doth in the first¹ Epistle to the Corinthians. For after having exceedingly praised them as loving him, even from the case of the fornicator, he comes down to accuse them. But in that to the Galatians not so, but the reverse. Yea, rather, if one should look close into it, even there the accusation follows upon praise. For seeing he had no good deeds of theirs then to speak of, and the charge was an exceeding grave one, and they were every one of them corrupted; and were able to bear it because they were strong, he begins with accusation, saying, “I marvel.”² (Gal. 1:6.) So that this also is praise. But afterwards he praises them, not for what they were, but what they had been, saying, “If possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes, and given them to me.” (Gal. 5:15).

“Bearing fruit,” he saith: this hath reference to works. “Strengthened”: this to trials. “Unto all patience and longsuffering”: longsuffering towards one another, patience towards those without. For longsuffering is toward those whom we can requite, but patience toward those whom we cannot. For this reason the term patient is never applied to God, but longsuffering frequently; as this same blessed one saith other where in his writings, “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering?” “Unto all pleasing.” Not, one while, and afterwards not so. “In all spiritual wisdom,” he saith, “and understanding.” For otherwise it is not possible to know His will. Although indeed they thought they had His will; but that wisdom was not spiritual. “To walk,” saith he, “worthily of the Lord.” For this is the way of the best life. For he that hath understood God’s love to man, (and he doth understand it if he have seen the Son delivered up,) will have greater forwardness. And besides, we pray not for this alone that ye may know, but that ye may show forth your knowledge in works; for he that knows without doing, is even in the way to punishment. “To walk,” he saith, that is, always, not once, but continually. As to walk is necessary for us, so also is to live rightly. And when on this subject he constantly uses the term “walk,” and with reason, showing that such is the life set before us. But not of this sort is that of the world. And great too is the praise. “To walk,” he saith, “worthily of the Lord,” and “in every good work,” so as to be always advancing, and nowhere standing still, and, with a metaphor, “bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God,” that ye might be in such measure “strengthened,” according to the might of God, as is possible for man to be. “Through His power,” great is the consolation.—He said not strength, but “power,” which is greater: “through the power,” he saith, “of His glory,” because that

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everywhere His glory hath the power. He thus comforts him that is under reproach: and again, “To walk worthily of the Lord.” He saith of the Son, that He hath the power everywhere both in heaven and in earth, because His glory reigneth everywhere. He saith not “strengthened” simply, but so, as they might be expected to be who are in the service of so strong a Master. “In the knowledge of God.” And at the same time he touches in passing upon the methods of knowledge; for this is to be in error, not to know God as one ought; or he means, so as to increase in the knowledge of God. For if he that hath not known the Son, knoweth not the Father either; justly is there need of increased³ knowledge: for there is no use in life without this. “Unto all patience and longsuffering,” he saith, “with joy, giving thanks” (ver. 12) unto God. Then being about to exhort them, he makes no mention of what by and by shall be laid up for them; he did hint at this however in the beginning of the Epistle, saying, “Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens” (ver. 5): but in this place he mentions the things which were already theirs, for these are the causes of the other. And he doth the same in many places. For that which hath already come to pass gains belief, and more carries the hearer along with it. “With joy,” he saith, “giving thanks” to God. The connection is this. We cease not praying for you, and giving thanks for the benefits already received.

Seest thou how he bears himself along into speaking of the Son? For if “we give thanks with much joy,” it is a great thing that is spoken of. For it is possible to give thanks only from fear, it is possible to give thanks even when in sorrow. For instance; Job gave thanks indeed, but in anguish; and he said, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away.” (Job 1:21.) For, let not any say that what had come to pass pained him not, nor clothed him with dejection of soul; nor let his great praise be taken away from that righteous one. But when it is thus, it is not for fear, nor because of His being Lord alone, but for the very nature of the things themselves, that we give thanks. “To Him who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” He hath said a great thing. What has been given, he saith, is of this nature; He hath not only given, but also made us strong to receive. Now by saying, “Who made us meet,” he showed that the thing was one of great weight. For example, were some low person to have become a king, he hath it in his power to give a governorship to whom he will; and this is the extent of his power, to give the dignity: he cannot also make the person fit for the office, and oftentimes the honor makes one so preferred even ridiculous. If however he have both conferred on one the dignity, and also made him fit for the honor, and equal to the administration, then indeed the thing is an honor. This then is what he also saith here; that He hath not only given us the honor, but hath also made us strong enough to receive it.

For the honor here is twofold, the giving, and the making fit for the gift. He said not, gave, simply; but, “made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” that is, who hath appointed us a place with the saints. But he did not say simply placed us, but hath given us to enjoy even the very same things, for “the portion”¹ is that which each one

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receives. For it is possible to be in the same city, and yet not enjoy the same things; but to have the same “portion,” and yet not enjoy the same, is impossible. It is possible to be in the same inheritance, and yet not to have the same portion; for instance, all we (clergy) are in the inheritance,² but we have not all the same portion.³ But here he doth not say this, but with the inheritance adds the portion also. But why doth he call it inheritance (or lot)? To show that by his own achievements no one obtains the kingdom, but as a lot⁴ is rather the result of good luck,⁵ so in truth is it here also. For a life so good as to be counted worthy of the kingdom doth no one show forth, but the whole is of His free gift. Therefore He saith, “When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants, for we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10.) “To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,”—he means, both the future and the present light,⁶—that is, in knowledge. He seems to me to be speaking at once of both the present and the future. Then he shows of what things we have been counted worthy. For this is not the only marvel, that we are counted worthy of the kingdom; but it should also be added who we are that are so counted; for it is not unimportant. And he doth this in the Epistle to the Romans, saying, “For scarcely for a righteous⁷ man will one die, but peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die.” (Rom. 5:7.)

4/5. 13. “Who delivered us,” he saith, “from the power of darkness.”

The whole is of Him, the giving both of these things and those; for nowhere is any achievement of ours. “From the power of darkness,” he saith, that is, of error, the dominion of the devil. He said not “darkness,” but “power”; for it had great power over us, and held us fast. For it is grievous indeed even to be under the devil at all, but to be so “with power,” this is far more grievous. “And translated us,” he saith, “into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” Not then so as to deliver man from darkness only, did He show His love toward him. A great thing indeed is it to have delivered from darkness even; but to have brought into a kingdom too, is a far greater. See then how manifold the gift, that he hath delivered us who lay in the pit; in the second place, that He hath not only delivered us, but also hath translated us into a kingdom. “Who delivered us.” He said not, hath sent us forth, but “delivered”: showing our great misery, and their⁸ capture of us. Then to show also the ease with which the power of God works, he saith, “And translated us,” just as if one were to lead over a soldier from one position to another. And he said not, “hath led over”; nor yet “hath transposed,” for so the whole would be of him who transposed, nothing of him who went over; but he said, “translated”⁹; so that it is both of us and of Him. “Into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” He said not simply, “the kingdom of heaven,” but gave a grandeur to his discourse by saying, “The kingdom of the Son,” for no praise can be greater than this, as he saith elsewhere also: “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.” (2 Tim. 2:12.) He hath counted us worthy of the same things with the Son; and not only so, but what gives it greater force, with His Beloved Son.¹⁰ Those that were enemies, those that were in darkness, as it were on a sudden he had translated to where the Son is, to

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the same honor with Him. Nor was he content with only this, in order to show the greatness of the gift; he was not content with saying, “kingdom,” but he also added, “of the Son”; nor yet with this, but he added also “beloved”; nor yet with this, but he added yet, the dignity of His nature. For what saith he? “Who is the Image of the invisible God.” But he proceeded not to say this immediately, but meanwhile inserted the benefit which He bestowed upon us. For lest, when thou hearest that the whole is of the Father, thou shouldest suppose the Son excluded, he ascribes the whole to the Son, and the whole to the Father. For He indeed translated us, but the Son furnished the cause. For what saith he? “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness.” But the same is, “In whom we have the full redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.” For had we not been forgiven our sins, we should not have been “translated.” So here again the words, “In whom.” And he said not “redemption,” but “full redemption,” so that we shall not fall any more, nor become liable to death.

4/6. 15. “Who is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation.”

We light here upon a question of heresy. So it were well we should put it off to-day and proceed with it to-morrow, addressing it to your ears when they are fresh.

But if one ought to say anything more: the work of the Son is the greater. How? Because it were a thing impossible to give the kingdom to men whilst continuing in their sins; but thus it is an easier thing, so that He prepared the way for the gift. What sayest thou? He Himself loosed thee from thy sins: surely then He Himself also hath brought thee nigh; already he has laid by anticipation the foundation of his doctrine.

But we must put a close to this discourse, when first we have made one remark. And what is this? Seeing we have come to enjoy so great a benefit, we ought to be ever mindful of it, and continually to turn in our minds the free gift of God, and to reflect upon what we have been delivered from, what we have obtained; and so we shall be thankful; so we shall heighten our love toward Him. What sayest thou, O man? Thou art called to a kingdom, to the kingdom of the Son of God—and art thou full of yawning, and scratching, and dozing? If need were that thou shouldest leap into ten thousand deaths every day, oughtest thou not to endure all? For the sake of office thou doest all manner of things; when then thou art going to share the kingdom of the Only-Begotten, wilt thou not spring down upon ten thousand swords? wouldest thou not leap into fire? And this is not all that is strange, but that when about to depart even, thou bewailest, and wouldest gladly dwell amongst the things which are here, being a lover of the body. What fancy is this? Dost thou regard even death as a thing of terror? The cause of this is luxury, ease: for he at least that should live an embittered life would wish even for wings, and to be loosed from hence. But now it is the same with us as with the spoiled nestlings, which would willingly remain for ever in the nest. But the longer they remain, the feebler they become. For the present life is a nest cemented together with sticks and mire. Yea,

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shouldest thou show me even the great mansions, yea the royal palace itself glittering with all its gold and precious stones; I shall think them no better than the nests of swallows, for when the winter is come they will all fall of themselves. By winter I mean That Day, not that it will be a winter to all. For God also calleth it both night and day; the first in regard of sinners, the latter of the just. So do I also now call it winter. If in the summer we have not been well brought up, so as to be able to fly when winter is come, our mothers will not take us, but will leave us to die of hunger, or to perish when the nest falls; for easily as it were a nest, or rather more easily, will God in that day remove all things, undoing and new molding all. But they which are unfledged, and not able to meet Him in the air, but have been so grossly brought up that they have no lightness of wing, will suffer those things which reason is such characters should suffer. Now the brood of swallows, when they are fallen, perish quickly; but we shall not perish, but be punished for ever. That season will be winter; or rather, more severe than winter. For, not winter torrents of water roll down, but rivers of fire; not darkness that riseth from clouds is there, but darkness that cannot be dispelled, and without a ray of light, so that they cannot see either the heaven, or the air, but are more straitened than those who have been buried in the earth.

Oftentimes do we say these things, but there are whom we cannot bring to believe. But it is nothing wonderful if we, men of small account, are thus treated, when we discourse of such things, since the same happened to the Prophets also; when they spoke not of such matters only, but also of war and captivity. (Jer. 21:11; 27:12, &c.) And Zedekiah was rebuked by Jeremiah, and was not ashamed. Therefore the Prophets said, “Woe unto them that say, Let God hasten with speed His work, that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come, that we may know it.” (Isa. 5:18, 19.) Let us not wonder at this. For neither did those believe who were in the days of the ark; they believed, however, when their belief was of no gain to them; neither did they of Sodom expect [their fate], howbeit they too believed, when they gained nothing by believing. And why do I speak of the future? Who would have expected these things which are now happening in divers places; these earthquakes, these overthrows of cities? And yet were these things easier to believe than those; those, I mean, which happened in the days of the ark.

Whence is this evident? Because that the men of those times had no other example to look at, neither had they heard the Scriptures, but with us, on the other hand, are countless instances that have happened both in our own, and in former years. But whence arose the unbelief of these persons? From a softened soul; they drank and ate, and therefore they believed not. For, what a man wishes, he thinks, and expects; and they that gainsay him are a jest.

But let it not be so with us; for hereafter it will not be a flood; nor the punishment till death only; but death will be the beginning of punishment for persons who believe not that

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there is a Judgment. And doth any ask, who has come from thence, and said so? If now thou speakest thus in jest, not even so is it well; for one ought not to jest in such matters; and we jest, not where jesting is in place, but with peril; but if what thou really feelest, and thou art of opinion that there is nothing hereafter, how is it that thou callest thyself a Christian? For I take not into account those who are without. Why receivest thou the Laver? Why dost thou set foot within the Church? Is it that we promise thee magistracies? All our hope is in the things to come. Why then comest thou, if thou believest not the Scriptures? If thou dost not believe Christ, I cannot call such an one a Christian; God forbid! but worse than even Greeks. In what respect? In this; that when thou thinkest Christ is God, thou believest Him not as God. For in that other impiety there is at least consistency; for he who thinks not that Christ is God, necessarily will also not believe Him; but this impiety has not even consistency; to confess Him to be God, and yet not to think Him worthy of belief in what He has said; these are the words of drunkenness, of luxury, of riot. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." (1 Cor. 15:32.) Not to-morrow; but now ye are dead, when ye thus speak. Shall we then be in nothing different from swine and asses? tell me. For if there be neither a judgment, nor a retribution, nor a tribunal, wherefore have we been honored with such a gift as reason, and have all things put under us? Why do we rule, and are they ruled? See how the devil is on every side urgent to persuade us to be ignorant of the Gift of God. He mixes together the slaves with their masters, like some man-stealer¹ and ungrateful servant; he strives to degrade the free to the level of the criminal. And he seems indeed to be overthrowing the Judgment, but he is overthrowing the being of God.

For such is ever the devil's way; he puts forward everything in a wily, and not in a straightforward manner, to put us on our guard. If there is no Judgment, God is not just (I speak as a man): if God is not just, then there is no God at all: if there is no God, all things go on at haphazard, virtue is nought, vice nought. But he says nothing of this openly. Seest thou the drift of this satanical argument? how, instead of men, he wishes to make us brutes, or rather, wild beasts, or rather, demons? Let us then not be persuaded by him. For there is a Judgment, O wretched and miserable man! I know whence thou comest to use such words. Thou hast committed many sins, thou hast offended, thou hast no confidence, thou thinkest that the nature of things will even follow thy arguments. Meanwhile, saith he, I will not torment my soul with the expectation of hell, and, if there be a hell, I will persuade it that there is none; meanwhile I will live here in luxury! Why dost thou add sin to sin? If when thou hast sinned thou believest that there is a hell, thou wilt depart with the penalty of thy sins only to pay; but if thou add this further impiety, thou wilt also for thine impiety, and for this thy thought, suffer the uttermost punishment; and what was a cold and shortlived comfort to thee, will be a ground for thy being punished for ever. Thou hast sinned: be it so: why dost thou encourage others also to sin, by saying that there is no hell? Why didst thou mislead the simpler sort? Why unnerve the hands of the people? So far as thou art concerned, everything is turned

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upside down; neither will the good become better, but listless; nor the wicked desist from their wickedness. For, if we corrupt others, do we get allowance for our sins? Seest thou not the devil, how he attempted to bring down Adam? And has there then been allowance for him? Nay, surely it will be the occasion of a greater punishment, that he may be punished not for his own sins only, but also for those of others. Let us not then suppose that to bring down others into the same destruction with ourselves will make the Judgment-seat more lenient to us. Surely this will make it more severe. Why thrust we ourselves on destruction? The whole of this cometh of Satan.

O man, hast thou sinned? Thou hast for thy Master One that loveth man. Entreat, implore, weep, groan; and terrify others, and pray them that they fall not into the same. If in a house some servant, of those that had offended their master, says to his son, "My child, I have offended the master, do thou be careful to please him, that thou be not as I": tell me, will he not have some forgiveness? will he not bend and soften his master? But if, leaving so to speak, he shall say such words as these, that he¹ will not requite every one according to his deserts; that all things are jumbled together indiscriminately, both good and bad; that there is no thanks in this house; what thinkest thou will be the master's mind concerning him? will he not suffer a severer punishment for his own misdoings? Justly so; for in the former case his feeling will plead for him, though it be but weakly; but in this, nobody. If no other then, yet imitate at least that rich man in hell,² who said, "Father Abraham, send to my kinsmen, lest they come into this place," since he could not go himself, so that they might not fall into the same condemnation. Let us have done with such Satanical words.

What then, saith he, when the Greeks put questions to us; wouldest thou not that we should try to cure³ them? But by casting the Christian into perplexity, under pretense of curing the Greek, thou aimest at establishing thy Satanical doctrine. For since, when communing with thy soul alone of these things, thou persuadest her not; thou desirest to bring forward others as witnesses. But if one must reason with a Greek, the discussion should not begin with this; but whether Christ be God, and the Son of God; whether those gods of theirs be demons. If these points be established, all the others follow; but, before making good the beginning, it is vain to dispute about the end; before learning the first elements, it is superfluous and unprofitable to come to the conclusion. The Greek disbelieves the Judgment, and he is in the same case with thyself, seeing that he too hath many who have treated these things in their philosophy; and albeit when they so spoke they held the soul as separated from the body, still they set up a seat of judgment. And the thing is so very clear, that no one scarcely is ignorant of it, but both poets and all are agreed among themselves that there is both a Tribunal and a Judgment. So that the Greek also disbelieves⁴ his own authorities; and the Jew doth not doubt about these things, nor in a word doth any man.

Why then deceive we ourselves? See, thou sayest these things to me. What wilt thou say

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to God, “that fashioned our hearts one by one”⁵ (Ps. 33:15); that knoweth everything that is in the mind; “that is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword”? (Heb. 4:12.) For tell me with truth; Dost thou not condemn thyself? And how should wisdom so great, as that one who sins should condemn himself, come by chance, for this is a work of mighty wisdom. Thou condemnest thyself. And will he who giveth thee such thoughts leave everything to go on at hazard? The following rule then will hold universally and strictly. Not one of those who live in virtue wholly disbelieves the doctrine of the Judgment, even though he be Greek or heretic. None, save a few, of those who live in great wickedness, receives the doctrine of the Resurrection. And this is what the Psalmist says, “Thy judgments are taken away from before his face.” (Ps. 10:5.) Wherefore? Because “his ways are always profane”; for he saith, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”

Seest thou that thus to speak is the mark of the grovelling? Of eating and drinking come these sayings which are subversive of the Resurrection. For the soul endures not, I say, it endures not the tribunal which the conscience supplieth, and so it is with it, as with a murderer, who first suggests to himself that he shall not be detected, and so goes on to slay; for had his conscience been his judge, he would not hastily have come to that daring wickedness. And still he knows, and pretends not to know, lest he should be tortured by conscience and fear, for, certainly, in that case, he would have been less resolute for the daring deed. So too, assuredly, they who sin, and day by day wallow in the same wickedness, are unwilling to know it, although their consciences pluck at them.

But let us give no heed to such persons, for there will be, there will assuredly be, a Judgment and a Resurrection, and God will not leave so great works without direction. Wherefore, I beseech you, let us leave off wickedness, and lay fast hold on virtue, that we may receive the true doctrine in Christ Jesus our Lord. And yet, which is easier to receive? the doctrine of the Resurrection, or that of Fate? The latter is full of injustice, of absurdity, of cruelty, of inhumanity; the other of righteousness, awarding according to desert; and still men do not receive it. But the fault is, indolence, for no one that hath understanding receives the other. For amongst the Greeks even, they who did receive that doctrine, were those who in their definition of pleasure affirmed it to be the “end,” but they who loved virtue, would not receive it, but they cast it out as absurd. But if among the Greeks this were so, much more will it hold good with the doctrine of the Resurrection. And observe, I pray you, how the devil hath established two contrary things: for in order that we may neglect virtue; and pay honor to demons, he brought in this Necessity, and by means of each he procured the belief of both. What reason then will he be able to give, who obstinately disbelieves a thing so admirable, and is persuaded by those who talk so idly? Do not then support thyself with the consolation, that thou wilt meet with forgiveness; but let us, collecting all our strength, stir ourselves up to virtue, and let us live truly to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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¹ It may be asked how St. Chrysostom could use this argument, and yet speak as he does of the intercession of Saints (see the end of Hom. vi. on the Statues, and note). The reason is, that he viewed the Saints as in the Kingdom of Christ, and subordinate; but the error here referred to seems to have made the Angels independent of Him, and the means of an approach to God without reference to His Atonement. St. Augustine refers to such systems, De Civ. Dei, lib. ix. 15, 21; x. 1, &c.

² ἔγνωτε. This is implied in his wishing them “more” knowledge.

¹ Perhaps it should be “second.” [All documents read “first,” and there is really no occasion for the conjectural alteration, for the statement applies to the first, as well as the second, Epistle.—J. A. B.]

² Vid. St. Chrys. in loc.

³ [The apostle’s word rendered “knowledge” is ἐπίγνωσις, which etymologically signifies additional or full knowledge, and often has distinctively that sense.—J. A. B.]

¹ [“To be partakers” is, literally, “for the portion.”—J. A. B.]

² κλήρω.

³ μερίδα.

⁴ [κλῆρος signifies “lot,” “inheritance,” &c. From the notion that Christian ministers were the Lord’s heritage (like the tribe of Levi) came the application to them of the terms clerus, clerici, whence clergy, clerk, &c.—J. A. B.]

⁵ The whole passage shows that he uses this word merely to imply man’s insufficiency, and not at all to introduce the notion of chance as opposed to Divine agency. He constantly uses the word at the end of his Homilies, as well as ἀξιοθῆναι, “to be thought worthy,” to show at once the necessity of good works, and our unworthiness after all.

⁶ [This clause Field restores from several MSS. and the Catena. The substantial repetition of it just after is characteristic—J. A. B.]

⁷ ἀδίκου, 2 [4] MSS. and Sav. marg. St. Chrys. does not, however, read so on the passage. Hom. ix. on Ep. to Romans.

⁸ i.e. the devils, αἰχμαλωσίαν.

⁹ μετέστησε. The word in Heb. 11:3, is μετετέθη, which agrees with this criticism.

¹⁰ [“The Son of His love” really means greatly more than “His Beloved Son.” See Lightfoot on Col.—J. A. B.]

¹ ἀνδραποδιστής, one who steals freemen for slaves. [Literally, “enslaver” (1 Tim. 1:10).—J. A. B.]

¹ The master.

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² γένη.

³ θεραπεύειν. As we say, familiarly, “doctor them.” The term was commonly used. Theodoret has a treatise called, “The Remedy of Greekish affections.” Here it is “humor them” by palatable doctrine.

⁴ [Various documents have “does not disbelieve,” through failing to observe that it means the Greek above mentioned, and that the expression changes with the next clause as to the Jew.—J. A. B.]

⁵ καταμόνας, Sept. E. V. “alike.”