



JOHN, JUDAH,  
PAUL & ?

comments on

First John  
Second John  
Third John  
Judah (Jude)  
Hebrews  
Galatians

JONATHAN MITCHELL

JOHN, JUDAH,  
PAUL  
AND ?  
COMMENTS ON  
FIRST JOHN  
SECOND JOHN  
THIRD JOHN  
JUDAH (JUDE)  
HEBREWS  
GALATIANS

based upon  
The Jonathan Mitchell New  
Testament  
BY  
JONATHAN  
MITCHELL, MA

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UNDERSTANDING

RIGHTEOUSNESS

(JUSTICE; FAIRNESS)

Galatians in Second Century

Exegesis

**BOOK COVERS**

Copyright 2013, Harper Brown  
Publishing

ISBN 978-0-9852231-4-4

New Testament text:

*The New Testament, God's Message of Goodness, Ease and Well-Being, Which Brings God's Gifts of His Spirit, His Life, His Grace, His Power, His Fairness, His Peace and His Love*

translated by Jonathan Mitchell

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ISBN 978-1-4507-0505-9

Bible Commentaries:

978-0-9852231-0-6: Peter, Paul and

Jacob, Comments On First Peter,  
Philippians, Colossians, First  
Thessalonians, Second Thessalon  
978-0-9852231-1-3: John, Judah, Paul  
& ?: Comments on First John, Second  
John, Third John, Judah (Jude),  
Hebrews, Galatiansians, First Timothy,  
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978-0-9852231-9-9: Peter's Encore &  
Later Paul, comments on Second Peter &  
Ephesian

Cover photo: I-Stock

Front Cover design: Lynda Mitchell and  
Joshua Mitchell

Artistic Consultants: Mishara Mitchell  
and Jessica Spencer

Back Cover text and design: Lynda  
Mitchell and Joshua Mitchell

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## INTRODUCTION

This volume is a collection of commentaries on six letters in the New Testament: three by John, one by Judah (also known as Jude), another by Paul, and the letter to the Hebrews.

Genesis 26 records Isaac digging again the wells that Abraham had dug. The envious Philistines had filled them in with earth, cutting off their supply of water – and thus, of life. Similarly, over the past nineteen centuries of the translation and interpretation of the Greek texts, divergent and partisan

views have caused an accumulation of rubble which filled in the wells of the New Testament manuscripts with "earth," cutting off access to the original "springs." The flow of the Living Water from many verses and passages has been blocked. Like Isaac, each succeeding generation must endeavor to re-dig the wells and re-open the providential springs for a fresh release of the Living Word to our land.

Once again we say, *Ad fontes*: back to the sources! In this second book of the series, we continue our investigation of the primary sources – the Greek texts – for clearer understanding as we engage more epistles and wrestle with the

interpretation of these Scriptures – first as they applied to the original recipients, and then as they are now appropriate to our time.

The interpretation and comments of this work are based upon *THE NEW TESTAMENT, God's Message of Goodness, Ease and Well-being Which Brings God's Gifts of His Spirit, His Life, His Grace, His Power, His Fairness, His Peace and His Love* – a translation by the author.

My conclusions reflect this expanded translation, and take into consideration the semantic range of many Greek words. Additional potential lexical meanings are parenthetically inserted

into the text of the translation, along with variant manuscript readings. I have given much attention to the significance of the Greek verb tenses and to the functions of the noun cases, rendering the different ways that each of them could be translated within its context. Each verse is presented in bold face with alternate renderings parenthetically given in light face. The reader should not give preference to one rendering over another, but should thoroughly and thoughtfully consider all the possible combinations. An = sign signifies that what follows is a paraphrase, which means that the literal Greek has been *interpreted* to assist the reader. Bear in

mind that such instances are just one studied interpretation of that particular Greek expression.

The main guides for interpreting the original works are the translation and the context, together with careful attention given to the culture and historical setting of the people to whom these letters were written. A concise introduction begins the comments on each letter. I make references to other New Testament letters and to the four gospels, as well as occasionally citing Old Testament passages that relate to the context. Other commentators' quotes, as well as insights from friends, are also cited. In short, this work is intended to shed

new light based upon a correct understanding of the Greek texts within the perspective of the local life situations and their first century contexts, and equally important, to serve as a catalyst for critical thinking regarding the impact of these letters upon our lives today.

In addition to these commentaries, six topical studies have also been included.

To God be the glory,  
Jonathan P. Mitchell

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to first thank my wife Lynda for her continued support of this work, for her editorial skills, for her insightful comment throughout the course of this work, and for her creative talents in the design of the cover. Next I want to thank my son Joshua for his technical expertise which has made possible this publication.

I want to thank my sister Rebecca Mitchell for her proof reading and input on grammar and style. I also want to thank Don Luther and Marge White for

their contributions to editing. I want to thank the following family and friends for allowing me to quote their comments which have added insights in various places in this collection of comments: Lynda Mitchell, Rebecca Mitchell, Dan Kaplan, Don Luther, and Steve Dohse. I want to acknowledge the following scholars whose works have been cited or mentioned:

Karen Armstrong, William Barclay, Walter Brueggemann, Martin Buber, E.W. Bullinger, Rudolf Bultmann, William D. Chamberlain, Bruce Chilton, C.H. Dodd, J. Preston Eby, Alfred Edersheim, Francis

Frangipane, Lawrence Garcia,  
John Gavazzoni, John Gill,  
Donald Guthrie, A.E. Harvey,  
Irenaeus, Jamieson, Fausset &  
Brown, Andrew Jukes, J.R.  
Daniel Kirk, A.E. Knoch,  
Ronald Knox, C. Baxter Kruger,  
Samuel J. Mikolaski, Bruce  
Metzger, Harper Brown  
Mitchell, Leon Morris, Fredrick  
J. Murphy, Ann Nyland, Henri  
Nouwen, Origen, Elaine Pagels,  
Warren A. Quanbeck, John A.T.  
Robinson, Richard Rohr, R.C.  
Sproul, A.M. Stibbs, Paul  
Tillich, Parker Voll, David H.  
Wheaton, Walter Wink, Ben

Witherington III, and Brian Zahnd.

All works that have been quoted are referenced within the text of this work. Quotes from the Old Testament have been from the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament* (CVOT), Concordant Publishing Concern, 2005; Ferrar Fenton's *The Holy Bible in Modern English*, Destiny Publishers, 1966; Joseph B. Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, Kregel Publications, 1971; JM Powis Smith (the OT) in *The Complete Bible, An American Translation*, The University of Chicago Press, 1964; *Tanakh*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1985; or the Septuagint (LXX),

translated by the author.

Other versions cited (primarily for contrast or comparison) are: *The Amplified Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1965; *The Concordant Greek Text*, Concordant Publishing concern, 1975; *Concordant Literal New Testament* (CLNT), Concordant Publishing Concern, 1983; *The KJV*, The National Bible Press, 1944; *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*, Watchtower Bible & Track Society, 1969; *NASB*, American Bible Society, 1977; *The New English Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1970; *The New American Bible*, Catholic Bible Publishers, 1993; *The NIV Study*

*Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983; *NRSV*, American Bible Society, 1989; *The New Word Translation*, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1984; *The New Testament, An Expanded Translation*, WM B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.

# ABBREVIATIONS & TEXTUAL APPARATUS

## ABBREVIATIONS:

MS: manuscript

MSS: manuscripts

LXX: The Septuagint – Greek version of the Old Testament

Gen., Ex., Matt., Rom., etc.: commonly accepted indicators of the books of the Bible

Aleph, A, B, C, D, Y, etc., indicate an individual codex or MS

*p* signifies that the MS is a papyrus MS

TR: Textus Receptus (the "Received

Text;" the "Majority Text")

*cf*: confer and compare

## APPARATUS:

Brackets, [ ]'s, have been used for the following situations:

to give a reading based upon other MSS.

to insert notes or comments into the text

to insert words to aid in the reading of the English version

to indicate the reference of a quote from the Old Testament

to insert explanations

Parentheses, ( )'s, have been used for the following situations:

to give other possible meanings of a Greek word

to give alternate renderings of phrases or

verses

to give a potential idiomatic translations

“=” has been placed before words for the following situations:

to signifies that the following is a potential idiomatic translation, or paraphrase

to give another spelling of a name or a suggested equivalent name

to give a Hebrew equivalent of a word or name

to give an explanatory note

# COMMENTS ON 1 JOHN

[Ch1](#) [Ch2](#) [Ch3](#) [Ch4](#) [Ch5](#)

[COMING VERSUS](#)

[PRESENT](#)

The period for the writing of this letter is determined by John A.T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament*, The Westminster Press, 1976) to be AD 60-65. Although it is not addressed to a specific village or city, most scholars see it as having been written primarily to address the rise of Gnosticism within the early called-out communities.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the many doctrinal statements address the basics of what the "early church" believed about the nature of God, His relationship to us, and how the covenant community should treat one another as well as those outside its local group. Some have simply classified this letter as a sermon. However, based upon the opening line in 2:1, "**My little children** (born ones), **I am writing these things to you** (or: for you)," A.E. Harvey writes, "[W]e are reading a real message written to a real congregation.... an essentially private piece of writing.... the whole argument centers around words like 'light,' 'life,' and 'love'..." (*The New English Bible*

*Companion to the New Testament*,  
Oxford University Press, Cambridge  
University Press, 1970, p 758).

Tradition associates it with the covenant  
groups in Asia Minor.

William Barclay (*The Daily Study Bible  
Series, the letters of John and Jude*,  
Revised Edition, The Westminster Press,  
1976, p 3-12) gives an overview of the  
varieties of Gnosticism and cites  
passages here that he saw as  
representative of the false teachings that  
were being introduced. He states: "The  
basic belief of all Gnostic thought was  
that only spirit was good and matter was  
essentially evil." He points to 2:19,

**"They came** (or: come; go; or:

went) **out from us, but they were not existing out of us** (or: they were not [a part] of us), **for if they were out of us, they would have remained** (dwelt; abided) **with us; but [this was] to the end that they may be manifested** (caused to appear) **that they are not all out of us or from us,"** (my translation, here and below)

as evidence that the false teachers had formerly been a part of the group, or groups, to whom he was writing. Then he cites 4:1, "... **because many false prophets have gone** (or: come) **out into the ordered System** (world of societal

culture, government, economy and religion) **and continue there,**" to support the idea that they had been community members, but are now out spreading their views.

Some of these teachers may have been Jewish, for they denied that Jesus was the Messiah (2:22). Since "the Gnostic point of view [was] that spirit alone was good and matter was utterly evil" (ibid. p 6), some of these folks denied the incarnation, and these gave rise to "Docetism," from "the Greek verb *dokein* [which] means *to seem...* [thus] Jesus only *seemed* to have a body" (ibid. p 7). In some cases, Gnosticism led to a variety of practices and behaviors that

strayed from the teachings given by Jesus, His disciples, and Paul. Examples are: asceticism (deprivation of the body), licentiousness (since the body is evil, its lusts could be satisfied without limit), elitism and exclusiveness (those with *gnosis*, "knowledge," were "spiritual" and made up a higher class than the "soulish" or "carnal" folks that were not initiated into the secret knowledge, and thus had no "insight") which divided the believers into two groups (this was later manifested in the division of clergy from laity) and promoted prejudice of us, versus them. "The consequence was obviously the annihilation of Christian fellowship"

(ibid. p 12).

Barclay sums up the Gnostics in this way: "They talked of being born of God, of walking in the light, of having no sin, of dwelling in God, of knowing God" (ibid. p 12). Thus we will find John addressing these specific issues. Two central points of Christian doctrine emerge here: God is Light (1:5) and God is Love (4:8). This second point leads to the core of the Christ event, and its effects, as found in chapter 4:

**9. Within this, God's Love is instantly manifested** (was at one point made visible) **within us** (among us), **in that** (or: because) **God has sent**

(dispatched) **His uniquely- born**  
(or: only-begotten) **Son as a**  
**Representative** (Envoy;  
Emissary) **into the ordered**  
**System** (world of society,  
culture, religion and  
government; or: the cosmos; or:  
= the aggregate of humanity), **to**  
**the end that we would live** (or:  
can experience life) **through**  
**Him.**

10. **Within this exists** (or: is)  
**the Love, not that we**  
**ourselves have loved** [other  
MSS: not that we ourselves love  
or accept] **God, but in contrast,**  
**that He Himself loves us and**

**sends** (or: urged toward reunion with us and sent) **His Son as a Representative** (Emissary): **a propitiatory covering around our sins** (failures to hit the target; errors; mistakes; deviations).

**11. Beloved ones, since thus** (or: in that manner) **God loves** (or: loved) **us, we also are constantly indebted** (or: under obligation) **to habitually love and accept one another.**

"But it would be wrong to think that this Epistle is no more than a refutation of heresy. There is a very positive aim, as John tells us himself. He writes 'so that

you may have fellowship with us... that our joy may be complete' (1:3f).... [It] is thus directed rather at bringing its readers into a state of assurance and a true knowledge of what faith implies" (Leon Morris, *The New Bible Commentary, Revised*, Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer, A.M. Stibbs, D.J. Wiseman, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970, p 1260). *Cf* also 5:13, below. Furthermore, Elaine Pagels instructs us with a caution about reading Paul, which would also apply to reading any of the NT authors. In her concluding remarks of, *The Gnostic Paul – Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters*,  
"To read Paul either way – as

hypergnostic or hyperorthodox – is to read unhistorically, attempting to interpret the apostle's theology in terms of categories formulated in second-century debate. On the other hand, whoever takes account of the total evidence may learn from the debate to approach Pauline exegesis with renewed openness to the texts." (Trinity Press International, 1975, p 164)



## Chapter 1

**1. The One who was continuously existing from [the] beginning (or: He Who was progressively being parted away from Headship and Rule). The One whom we have listened to, and still hear; the One whom we have seen, and now yet perceive with our eyes (or: in our eyes); the One whom we gazed upon as a public spectacle (as an exhibit in a theater) and our hands handled (felt about for and touched) – groping around the Word of the Life**

(or: the Logos, which is the Life; the thought which pertains to

life; the Idea from the Life; the message which has the character and qualities of the Life; the Reason which belongs to the Life; [note: I have treated *ho* as the definite article in the first four phrases here and in vs. 3; many treat it as a neuter relative and render it: That which]

Dr. Ann Nyland has also rendered *ho* "The One who... One whom..." in this verse (*The Source New Testament*, Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2004, p 477). John is speaking of Jesus Christ here, referring to the time of His ministry as a human, as recorded in the gospels. Rendering it "that which," as many do,

would make his statement refer to the message that Christ preached. However, the last clause, "**our hands handled...**" instructs us that John is referring to "**the Word of the Life**" that appeared as the Man, Jesus.

Rudolf Bultmann says "The first expression... apparently means nothing other than what John 1:1 expresses..." (*A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, Edited by Robert W. Funk, *Hermeneia*, Fortress Press, 1973, p 7-8). My second translation of this sentence, in the parenthetical insertion, expresses the imperfect tense of the verb *eimi* (being) as a progressive existence, then describes the motion indicated by the

preposition *apo* (parted away from), and finally gives two other semantic meanings of *arche* (headship; rule). See my expanded translation of John 1:1. As to the Greek *logos* (Word), the semantic range of this word expands our view to observe that the Christ was Himself the "message," the "idea" and the "reason" which came into the world and manifested in flesh and blood, as verse 2 goes on to indicate. Here, as in John 1:14, "**the Word** which is the Life" – and the Way to Truly Live (John 14:6) – was incarnated in the life of a Man who could be seen and touched, and who could speak words of life (John 6:63) which folks could hear with their ears.

Paul uses this same phrase in Phil. 2:16. Bultmann points out that the "subject matter and person are basically identical" (ibid. p 8). John was speaking of historical, existential experiences as verse 2 makes clear. The verbs of this second sentence all "denote sense perception" (ibid. p 9).

We see in this first verse a corporate theme in this letter, and a sense of solidarity, in John's use of the first person, plural, as expressed in the personal pronoun "we." This will be seen again and again.

**2. And the Life was manifested** (or: is brought into the clear light and made visible) **and we have seen, and still**

**observe, and are repeatedly testifying** (bearing witness; giving evidence) **and in a message are constantly reporting to you folks the Life which has the character and qualities of the Age** (or: the life of, for and pertaining to the ages; eonian life) **which Certain [Life] was continuously existing [oriented and proceeding] toward** (or: was face to face with) **the Father, and was manifested** (or: is made visible) **to us, in us, by us, and for us.**

Again, "the Life" – the life of the Second Man, the *eschatos* Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the historical appearance of the *logos* – which humanity was meant to live, was brought to clear light and made visible

(manifested) so that folks could witness it, make observations, and report it to all of humanity – as they have done in the Scriptures such as this letter.

In the last clause we again have the same verb of being in the imperfect tense. But here it is followed by the preposition *pros*, which can be translated as "face to face with," or "**toward.**" I inserted "**oriented and proceeding**" because these two concepts are inherent in the meaning of the preposition. John 1:2 reads "*pros* God," while here it is "*pros* the Father." Bultmann notes, "*Pater* [Father] is a familiar designation for God in 1 Jn (1:2f; 2:1, 13, 15f, 22-24; 3:1; 4:14) and is used continually in

John" (ibid. p 9). As we further unpack this verse, we can observe that since the Life is also the message, it follows that the message directs us "**toward the Father.**"

In the last phrase, the personal pronoun "**us**" (note again, the plurals **we** and **us**) is in the dative case with no expressed preposition. Thus, I have given four functions of the dative which make sense to the context, but indicate different aspects of the Life in Its manifestation: It was made visible **to** them, and through their written report is made visible to us; It was manifested **in** them (and now, us) and **by** them – to others folks; It was manifested **for** them (and us) – i.e., for

**our** benefit.

As to the phrase *ten zoen ten aionion*, I give the following expansion: "**the Life which has the character and qualities of the Age** (or: the life of, for and pertaining to the ages; eonian life)." The bold rendering expresses the Jewish conception of the Age of Messiah, the age that they were expecting to come when the Messiah came, and the new quality and character of the life of that age. In the parenthetical alternatives, the first gives a literal translation of the phrase and the second (eonian life) gives a close equivalent in English, based upon the word eon (similar to age: an indefinite period of time). The Greek

*aion* (age) originally referred to the lifetime of a human. Thus, it came to mean an indefinite period of time – and one which could not be foreseen, as to its duration. Jesus Christ came in the conjunction of two ages (*cf* Heb. 9:26 and Mt. 28:20, my translation), ending the age of the Law, and beginning the age of the new creation.

**3. The One whom we have seen, and still now see, and we have heard, and now continue listening to and hearing, we are also constantly reporting to you, to the end that you, too, may be continuously having common being and existence (or: would be progressively holding partnership and participation)**

**with us. And yet, our common being and existence** (or: participation; fellowship; partnership; sharing) **[is] with the Father, even with His Son** (or: as well as with the Son from Him; or, in apposition: and with the Son which is Him), **Jesus Christ.**

Here we should first consider the tense of the first two verbs. They are in the perfect tense, which indicates a completed action of the past with results which continue on into the present time. They had seen Him in the past, and yet they still see Him. How? Perhaps in the same way that Jesus did what He SAW the Father doing (John 5:19-20). Perhaps the experiences were so vivid that in

their mind's eyes they could still see Him. Perhaps they could see Him now in members of His body. Paul uses the perfect infinitive of this same verb *horaō* in 1 Cor. 2:2,

**"for I decided not to see or know anything among you folks, except Jesus Christ – and this One being one having been crucified (executed on a stake)!"**

Another meaning of this verb is "to know" – from having seen! Paul wanted to see Christ within and among the covenant community in Corinth – see Him in their lives; see their lives in union and identity with Him – who laid

down His life and was crucified for all (as we see below, in 3:16) – as they laid down their lives for their friends (John 15:13), i.e., a cruciform life.

The second verb means to listen and to hear. They had heard Him in the past, and they were still listening to Him speak within their spirits, and through members of the communities. They still listened to the teaching and message which He had spoken, as well. They were hearing Him now through the voice of the Spirit, the effect of the Breath of God that hovered over them and moved within them (they being the "new creation" of which Paul spoke in 2 Cor. 5:17) just as it had in Gen. 1:2.

It was this constant seeing and continued hearing that created a common participation with one another, and with God: the Father and the Son. The word *koinonia* has the root meaning of **common being and existence** (which the work of Christ founded in making the "new creation" – Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17) which becomes the basis of active fellowship, participation and partnership among the members of the community and with God. This is what Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 3:9,

**"For we are God's fellow-workers** (or: we are co-workers of and from God; we exist being co-workers who

belong to God). **You folks are God's farm** (or: field under cultivation), **God's building** (or: construction project; structure, or act of building)."

All this comes from "seeing Him" and seeing what He is doing; from "hearing Him" and doing what He tells us to do. The term "Christ" means "anointed," and it is a picture of God's Spirit coming into union with a human. The new **common existence**, fellowship and participation with God are expressions of being in union with Him (*cf* John 14-17).

Barclay says of this verse that it gives one of the objects of writing this letter, which is, "to produce fellowship with

men and fellowship with God" (ibid., p 21). The following verses bear this out.

Bultmann comments that the motif of *koinonia* is characteristic of the letter, signifying a way of living. (ibid. p 13)

This mode of life is a **common existence** in a covenant community. It is a **common being** in the Spirit into Whom, and into Which, we have been immersed to the point of saturation,

**"For we, ourselves – within the midst of one Spirit (or: in union with one Breath-effect and Attitude) – are all submerged into one body (or: were all immersed into, so as to be enveloped by, one body) –**

**whether Jews or Greeks (or: Hellenists), whether slaves or free folks – and we all are (or: were) made (or: caused) to drink one Spirit (or: spirit; Breath-effect; Attitude)" – 1 Cor. 12:13.**

**4. And so we ourselves are proceeding in writing these things, to the end that your joy [other MSS: our joy] would continually exist having been filled up and then continue full.**

This is an echo of John 15:11, 16:24 and 17:13. Note the present subjunctive "**would continually exist**" paired with the perfect passive "**having been filled up and then continue full**" – as John

speaks the purpose of this writing (**to the end that**) into the lives of the recipients.

Other manuscripts read "our joy," and there are good witnesses for both readings. The differences are in one letter of the word. It is the echoes of John, cited above, that lead me to the reading "**your**," and Griesbach's text has this reading. William Barclay's NT translation also reads "your" here.

However, the more recent texts read "our." Whichever was original, the joy of the Lord is for all! In either case, it is one of the purposes for writing the letter.

**5. And this is the message (or: And it is this message) which we have heard –**

**and still hear – from Him, and we are continually bringing back tidings (or: announcing again) to and among you people that God continuously exists being (or: is) Light, and within Him darkness and obscurity do not exist – not even one (or: and so, there is absolutely no dimness or shadiness in Him).**

Note that John points to a single topic (stated in the last half of the verse) as he says "**this is the message,**" or, "it is this message." And here the reader is drawn back to the gospel of John, once again, 1:4-9,

**4. Within It (or: Him), life was continuing and progressively**

**existing** (or: In It was life [as a source]; [Aleph, D and others witnesses read present tense: In union with it there continues being life; Life progressively exists within the midst of It]).

**And the life was continuing being, and began progressively existing as, the Light of mankind** (or: Furthermore, the Light progressively came to be the life known as "humanity," and was for human beings; or: Then the life was existing being the light from the humans).

**5. And the Light is constantly shining in the dim and**

**shadowed places, and keeps on progressively giving light within the gloomy darkness where there is no light** (or: within the midst the obscurity of The Darkness where there is no light of The Day; or: = in the ignorant condition or system). **And yet the darkness does not grasp or receive it on the same level** (or: Furthermore, the Darkness did not take it down, so as to overcome it or put it out; or: = the ignorant condition or system would have none of it, nor receive it down into itself [in order to perceive it]; But that

darkness does not correspondingly accept It nor commensurately take It in hand so as to follow the pattern or be in line with Its bidding).

**6. A man came to be** (was birthed), **being one having been sent forth with a mission, as a representative, from God's side** (or: having been commissioned as an emissary and sent forth from beside God; having been sent forth to the side, as an envoy, whose source was God); **a name for him: John.**

**7. This one came into a**

**testimony** (or: went to witness; came for evidence), **to the end that he may give testimony** (be a witness; show evidence) **about The Light, so that all humanity** (or: everyone) **would at some point come to believe and trust through him** (or: by means of it).

**8. That person (= He) was not The Light, but rather [he came] so that he could give testimony** (would be a witness; should present evidence) **about The Light.**

**9. It was** (or: He was, and continued being) **the True and**

**Genuine Light which** (or: Who) **is continuously** (repeatedly; progressively) **enlightening** (giving light to) **every person** (or: human) **continuously** (repeatedly; progressively; constantly; one after another) **coming into the world** (or: the ordered system of culture, religion, economics and government; or: the universe) (or: It was the real Light, progressively coming into the world {organized system}, which is progressively enlightening {or: shedding light on} every human).

With this passage of John to instruct us as to his use of the word "light," let us now open the aperture to receive more light into our camera as we consider what John means by, "**God continuously exists being** (or: is) **Light**." I have rendered the verb both as an ontological statement (**exists being**) in expressing John's metaphor, and also as a simple copulative (is).

As we consider the above passage in John 1, it seems that John's use of this language about Light – in referring to the Christ, the incarnate expression of the Logos – is metaphorical. He is obviously not speaking of sunlight or the light given off by energy, although we

can draw analogies from both. I suggest that the light spoken of both in John's gospel and in this letter is the light of Truth (which can also be translated "Reality") and Knowledge (*gnosis*). And since many scholars have suggested that this letter was written to counter the influence of Gnosticism within the Christian communities, I think that we can conclude that this is how John is using the word "light." It is in this same sense that Jesus said,

**"I Myself am (or: continuously exist being) the Light of the world**

(or: of the cosmos; of the ordered system; of

the dominant cultural, political, economic and religious arrangements; of the universe; of ‘the theater of history’ – Walter Wink). **The one habitually and progressively following Me can by no means walk around** (= under no circumstances live their life) **within the darkness** (or: the dim and shaded areas; the gloom and obscurity due to the lack of the Light of the Day; the [realm]

of the shadows; [note: = ignorance; = that situation which existed before the Light came; or, could also refer to the dim condition within the holy place of the Temple, or to the darkness of death, blindness or the womb]), **but, to the contrary, he will possess (have; hold) the Light of 'the Life!' (or: the light which is life.)**" – John 8:12

C. Baxter Kruger adds insight to the

meaning of this statement by Jesus, "'I am the light of the cosmos,' both the *source* and the *meaning*, the *rhyme* and the *reason* of the existence of all things. It is in Jesus – and in what became of humanity and creation in him – that we see the gracious and joyful purpose of the triune God in calling forth the universe and human existence" (*The Shack Revisited*, Faith Words, 2012, p 159, emphasis original).

Bultmann points us to 4:8 and 16, below, where we have the expression, "**because God continuously exists being Love** (or: for God is Love and Acceptance)." And then he reminds us of John 4:24, "**God [is] spirit** (or: Breath; Wind; a

Breath-effect and Attitude)," and comments that these expressions "rather express what God means for man... the real meaning of light is the luminosity man needs in order to find his way in his daily as well as his spiritual life" (ibid. p 16).

We must recall that "light" is a part of the creation (Gen. 1:3-5), in its literal use. Likewise is "spirit," which can also be rendered "wind; breath-effect." Each of these words is a human word used to help us to understand the nature, essence and sphere of the divine. I will admit to a strong penchant for seeing 4:8 and 16 as being ontological, still, "love (*agape*)," too, is a human word used to

describe what most consider the highest quality of being of which we can conceive, and 1 Cor. 13:4-8a gives us a good picture of the nature of God. Yet with all the above considered, it is with these words of Paul to Corinth that we should think about the qualities and essences of God, or as Paul Tillich terms Him, the Ground of Being – for "being," too, is a part of creation. But now to the last phrase of our verse, **"and within Him darkness and obscurity do not exist – not even one** (or: and so, there is absolutely no dimness or shadiness in Him)." In Gen. 1:2 we see that darkness is mentioned before light, and in vs. 4 there, after light

was created in vs. 3, we find that Yahweh had to separate between the light and the darkness. Paul references this in 2 Cor. 4:6,

**"because the God suddenly saying (or: the God Who once was saying), "Light will shine forth (give light as from a torch; gleam) from out of the midst of darkness (dimness and shadiness; gloom and the absence of daylight)!" [is] the One who shines forth within the midst of our hearts, with a view to illumination of the intimate and experiential knowledge of God's glory – in**

## **a face of Christ**

(or: [is] He Who gives light in union with our hearts, [while] facing toward an effulgence and a shining forth which is an intimate knowing of the praise-inducing manifestation whose source and origin is God, and which is God, [while] in union with face to face presence of Christ [other MSS: Jesus Christ])."

Darkness is a part of the creation, which

came out of God (e.g., Rom. 11:36), but it does not exist in Him Who is Light. But we see in Gen. 1 and Paul, above, that He initially put light within the midst of darkness. It is from this that Paul draws his analogy, using it as a metaphor – as does John in this letter. But what is John saying here? We can get a hint from 2:8 where we find the expression

**"the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and of lack of the light of the Day; [note: a figure of the ignorance of the prior system and realm]) **is progressively being caused to pass by, and the True Light** (or: = real

knowledge and understanding; =  
Light of the new Day) **is already**  
(before now) **progressively**  
**shining and appearing."**

As you see, in my translation I gave a note and two paraphrases to help the reader, and I think that these "shed light" upon the last phrase of this verse. In John 1:5, above, the Light that shined in the Darkness was Jesus speaking Truth and Reality into the shadows, dimness and gloom of the old covenant (Heb. 8:5; 10:1) and the ultra-religious Phariseeism of Galilee and Judea. We can observe another witness in John 3:

19. **"Now this continues being**  
**the** (or: So there continues

being the same) **process of the sifting, the separation and the decision** (the evaluation; the judging), **because the Light has come** (or: has gone) **into the world** (the aggregate of humanity; the ordered system and arrangement of religion, culture and government; or: the system of control and regulation), **and yet mankind loves the darkness** (or: the people love the dimness of obscurity and gloom; or: the humans loved the realm of the shadow) **rather than the Light, for their works** (deeds; actions)

**were continuing to be bad ones** (unsound ones; wicked ones; laborious ones; toilsome ones that created bad news; wrongful ones), 20. **"for everyone [who is] habitually practicing** (or: performing) **worthless things** (base, mean, common, careless, cheap, slight, paltry, sorry, vile things or refuse) **is continuously hating** (regarding with ill-will) **the light, and is not coming** (or: going) **to the light** (or: the Light), **so that his works** (deeds; actions) **may not be tested and put to the proof** (and thus, exposed and perhaps

reproved).

21. **"Yet the one habitually doing the truth** (constantly constructing the real; repeatedly making the genuine) **is constantly coming** (or: going; moving) **toward the light** (or: the Light), **so that his works** (deeds; actions) **may be set in clear light and manifested,** **because they exist being ones having been worked and accomplished** (or: performed as deeds) **within God** (or: that it is within God [that they are] ones having been acted out)."

Darkness is a metaphor for a negative

and ignorant way of living, just as **"walking about... within the midst of and in union with the Light"** (vs. 7, below) is a positive and *enlightened* way of life. Paul contrasts these two metaphors in Eph. 5: 8, speaking ontologically,

**"for you folks were once existing being darkness (dimness; obscurity; gloom; shadiness), yet (or: but) now [you are] light, within and in union with [the] Lord [= Christ or Yahweh],"**

and then continues in vs. 11, **"do not continually participate together** (involve yourselves in joint

communion or community; or: Stop having fellowship together) **in unfruitful acts** (works; deeds; performances) **of the Darkness** (dimness in the shadows; gloom and obscurity)," connecting the metaphor with conduct.

In Col. 1:13 Paul again uses the figure of darkness, this time contrasting their past existence with that of Christ's reign (the eschatological presence of the Messiah's kingdom),

**He who drags us out of danger** (or: rescued us) **forth from out of the midst of the authority of the Darkness** (from Darkness's jurisdiction and right; from existing out of gloomy shadows

and obscure dimness; = the privilege of ignorance), **and changes [our] position** (or: transported [us], thus, giving [us] a change of standing, and transferred [us]) **into the midst of the kingdom and reign of the Son of His love."**

It was the previous arrangements of our lives – those which had authority over us – which he here has termed "**the Darkness.**" (see my comments on this verse in *Peter, Paul and Jacob*, Harper Brown Publishing, 2012). In 1 Thes. 5:5 Paul again uses an ontological contrast, but there expands the contrast to darkness in the compound phrase: "...

**sons of** (= associated with and having the qualities of) **Light and sons of** (= associated with and having qualities of) **Day!"**

Jesus, the Christ who brought the new creation into existence, proclaimed in John 12:

**46. "I, Myself a Light, have come into, and am now within, the world** (the organized system of religion, culture and government; the ordered and adorned arrangement; or: secular society; or: the cosmos, or universe), **to the end that everyone** (all people; all) – **[each] one habitually trusting**

**and progressively believing into Me – can not (should not; may not; would not) remain (abide; dwell) within the midst of the Darkness, or in union with dim shadiness or obscurity."**

**6. If we should up and say that we are continuously having common being (or: constantly enjoying fellowship, participation and partnership) with Him and yet may be habitually walking round about (= living our lives) within the Darkness and the dim realm of shadows [note: a figure of ignorance, or the obscure previous way of seeing reality; the existence before the Breath-**

effect vibrated over us], **we are constantly lying** (speaking falsely) **and are not in the habit of doing the truth** (or: are not constructing, practicing or producing reality).

I again inserted an interpretive note when I translated this verse, instructing the reader as to the meaning of the figurative language about darkness and pointing back to Gen. 1:2. As discussed above, John is referencing the prior environments of those in the called-out communities, and whether their involvement had been in Judaism or paganism, prior to the coming of the Light to them, darkness was upon the faces of their lives.

Bultmann points out here that the dualistic language of "**constantly lying** (speaking falsely)" and "**doing the truth**" corresponds to the dualism in the metaphors of "**Light**" and "**the Darkness**" (ibid. p 19) and instructs us about what John means by "constructing, practicing or producing reality." In this last clause I have painted in the semantic range of the verb normally just rendered "**do**," here used in its present tense form. Truth, or reality, is here contrasted "**lying** (speaking falsely)," and this latter refers to something that is unreal.

Bultmann also associates darkness and lying (the unreal) with death, connecting 2:11 (**the person habitually hating**

**constantly exist within the Darkness)** with 4:20 (**If anyone may up and say, "I am constantly loving God," and yet may be habitually hating his brother, he is a liar**) and 3:14 (**The person not habitually loving continues remaining with the Death**). (ibid. p 19)

Observe, also, that John associates the idea of "**common being** (or: constantly enjoying fellowship, participation and partnership)" with the living of our lives (seen in the common metaphor of "**walking around**"). The life of a covenant community is one of interactions and relationships between its members, not just coming together for a "meeting." Shining the Light to "the

world" about them will also involve interaction and relationship – and sometimes partnership – with those with whom the group associates in daily living. It is the prejudiced religious mindset that seeks to withdraw and not be involved with those outside one's own group. We see the contrast to this religious mindset (as demonstrated by the prejudice of the Pharisees) when considering the mindset of loving inclusion as demonstrated by the words and behavior of Jesus.

**7. Yet if we keep on walking about (= continue living our life) within the midst of and in union with the Light, as He exists (or: is) within the Light, we**

**constantly have common being and existence** (or: hold common fellowship, participation and enjoy partnership) **with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, keeps continually and repeatedly cleansing us** (or: is progressively rendering us pure) **from every sin** (or: from all error, failure, deviation, mistake, and from every [successive] shot that is off target [when it occurs]).

Verse 7a brings into focus our behavior – how we live. The Light is a sphere of living our lives and is also the sphere of our "**common being and existence.**" It is the sphere within which God and Christ have their existence. Here God is

not just Light, but resides "**within**" the light of authentic living; within the light of the reality of the new arrangement (or: covenant; *cf* Heb.8:6-13) of the new creation (*cf* 2 Cor. 5:17). The message – the Logos – of the Life (vs. 1) is in fact the very life in union with which, and in the midst of which, we are called to live and move and have our existence (Acts 17:28).

In proceeding to unpack the last half of this verse we must keep in mind the present tense of the verb "**cleansing**." Following Catholic theologians (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) justification is a doctrine that involves continued forgiveness of sins throughout the

believer's life. The traditional Reformed view of this verse is that "**the blood of Jesus**" refers here to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. When justification (*dikaio $\underline{u}$ ne*) is rightly understood as "being turned in the right direction (or: being rightwised – Bultmann's term)" or "being placed in the Way (Christ) pointed out" (W.E. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*) which involves "right relationship" (Barclay, and others) or "fairness and equity," the forensic notion of both Catholics and Protestants quickly disappears. Note again that the clause that we are considering here is following a

discussion about **common being and existence**, fellowship, partnership and common participation (*koinonia*). It is primarily a horizontal setting that is in view, although a setting that is located within the midst of God, as manifested in His Light. The message is about God bringing us into union with Him so that we can live "rightly" with other people, and treat them with love, fairness and equity. It is the cruciform life of a follower of Jesus (Matt. 16:24). The good news never speaks of God having to be reconciled to us. The message is for US to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:18-20). God loves us and even loves human society (the world – John 3:16).

Brian Zahnd is instructive here:

"The world is not just an aggregate of individuals; it is also civilization and human society as a whole, and God intends to save it. Thus Jesus is the savior of souls (individuals) *and* the savior of the world" (*Beauty Will Save the World, Rediscovering the Allure & Mystery of Christianity*, Charisma House, 2012, p 99, emphasis original).

Now I will agree that the shedding of Christ's blood was both a historical and an "eternal" act, since 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that God was within the midst of, and

in union with, Christ reconciling the aggregate of humanity (and society) to Himself. Our being cleansed by His blood reaches back to the Christ event that changed history and ended the age of the Law, bringing about a new creation. However, I would suggest that vs. 7b can have another application that is based upon our participation with one another, and with Him. The metaphor of a body has been used to describe the called-out community. The life of a body is within the blood (Lev. 17:14). Christ is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and we must drink in His life-blood (John 6:51-56) in order to have His life within us – it becomes our food.

But "blood" is also a metaphor, a symbol, of giving one's life for one's friend – as John 6:51 indicates in speaking of "the bread of life" that Jesus gave "for the life of the aggregate of humanity (the world)."

The body of Christ has life within it because His blood (within which is His life) circulates through every member, bringing life to each cell and carrying off the waste. As the members of the body come together in fellowship and inter-participation with one another, His life, via His Spirit and His Word (both of which are life) flows from member to member, both feeding and repeatedly, continuously cleansing each member

from mistakes and failures. Keep in mind that John has been speaking about living our lives in the Light (another bringer of life). Our *koinonia* is a source of life and cleansing, as His life-blood is drunk-down through the fellowship of our **common being**. He came that we might have Life. The shedding of the blood of animals, so that we can eat their flesh, is a means of providing life to us. And so was the cross (at Passover) a sign and a figure to us: it proclaimed our deliverance and fed us for our journey out of bondage and into His promises.

Another thought on the two parts of this one verse: the first part speaks in

corporate terms of a way of life, using the metaphor of Light to describe the character and quality of the covenant community. Perhaps we should see the second part, about His blood, as being the blood that created the covenant community – that it is this new arrangement (Matt. 26:26-29), this new covenant, which is being referenced as the vehicle for carrying away from the community the error and wrong direction of thought, cleansing it from the infection of the false teachings. My friend John Gavazzoni pointed here to Paul's "house-building" term used in Eph. 4:

16. – **from out of Whom** (or: out from the midst of Which) **all**

**the Body** (or: the entire body) **being continuously fitted and framed together** (made a common joint by a word; laid out and closely joined together) **and constantly being knit together and caused to mount up united through every fastening** (or: joint) **of the supply of rich furnishings** (or: through every assimilation of the full supply of funds; through every touch {kindling; setting on fire} of the completely supplied requirements) **in accord with** (or: down from; commensurate to) **the operation** (operative,

effectual energy) **within [the] measure of each one part** [other MSS: member], **is itself continually making** (or: is for itself progressively producing and forming) **the growth and increase of the Body, [focused on and leading] into house-construction** (or: unto building [up] and edification) **of itself within the midst of, and in union with, love.**

Here in vs. 7 John may have in mind the thoughts that Paul had shared with the Corinthians about when the community came together for covenant meals, that some were behaving poorly towards

others, not discerning that they were all coming together as Christ's body (1 Cor. 11:17-34). It was within that context that Paul was addressing "**tearing splits** (= separations into cliques; divisions) **continually inherent among [them]**" (vs. 18). And it was within their fellowship that they were partnering with the life (figured by the blood) of Christ, figuratively drinking it with Him in a new way, within the kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

**8. If we should up and say that we have no error** (or: do not periodically possess deviation or hold sin and mistake), **we are continuously leading ourselves astray** (or: deceiving

ourselves and driving ourselves off the Path), **and the Truth is not** (or: reality does not exist) **within us.**

**9. If it would be our habit to confess** (admit; avow; say the same thing as; speak in accordance with; or: would continue in agreement [about]) **our error** (our failure; our mistake; our sin), **He is constantly faithful and just** (fair; in accord with the Way pointed out and in right relationship; rightwised), **to the end that He would at once send away for us** (or: dismiss or pardon and cause to flow away in us) **the errors** ([some MSS add: our] failures, mistakes and deviations) **and then would cleanse** [other MSS: He will cleanse] **us from**

## **all injustice**

(all that is contrary to the Way pointed out; every unrighteousness; all unfairness, inequity and unrighteous relationships; every behavior that is turned in the wrong direction).

**10. If we would say that we have not failed to hit the target (or: sinned; made a mistake; erred; deviated), and exist thus, we habitually make Him a liar (one who utters falsehood), and His Word (Thought; Idea; message; Logos) does not exist among (or: is not within) us.**

Now as we approach John's thought in

vss. 8-10, let us keep in mind the context of what has just been said, before:

**common existence**, corporate fellowship, participation and partnership (*koinonia*), vs. 6-7, which is either within the Light (the truth, reality and proper conduct of the new covenant) or within darkness (vss. 5-6 – which is a metaphor for ignorance, wrong behavior and false teachings).

These verses have traditionally been read as applying to individuals – and a secondary reading can apply in this way. But the context instructs us that up to this point John is speaking corporately, and that these verses are addressing corporate issues of error and deviation.

*Hamartia* is an archery term that refers to endeavoring to hit a target, but making some mistake in our aim or release of the arrow and thus deviating and missing the goal of our endeavor. By seeing this term through the eyes of traditional Christian doctrine (via a limited translation which does not instruct us as to the core idea of the term) and the concepts of individual piety, I suggest that we have strayed from the point that John was making as he addressed covenant communities. Consider that the messages that were sent to the seven congregations in the Book of Revelation were primarily spoken to the corporate bodies; to the entire community of each

city (see my translation and the careful rendering of the personal pronouns, which were mostly singular, addressing the issues not to individuals but to the entire group as a unit).

The communities addressed in this letter had errors introduced into them by false teachers (folks who were in darkness and spoke lies and falsehoods), and they were being led astray into Gnosticism, or perhaps, what later became introduced into orthodoxy. The confession of error and deviation (vs. 9) is a corporate issue. He is not talking about making personal confessions to a priest or even to the group. This would not have been appropriate in a society

that had honor versus shame as a core value. Folks would have been embarrassed to do this – just as they are today, and so continue to carry a sense of guilt.

Note in 9b that their admitting the error of these false teaching would cleanse the group of all injustice: all that is contrary to the Way pointed out; every unrighteousness; all unfairness, inequity and unrighteous relationships; every behavior that is turned in the wrong direction. The false elitism and divisive, prejudiced individualism, characteristic of some Gnosticism, was resulting in behavior that was contrary to the Way of Christ – which is a life of cruciform

love, in covenant community. The "sin" was a corporate problem, just as was the improper table conduct in Corinth, cited above.

By claiming that they had no errors or deviations (had not failed to hit the target) they were making Christ and God a liar, for their behaviors were contradicting His Word, message and idea. If we do this (notice the corporate "we"), we show that His Word is not in existence within our group ("among us").



## Chapter 2

**1. My little children (born ones), I am writing these things to you (or: for you) to the end that you may not fail to hit the target (deviate from the goal; sin). And if anyone should at some point fail (or: suddenly commit sin, make a mistake or deviate), we constantly have One called alongside to help, give relief and guide us toward the Father (or: we continuously possess a Paraclete, face to face with the Father): Jesus Christ, [the] One in accord with the Way pointed out (or: a Just One; [the] Righteous One; [the] Fair One who is in right relationship with all;**

a Rightwised One; [the] right one; a Person that is turned in the right direction).

There are two ways in which we can understand John's use of the word "**little children.**" The first is in its literal sense, for the good news brought by Jesus began social change with these new covenant communities. Children were being addressed directly in letters (*cf* Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1, 2) – something that was unheard-of in secular societies of that time and culture.

The second is the metaphorical sense such as when Paul spoke to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:1-2, indicating that their spiritual development was like

new believers. Also, there is Heb. 5:12-13 where when folks should have grown in Christ so as to be teachers, they were still categorized as babies, "**untried** (inexperienced) **pertaining to [the] Word of the Way pointed out** (from the message of fair and equitable dealing or an idea about rightwised relationships; also: = in regard to the idea of, and the reason derived from, covenant membership."

Taking this second use a step farther, and considering the foregoing context of the previous chapter (and recall that there were no chapter divisions in the Greek texts, so verse 1 is continuing the thoughts just expressed in the previous

verses), John is likely classifying many of the recipients of this letter as little children. The noun *teknia* is the diminutive form, so he is not just calling them children, but "**My little children...**" The possessive pronoun shows that he is taking a position of a father to these folks – just as Paul did in 1 Cor. 4:15. Then he expresses another purpose for writing this letter: "**that you may not fail to hit the target** (deviate from the goal; sin)." Vss. 8-10 have assured the group(s) that they had missed the goal, but he is now writing that this should no longer be the case. At the same time, individuals who were "little born ones," in either sense mentioned above, would

receive positive encouragement in hearing this read to them.

But not to worry, the situation is bright, for, **"we constantly have One called alongside to help, give relief and guide us toward the Father."** Jesus is always available to us (we need not wait for some "end-time return"), and He functions as our Paraclete. He is "face to face with the Father," for they both have made their dwelling place with us (John 17:23). In fact, Paul refers to the called-out communities as "God's temple." Barclay says, "A *parakletos* has been defined as 'one who lends his presence to his friends'" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 38). Now note here His qualifications for

being our Paraclete: He is "**in accord with the Way pointed out** (or: a Just One; [the] Righteous One; [the] Fair One who is in right relationship with all; a Rightwised One; [the] right one; a Person that is turned in the right direction)." He is the perfect Guide for literal young children, and for folks who are new to the Way. He is turned in the right direction (toward the Father), so folks can follow Him with confident assurance. He is One who is in right relationship with all, so He will bring concord and unity to the communities. The deviant teachers should not be followed. Jesus the Messiah will be with their spirits, as their Guide and

Assistant. They "**constantly have**" (the present tense) Him. What assurance John imparts – and what awareness of His presence being with them.

The personal possessive pronoun "**His**" in vs. 7, above, shows that the following personal pronoun "**He**" in vs. 9 is referring to God, where the adjective "**just** (fair; in accord with the Way pointed out and in right relationship; rightwised)" is applied to Him – just as it is applied to Jesus in this verse. In the following verse we see an example of what this "justice" and "right relationship" implies.

**2. And He Himself exists continually being a cleansing, sheltering cover**

**around our mistakes and errors, sheltering us from their effects so that we can be in peaceful and rightwised relationships** (or: being the act by which our sins and failures are cleansed and made ineffective, effecting conciliation [to us]), **yet not only around those pertaining to us** (or: having their source in us), **but further, even around the whole ordered System** (secular realm and dominating world of culture, economy, religion and government; or: universe; or: aggregate of mankind)! Jesus the Messiah exists as our covering. In this He exemplifies what is right and just – what is the Way pointed out for one that is rightwised. "Covering or

shelter" is the literal meaning of *hilasmos* (which is usually rendered "propitiation" or "propitiating shelter" or "atoning sacrifice"). This word is used only here and in 4:10, below, in the NT. Nyland renders it here "the means for taking away our sins," (ibid. p 478). In His commentary on the book of Romans (*The Moffatt NT Commentary*), C.H. Dodd suggests that the word signifies to cleanse and remove. This word is used in the LXX for the Heb. *kaphar*, which is often rendered "atonement," e.g., in Num. 5:8 and Ps. 130:4 (in other places, such as Lev. 1:4, we find the verb form prefixed by *ex-*), but the literal meaning of this noun is "a

covering" or "a shelter." A related word, *hilasterios*, is the word for the "mercy seat," the cover of the ark of the covenant (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5). We find the verb form (*hilaskomai*) only in Lu. 18:13,

**"But the tax collector (or: tribute contractor), standing far off (= remaining at a distance, in the background), continued unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven (or: unto the atmosphere or sky) – and in contrast kept on beating (striking) his chest, repeatedly saying, 'O God, at your mercy seat let me, the failure (the one**

who has missed the goal; the sinner), **be sheltered and cleansed!,"**

and in Heb. 2:17,

**"... so that He might become a merciful and a faithful (or: loyal) Chief Priest (Leading, Ruling or Beginning Priest) [in regard to] the things toward God, into the [situation] to be repeatedly and continuously overshadowing the failures (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins) of the People with a gentle, cleansing shelter and covering."**

In this context, we should consider 1 Pet.

4:8,

**"because love is constantly covering** (habitually throwing a veil over; progressively concealing; [and with other MSS: will be covering]) **a multitude of failures** (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins)." [Prov. 10:12]

– especially considering that **"God is Love."**

I rendered the preposition *peri* literally, **"around,"** giving a more graphic picture of the act of covering in order to provide shelter. And with this picture, Ezk. 16:8 comes to mind, where Yahweh "... spread His hem (or: skirt) over

[Jerusalem] and covered [her] nakedness... and entered into covenant with [her]..." This was describing Yahweh's entering into covenant with Israel, using the metaphor of making her His wife. These last two references, which include Israel's story, should be kept in mind when seeking to understand vs. 2, above. Before it was a covenant with one nation, Israel. But now we see that the new covenant and the new covering include "the whole aggregate of mankind," or as Bultmann puts it, "the whole of the human world" (ibid. p 23). We see a similar thought expressed in John 1:29, where it says that the Lamb of God is the One "**continuously lifting up**

**and carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System."**

The giving of His life to us was sufficient to place a covering around all of humanity, and make them all His. You see, when Israel sacrificed an animal to the Lord, the animal became Yahweh's as a symbol signifying that Israel belonged to Yahweh. Here it is a better sacrifice (Heb. 9:23) that includes a covering for everyone with a "better covenant" (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). It is now a situation of **"the hearts [not the mercy seat of the ark] having been sprinkled from a consciousness of evil"** (Heb.

10:22).

Barclay comments, "There is in the New Testament a strong line of thought in which the universality of the salvation of God is stressed. God so loved *the world* that he sent his son (John 3:16). Jesus is confident that, if he is lifted up, he will draw *all men* to him (John 12:32). God will have *all men* to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4)." (Barclay, *ibid.* p 40, emphasis original)

Bultmann notes that *kosmos* (world) does not have the same meaning in this verse as it does in 2:15, below, but rather as how the idea is found in Rom. 3:23f ("**You see, all at one point veered off the mark** {or: all folks deviated; or:

everyone fails; everyone sins}..."), 2 Cor. 5:19 ("**God was existing within Christ** {or: God was and continued being in union with [the] Anointed One} **progressively and completely transforming [the] world to be other [than it is] in Himself, to Himself, for Himself and by Himself, not accounting to them** {not putting to their account; not logically considering for them; not reasoning in them) **the results and effects of their falls to the side** (their trespasses and offences}...") and 1 Tim. 2:6 ("**the One giving Himself a correspondent ransom** {a ransom in the place of and directed toward the situation} **over [the situation of and]**

**on behalf of** {or: for} **all** {everyone; all humanity and all things}..." and then suggests that in this verse it refers to "the whole of the human world, as in John 1:29; 3:16f; 4:42; 12:47" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 23).

**3. And so within this [situation], if we could be continuously watchful and would habitually keep, guard, observe, and maintain His implanted purposes and internalized goals (or: inner projections of destiny), we [would] progressively know through experience and continue to recognize with insight, because we have come to know Him, and we now experience Him intimately with insightful**

**knowledge.**

(or: So in union with this [relationship] – should we constantly maintain His impartations from the finished product, and would observe His inward directives of destiny – we progressively know by experience, and recognize by insight, that we have known Him.)

We should not miss the solidarity with them that John expresses with the plural "we." I suggest that this is more than a rhetorical devise (the "epistolary we"). What he is saying applies to everyone – all are one body in Christ.

I expanded *tereō* in the first clause (**watchful... maintain**) to inform the reader of the semantic range of this verb. The present subjunctive suggests that we can constantly do this. The direct object of this verb is the word *entole* which is composed of the preposition *en* (within; and in composition: inner; internal) and the word *telos* (purpose; goal; destiny; finished product; end in view; final outcome). In common use it can mean a command, but when an officer gave a command to a soldier, he was implanting his purpose into him. When an owner gave a precept or an instruction to his slave, he was imparting his immediate goal into him/her and that instruction had

to be internalized for the slave to carry it out. But our Father deals with us as children and friends, so I have chosen to emphasize the characteristics of the action, giving a picture of its mechanics, rather than simply using a common word that carries with it either a military or an owner-slave connotation. When God speaks to us, He projects an inner goal or destiny into us, implanting His Seed (Word) into our soil. He inserts a destiny into us.

Next in this verse, we come to two forms of the same verb *ginosko* (to know by intimate experience and have insight). In its first use here it is a present indicative. However, since I placed the

dependent clause first and since it is in the subjunctive, I have added "[would]" to correspond to the "if" of the dependent clause, and thus to conform to English syntax. John is saying that "if we could do this, then we would **"progressively know through experience and continue to recognize with insight."** We would have increased knowledge and insight **"because we have come to know Him, and we now experience Him intimately with insightful knowledge."** It is in this last clause that we meet this same verb, but here it is in the perfect tense – which describes an action completed in the past but with present and continuing

results. It is based upon the established experience of knowing Him that "watching... keeping... maintaining" His implanted purposes and internalized goals bring us progressive knowledge and continued insight. The "if-clause" suggests that progressive knowledge and continued insights are dependent upon tending the things that He has placed within us. This is like the metaphor of "abiding in the Vine" (John 15:1-10) where He says to His students, **"Whenever you may observe, watch over, guard and keep My implanted goals, you will be remaining (abiding; dwelling) with the midst of and in union with My love..."** (vs. 10).

Here Bultmann points out that "The theme of fellowship with God is now replaced by the theme of the knowledge of God.... [which] forms a substantive unity with the fellowship with God..." and later states that "There is no knowledge of God which as such would not also be 'keeping the commandments'." (ibid. p 24, 25).

**4. The person who keeps on saying, "I have come to know Him by experience," and yet is not habitually keeping (observing) His implanted goals (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives), is a liar (exists being one who speaks falsehood) and God's Truth (the Reality**

of God; the Genuine Actuality which is God) **is not** (or: does not exist) **within this one.**

This statement could apply to anyone who claims to be a part of God's called-out covenant community but is not existentially living his or her life in accord with the truth and reality of the qualities and characteristics of the Life in Christ, namely in self-giving love. We could relate this to the parable of the sheep and the kids in Matt. 25. If we don't recognize Him in His brothers and give ourselves into their need, we are not ready for participation in His reign and have need of His purging fires in our lives.

Considering the spiritual environment that John has been addressing, this verse probably referred to the Gnostics among them – those who claimed to have a special knowledge. He says that their claims and their teaching are lies. The requirements of the "if-clause" of vs. 3 must be met if one is to have experiential knowledge of Him: of the truth and reality which is the Christ, and which was implanted, imparted, inserted-within through the Word of Christ's destiny within humanity.

**5. Yet whoever may be habitually keeping** (attentively guarding to observe) **His Word** (Thought; Idea; message), **truly** (or: actually; in reality)

**within this person God's Love has been perfected and brought to its goal** (or: the love which is God has been matured, finished and reached its purposed destiny). **In this we constantly know experientially that we continuously exist within the midst of Him, and in union with Him.**

Note that "**God's Love**" is the goal of the above "if-clause" in vs. 3, and of the "may be" of the first clause here. Note also that "**His Word**" explains the content of His imparted goal, inner directive and implanted destiny. It is keeping and observing His message – i.e., living out His idea of a loving covenant community that reaches out to

others (a cruciform corporate-life) – that lets us know that our existence is in union with Him, and that we are in the midst of the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It gives proof to us, by our own experience, that we have been placed in the Way pointed out: that we have been rightwised into being fair, equitable and in right relationship with Him and with humanity. John has here given a practical, simple definition of what Paul termed *dikaiosisunē*, and what theology has termed "justification." It is a living state of being, not a "forensic fiction."

Bultmann sheds additional light, here, "...God's reality and his love are

identical, as stated in 4:8, 16: *ho theos agape estin* ('God is love').... the *tou theou* ('of God') [in the last phrase of vs. 5, above] is not an objective genitive ('love for God'), but rather a subjective genitive ('God's love for men')" (ibid. p 25, brackets mine). He further notes that when it speaks of "**has been perfected**" it "means that brotherly love is brought to fulfillment..." (ibid. p 26).

**6. The person habitually speaking [thus, as though] to be constantly abiding (remaining; dwelling) within Him, is continuously under obligation himself also to go on walking about (= behaving and conducting his life) just as That One (or: on the level and in the**

sphere as [He]) **walked** (or: walks; = lives His life).

Again, we are instructed that the ideas of "**abiding** (remaining; dwelling)" – *cf* John 15:1-13 – and of being "**within Him**" means living our lives "**just as**" He lived His life. "Jesus is thus referred to as the model and the foundation of Christian conduct" (*ibid.*, p 26). *Cf* John 13:15.

Or, since the verb "**walked**," in reference to His life, is in the aorist tense, it can be translated as a simple, English present, "walks." This would infer that John was speaking of His living His life within us, His body, and this would suggest an ontological sense

of being in union with Christ (vs. 5, above) – not just an agreement of our will with His.

**7. Beloved ones, I am not writing an implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of purpose) **new in kind or quality to you** (or: for you), **but rather an old implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of destiny) **which you folks have continually had** (or: were habitually holding) **from [the] beginning. The old implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directed destiny) **is the Word** (Thought; Idea; message) **which**

**you folks heard** (or: attentively hear [and thus obey])!

In other words, he is saying, "This is nothing new to you, it is what was told to you from the start. You have had this idea placed in your minds with the first message you heard about the Christ, and it has been this very Truth that you were habitually holding." Recall the words of Jesus in John 13:34,

**"I am giving to you men a new implanted goal** (an inward purposed directive different from that which had been formerly; an impartation of a finished product and destiny that is new in kind and character):

**that you folks are to be continuously and progressively loving** (or: should constantly love) **one another, just as** (correspondingly as; to the same level as; in the sphere as) **I love you folks so that you also may constantly** (or: would habitually) **love one another,"**

so we see that what John is speaking of here is indeed the original goal of Christ's covenant community. In fact, for the Jews of the recipient communities, the idea of loving one's neighbor dates at least to Lev. 19:18.

8. **Again,** (or: Once more) **I am writing to you an implanted goal** (impartation

of the finished product within; inward directive) **new in kind and quality, which is** (exists being) **true** (actual; real; genuine) **within Him, and within you** [other MSS: us], **that the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and of lack of the light of the Day; [note: a figure of the ignorance of the prior system and realm] **is progressively being caused to pass by, and the True Light** (or: = real knowledge and understanding; = Light of the new Day) **is already** (before now) **progressively shining and appearing.** In the message brought by Jesus quoted with the previous verse, we see that the folks participating in the new reality of

the reign of God are told to love and accept one another "just as" Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loves them. He loved the whole aggregate of humanity and gave His life for all. This was beyond Lev. 19:18 which was an injunction that applied only to those of their own community (their neighbors). Not only that, His teaching called His students to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44). This was certainly a revolutionary idea.

John is adding something more to the message here. Not only has the Christ come and given Light to the world, but with this dawning of the eschatological Day of the Lord (or, Christ), **"the**

**Darkness is progressively being caused to pass by.**" The old order of the previous age of ritual and animal sacrifice at a physical temple is about to vanish (John 4:21-24). Also see Heb. 8, beginning with vs. 6, "**But now...**" on through vs.13:

**"In thus to be saying "new," He has made the first (or: former) "old," and that [which is] progressively growing old and obsolete (failing of age), [is] near its disappearing (vanishing away)."**

The "**True Light**" which embodies the "true *gnosis* (knowledge; insight)" is "**already progressively shining and**

**appearing"** as the message of the Christ spreads throughout the world. What had been looked for by the prophets of old was now present and growing. Nothing else needed to be sought through mystic experience or secret knowledge. The Reality of the kingdom of God had arrived and His sovereign influence was in action.

**9. The person who keeps on speaking [thus, as though] to be within the Light, and yet is constantly hating (or: regarding with ill-will) his brother (or: = fellow believer; or: fellow member of his society), is a liar and continues being within the Darkness (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and**

lack of the light of the Day; = prior night) **until the present moment.**

It was "**the Darkness**" that was the state of existence (both in Judaism and in the pagan religions) before the coming of the Christ – "**the Light**" (John 1:4-9; 3:19-21). Hate and ill-will are the very opposite of Love and acceptance, just as darkness is the opposite of the Light. It was the hate that killed the Christ, just as hating another person makes one a murderer (3:15, below). A person cannot be in union with the Light and be hating others. So the person who claims to be a Christian but hates someone else is really not a Christian, but is lying and is in darkness.

With regard to the false teachers, assuming that they were teaching Gnosticism, John is calling them liars because in their elitism they actually had ill-will toward those that they considered to be "average" believers within the community. John is saying that what they presume to be enlightened "knowledge" was nothing more than the darkness (ignorance) that existed before the advent of the Light. (*cf* Matt. 5:21-22)

**10. The person habitually loving (seeking accepting reunion with) his brother constantly abides (remains; dwells; = has his home) within and in union with the Light, and there exists**

**no snare** (trap-spring; stick upon which bait is put; = cause for stumbling) **within him.**

Love is the quality and character of God and of His Light (Christ). It is the opposite of hate and darkness. Here John gives further instruction of how we can know that we are within Christ, and "**in union with the Light.**" When we are really operating in love there will be no cause for stumbling within us, causing us to stumble; no trap-spring within us to ensnare or stumble other folks. If we are always "seeking accepting reunion" with people, we are on the right track – we are walking in the Light of the Way.

**11. But the person habitually hating**

(or: repeatedly having ill-will toward) **his brother** (or: = fellow believer or fellowman) **constantly exists within the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows, lacking of the light of the Day) **and so continuously walks about amidst the Darkness, and has not seen so is not aware where he is progressively departing** (or: habitually going away), **because that Darkness blinds** (or: blinded) **his eyes.** Again, hate is a sign of darkness. It is an absence of love and acceptance of people. When we are in darkness we are not being led by God's Spirit; we are not existing as "sons of God" because we are hating folks. We thus do not know

where our life is going and are ignorant of our destiny. We are not participating in the rightwised conduct, the peace or the Spirit-generated joy of kingdom (Rom. 14:17). The false teachers were "blind guides" (Matt. 23:16-26), as were the Pharisees. Much of the divisive teaching of Christianity with the "us and them" mentality which results in exclusion of others has continued this same tradition of darkness. Elitism and prejudice have been the plague of every religion.

**12. I am writing to you, little children (or: young born ones), that the failures (mistakes; sins; deviations; situations of missing the goal) have been sent away**

(or: caused to flow away; put away; divorced; forgiven) **for you through His Name** (or: because of the Name which is Him)!

Whether he is referring to the work of the cross, in the phrase "**through His Name**" / "because of the Name...", or whether John is speaking prophetically in the Word of this letter, saying that he, John, is sending away the mistakes of the group, is not certain. Recall that Jesus said to His disciples in John 20:23,

**"If you folks should send away** (dismiss; allow to depart; forgive; pardon; divorce) **the mistakes** (sins; errors; failures) **of certain ones, they have**

**been sent away for them** (or: have been and remain pardoned in them; have been dismissed or divorced by them). **If you would continue holding fast and controlling** (or: should keep on grasping and exercising strength; or: can restrain, hinder, hold back) **those of certain ones, they have been and continue being held fast and controlled** (seized; grasped; restrained)."

Whichever, and perhaps both, we are here instructed in the power and authority of His Name, and he is referring to the results as a statement of fact.

See the discussion on "little children" in 2:1, above. He may here be speaking of categories of development within the group, or of age levels, or simply expressing intimate affection.

A word about "**His Name**" seems appropriate here. "The Jews used *the name* in a very special way. The name is not simply that by which a person is called; it stands for the whole character of a person in so far as it has been made known to men" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 53). Ps. 9:10 tells us, "Those who know Your Name put their trust in You." This signifies that they knew His *nature*. In the same way, Ps. 25:11 lays claim to Who He is in the plea for pardon: "for

the sake of Your Name" – i.e., "Your reputation." Ps. 31:3 bases a request for guidance "for the sake of Your Name" because Yahweh was David's "mountain crag and stronghold." Ps. 20:7 professes that they "trust in the Name of Yahweh our God" instead of trusting in military might, because His Name represented His power and sovereignty. Thus, here, we see that it is because of the authority that John bears as a member of His body who represent Him, as well as the power inherent in His Name itself, that John can make this statement. His Name equals His Word.

**13. I am writing to you, fathers (or: parents), that you have by experience**

**known, and now have intimate insight of, the One [Who is] from [the] beginning (or: the Original One). I am writing to you, young men (or: youths), that you have overcome (conquered; are victorious over) the one bringing a gush of misery**

(or: the useless, unprofitable situation; the wicked man; the evil one; the bad situation or sorry plight; the worthless man; the pernicious and knavish fellow; the one causing anguish and painful labor; the condition full of harassed toil and annoying perils; the base fellow) – **and this now exists**

**as a decided victory.**

The categories of "**fathers**," "**young men**" and "**little boys and girls, or servants**" (in vs.14) seems to suggest that in this passage he is directing his words to the age-groups that compose the community, recognizing each as significant and important – as opposed to the false teachers who would only recognize the elite of the group: those with the supposed *gnosis*. The term "**fathers**" (*pateres*) has been found in papyrus writing where it referred to both male and female, and thus have I inserted "(or: parents)" as a possible meaning (e.g. *cf* Nyland, *ibid.* p 374, note 6, and others).

The fathers have experience in knowing Christ. The phrase "**the One [Who is] from [the] beginning** (or: the Original One)" is a clear reference to John 1:1 where Christ is identified as the *Logos* (Word). He is reminding them that they have intimate insight into the truth of Christ, so they should not be easily led astray for exotic teachings.

He reminds the young people that in Christ they have overcome this unprofitable situation (or: the person who is bringing a gush of misery into their lives; the useless false teacher; the one who is causing anguish and painful labor and harassing toils – the base fellow that is adding unnecessary

religious practices to your lives). My **bold** translation gives the most literal meaning of the word *poneros*, and the parenthetical expansions give the full sweep of its semantic range.

Unfortunately, traditional doctrines have personified this word as always indicating "the devil." But if we let the context instruct us, we will see that John is most likely referring to the false teachers that were among them.

Notice the effect of the perfect tense of "**overcome**." He is saying that they presently have the victory, and are in a state of being, or in the situation, of having completely overcome it. Again, he is either reminding them of their

ongoing victory in Christ, or he spoke prophetically into their lives, bringing release from the worthless situation and knavish person that had brought it about.

**14. I write to you, little boys and girls, or servants, who might be hit for discipline** (or: those of the age for being educated and trained), **that you have by experience known the Father; I write to you, fathers** (or: parents), **that you have by experience known, and now have insight into, the One [Who is] from [the] beginning** (or: the Original One). **I write to you, young men** (or: youths), **that you are** (or: exist being) **constantly strong, and God's Word** (Logos; Thought; Idea; message)

**continuously dwells** (abides; remains) **within you and you have overcome** (conquered; are the victor over) **the one bringing a gush of misery** (see parenthetical expansion in verse 13, above).

I brought the first clause, which addresses again the boys and girls, or servants, into vs. 14 because of the similarities of the dependant "**that**" clauses in both this and the next clause that addresses again the fathers/parents. The first one speaks of knowing the Father, while the second is a reference to Christ. I suggest here that John is referencing the words of Jesus in John 14:7, 9-11, and I quote vs. 7 here,

**"Since you men have personally and experientially known Me (or: If you folks had insight of Me or were acquainted with Me), you will also personally and experientially know and perceive My Father [other MSS: you would likely have seen and now know (or: perceive) My Father, as well]. And so from right now (this moment) you are intimately, experientially and progressively knowing Him (or: gaining insight of Him) and have seen [Him]."**

He is likely repeating the last clause about overcoming for emphasis. But here he adds the idea of their being **"constantly strong"** because **"God's Word... dwells"** in them as the reason for this. Of this second clause, Bultmann observes, "... the strength of the 'young men' rests on the fact that God's word 'abides [dwells]' in them and determines their existence" (ibid. p 32).

15. **You folks should not be habitually loving** (as indicative: are not normally accepting; as imperative: Stop constantly seeking reunion with) **the world** (secular realm and the controlling ordered System of culture, religion, economy and government), **neither** (or: not even) **the**

**things within the world** (ordered system). **If anyone is in the habit of** (or: keeps on) **loving the world** (ordered system of religion, or of secular society), **the Father's** [other MSS: God's] **Love** (or: the love which the Father has; the Love which is the Father) **does not exist within him,**

In unpacking this verse, the first thing to realize is the particular meaning of *kosmos* (world) in this and the following verses. Bultmann (ibid. p 32) points out that John is not here speaking of the cosmos of the physical creation, nor of the world of humanity. Here we need to consider the semantic range that includes those parenthetically inserted in my

translation of this verse, above, following the word "**world**." In vss. 16-17 John explains what he means by his use of this word. Many false ideas have stemmed from a Gnostic reading of this verse, coupled with the Platonic ideas about *essences* – that the true and real are only in the realm of "spirit" or in a "heaven beyond the blue sky." Barclay quotes C.H. Dodd in his definition of *kosmos* here: "Our author means human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values and egoism" (ibid. p 56).

The verb form *agapate* is in the present tense, but this can be a subjunctive, an

indicative or an imperative – as my expanded rendering shows. John is either affirming that they are not, saying that they should not, or telling them to stop. The expanded meanings of "**loving**" – accepting; seeking reunion with – are the central ideas of what John is saying. They should stop accepting what their local culture or the Roman rule say are right, and accept the message that Jesus brings. They should not repeatedly seek reunion with the systems of religions from which they have been called out. As a new creation community they are not normally embracing the norms of the secular society or the economics of the systems in which they live. They are

living by kingdom norms and the economics of giving. Recall vs. 5, above, and the relation of God's love to keeping His Word (= living His message).

If someone IS "**in the habit of**, or keeps on, **loving**" these arranged systems, then it is evident that they are not in union with "**the Father's Love**," and this love is not an existential part of their being. The term "**Father**" is in the genitive case, and the varied renderings present the potential function which the genitive can express.

16. **because everything within the world** (ordered but dominating System of the secular and the religious) – **the**

## **flesh's over-desire**

(full passion of the alienated human nature; lust of the estranged self; earnest wants of the false persona that was conformed to the System), **and the eyes' over-desire, and the arrogant ostentation** (haughty, presumptuous or pretentious egoism) **pertaining to living** (= the biological and sociological life we live), **is not out of the Father as a source** (or: does not proceed from the Father), **but rather is continuously forth from out of the world** (the ordered System of society, culture and religion),

So here John's language about love and the "world" is explained. The

parenthetical expansion gives insights to the meaning of "**the flesh's over-desire.**" Alienation and estrangement give rise to desires for reunion, which in itself is good, but which the state of being alienated and estranged from God distorts into "**over-desire,**" and lust. The allurements of the System (be this system a religious one, or a secular one) draw us towards conformity to itself. This is why Paul said,

**"And stop constantly conforming yourself to** (or, as passive: Then quit being repeatedly fashioned or patterned together by) **this age** [or, with other MSS: and not to

be continuously configured to this age; and not to constantly remodel yourself for this age], **but on the contrary, be continuously transformed** (transfigured; changed in shape, form and semblance) **by the renewing** (or: in the renewal; for the making-back-up-new again) **of your mind...**" (Rom. 12:2).

We see in the advertising and media industries of our culture the realities of which John is speaking here. From them arise great and repeated "**over-desires**" which draw us into accepting and seeking union with the Systems of

religion, as well as the Systems of the norms of cultural relating to people. The result is "**the love, which many people have, (or: the love of many folks) will be caused to blow cold**" (Matt. 24:12) and the Father's love is not to be found in them.

As to "**the eyes' over-desires,**" Barclay again cites C.H. Dodd who says this means "the tendency to be captivated by outward show" (ibid. p 58), but this could also refer to desiring to possess the thing at which one looks. The next word, *alazoneia*, Barclay describes as "the boastful braggart who tries to make himself out a far bigger man than he is" (ibid. p 58).

**17. and the world** (ordered System of religion, society, culture, economy and government) **is progressively** (or: constantly; repeatedly) **being caused to pass along** (pass by; pass away), **as well as its over-desire** (full passion; earnest wants; lust), **yet the person constantly doing** (or: performing) **God's will** (intent; purpose; desire) **remains** (abides; dwells) **on into the Age** (= the time and sphere characterized by the Messiah).

The passing away of this world equates to "**the Darkness**" that "**is progressively being caused to pass by**" in verse 8, above. This is an ontological statement, referring to the passing of the

previous age that accompanied the dawning of the new creation. It was also an eschatological statement, referring to what was about to happen at "**the combination of parts to one end of the age**" (Matt. 24:3) and the "**conjunction of the age**" (Matt. 28:20). It is what Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 7:31b,

**"for the outward fashion, mode of circumstance, condition, form-appearance** (or: character, role, phase, configuration, manner) **of this System** (ordered world of culture, religion and society) **is progressively passing by** (= the present scheme of things is

changing and passing away)." Consider well the second half of this verse: it is not speaking of being "whisked away" somewhere, but of remaining and dwelling. This continues on in this new age in which we are presently living and in the body of the Messiah – here, upon the earth. The previous age ended with the death of the Messiah, and this was manifested in that generation by the giving of the Spirit and, in AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The old has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17).

**18. O undeveloped ones or folks of the age to be educated** (or: servants, little boys and little girls who might be hit in

training and for discipline), **it continues being** (or: is progressively) **a last hour** (= an *eschaton* of the Day, or the closing moment [of the age]), **and according as you hear** (or: heard) **that an antichrist** (or: anti-anointing; that which is instead of, or in the place of, Christ or the Anointing) **repeatedly comes** [other MSS: the anti-anointing (or: antichrist) continuously comes], **even now many anti-anointings** (or: antichrists; many things or people taking the place of Christ or stand in opposition to the Anointing) **have been born and are here** (or: have come into existence and are at large), **from which fact** (or: whence) **we constantly know by**

**experience that it continues being a last hour** (= a closing moment [of the age]).

Peter spoke of the ransom paid by Christ's precious blood: "**a flawless** (unblemished) **and spotless Lamb.... One being set in clear light and manifested upon [the] last part** (or: final; [*p*72 and others read plural: last things, circumstances or aspects]) **of the times** (or: of the [or: these] successive chronological time periods)" in 1 Pet. 1:18-20. This historically sets the time period of "the last time or days," or as John phrases it here, "a last hour." They knew that they were at the close of one age, and the beginning of the new.

Balaam prophesied to Balak in Num.  
24:14-19,

"I shall counsel you what this  
people shall do to your people  
**in the latter days....**

A Star will position itself from  
Jacob; and a Scepter will arise  
from Israel...

And Israel will do ably. For  
One from Jacob shall hold sway  
(or: wield dominion) and will  
destroy the survivors of a city  
(or: fortress)."

This word has long been applied to  
Jesus as the Messiah, as was Jer. 23:5-6  
which speaks of "a righteous Branch"  
who will reign as King, "And THIS is

His name where by He shall be called, 'Yahweh our Righteousness'." Then in vs. 20 we read, "In the last (or: **latter end**) of the days shall you people understand it perfectly." These are just a couple examples of the long history of the idea of "the last day," which Bultmann says "stem from OT Jewish apocalyptic" literature. (ibid. p 36) Even Jacob used the concept when beginning the prophecies about his sons in Gen. 49:1, speaking first of all about "when the people of Israel would enter into the Promised Land" (Barclay, ibid. p 59). "In biblical thought the last time is the end of one age and the beginning of another" (ibid. p 60).

Bultmann rightly says that "the antichrists are the false teachers, and everyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ (vs. 22), who does not 'confess' him (4:3), who does not acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh (2 Jn 7)..." (ibid. p 36). Because such folks have arisen within the covenant communities John avers that by experience they are aware that **"it continues being a last hour,"** or, a closing moment of that age. This is another way of saying that the darkness is passing away (vs. 8), and "the true light is already shining" (ibid. p 36). Note the opening phrase of this verse: John is speaking to the entire

community(ies) and he is classifying them as folks of the age that still needs to be taught. The next verse continues to speak of the antichrists.

**19. They came (or: come; go; or: went) out from us, but they were not existing out of us (or: they were not [a part] of us), for if they were out of us, they would have remained (dwelt; abided) with us; but [this was] to the end that they may be manifested (caused to appear) that they are not all out of us or from us.**

This verse instructs us that the term and concept of "antichrist" does not refer to any one person, it is simply a manifestation of the darkness which

comes from time to time but is always caused to flee because of the Light. John wrote here about situations that existed in Asia Minor during his lifetime. These warning concerned what he saw as a present danger to the communities to whom he was writing. Paul prophesied of such situations in Acts 20:

**29. "Now I myself have seen and am aware that, after (or: with) my spreading forth as dust and ashes (= going away, so as to be out of reach), heavy (= burdensome and oppressive) wolves will enter into the midst of you folks – folks by habit not sparing**

(or: treating with tenderness or forbearance) **the flock,**

**30. "and men from among you yourselves (= from your own community) will of themselves stand up, repeatedly speaking things having been thoroughly turned and twisted (things that are distorted and not straight), to progressively drag (or: draw; [D & p41 read: turn]) away the disciples behind (thus: after) themselves."**

**20. And further, you folks continue having the effects (or: constantly hold**

and progressively possess the results) of **an anointing from the set-apart One** (or: the Holy One), **and so you all have seen and are aware** (or: know; perceive; [other MSS: and you know all {those} folks]).

In the first clause the verb is in the present tense and means to have, hold and possess, and thus the three renderings which I have provided. Each sense of the linear action of the verb gives a slightly different nuance.

Something can continue without being constant. Something can continue or be constant without being progressive.

Taken together they give a vital sense to the anointing. As to the semantic range of

meaning, a person can have something without holding or possessing it; it can be a possession without him presently having it or holding it. Holding it lends a sense of controlling it in a very immediate sense. Recall that Paul said,

**"Also – [the] spirits and attitudes of the prophets are normally humbly aligned with [other] prophets, or, to [the] Prophets (or: breath-effects of those having fore-light are constantly subjected and subjoined to the arrangements [made] by [the] folks having fore- light)." (1 Cor. 14:32)**

Now observe that what is had, held or

possessed is not the anointing itself, but the effects or the results. This comes from the *-ma* ending of the Greek word, *chrisma*. Notice its closeness to *christos*, Christ. This could be rendered "the effects of Christ," and it would be exactly right. And John here spoke this to the entire community – or to the communities in which this letter was shared. He did not say "Some of you have..." or "The leadership possesses and controls..." He would not likely have known each individual or the personal states of piety or understanding. They constantly had the effects of the anointing and progressively possessed the results of the "Christ-ing" because

they were members of the covenant community; they were alive in Christ. The anointing was a symbol, a figure that represented the presence and effective participation of the Spirit of God, the Breath-effect, with a human. This was an ontological union which was intimate to the extent that the believer became "**one spirit**; one Breath-effect; one Attitude" with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Here, John regards this as a corporate experience because a covenant community is one — they are members one of another (Rom. 12:5).

John Gavazzoni has written,

"In fact, there is no such thing as an enjoyment of Christ on a

merely individual basis. I think that's a thread that runs through all of Paul's thought. That is not to say, of course, that to receive from the Lord means that we must be in the physical presence of other believers, but that since 'he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' the 'mystical body of Christ' factor is always present, so that in some way, others' spirits, in union with Christ's Spirit, are always a part of our personal communion with God."  
(from a private email)

Because of the first clause of this verse, John reminds them that "**you all have**

**seen and are aware** (or: know; perceive)." Again, this is a corporate awareness, knowledge and perception of what he has just been saying in the previous verses. This verse has often been taken out of context, and poorly translated to suggest that "ye know all things" (KJV). They were aware because they had seen and perceived what he was talking about in vs. 19 and above. Other MSS have all in the accusative, instead of the nominative, and so can read "and you know all [those] folks (or: [them] all)," which makes sense to the context, as well. Again in reference to the false teachers, vs. 27 instructs them that because "**the**

**effects of the anointing which you folks received (or: receive) from Him constantly remain (abide; dwell; make their home) within you folks... you continually have no use (or: you are not constantly having a need) that anyone should keep on teaching you (or: be repeatedly giving you a course of lessons; coach you; instruct you)." They did not need these false teachers that left their group(s).**

Bultmann (ibid. p 37) informs us "that 'anointing' played an important role in Gnosticism, viz., as the sacrament of anointing," citing Rudolf Schnackenburg (*Die Johannesbriefe*, Friburg, Herder, p 152 notes 3 and 4). This sheds much

light on why John brought this up at this juncture.

**21. I do not write to you because you do not know the Truth** (or: [new] Reality), **but rather because you do know it, and because every lie is not forth from the Truth** (or: even that all falsehood is not [coming] from Reality). With our understanding enlightened by vss. 19-20, we see that the "**lie**" refers to the false teachings that had been coming into these communities, and that they were not a part of the true message from the Christ – and the reality was that these communities really knew this. The history of the "church" is rife with such experiences – such as these against

which John is writing in this letter – and today such things are in full bloom. *Cf* the letter from Judah (Jude).

**22. Which one is (exists continuously being) the liar, if not the person habitually denying (repeatedly disowning; = constantly turning his back), [saying] that Jesus is not the Christ (the Anointed One [= Messiah])? This person is (exists being) the anti-anointing (or: anti-anointed person; the one taking the place of and being in the opposite position of the anointing and of Christ): the one habitually denying (constantly turning his back on) the Father and the Son.**

At first glance, the first statement might

indicate that John is referring to the Jews, specifically, here – and indeed this does historically apply to many of them even to this day who did not accept Jesus as their Messiah. But with the understanding that John is addressing the Gnostic belief that the historical Jesus only "seemed" to be the Christ, that the Christ only came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him just before He died, we can better understand why John's next sentence refers to such a person as personifying "**the anti-anointing**" or is "the anti-anointed person." This person, the one who does not see "The Man Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 2:5) or the Second Man

and *eschatos* Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47) as the embodiment (incarnation) of God in humanity, is "the one taking the place of and being in the opposite position of the anointing and of Christ."

To deny the historical Jesus as the Christ is to also deny **"the Father and the Son"** because,

**"no one is by habit completely or accurately knowing the Son in an intimate and personal way – except the Father – nor does anyone continue having an intimate experiential full-knowledge of the Father – except the Son, as well as to or in whomever the Son in now**

**desiring** (wanting) **to unveil [Him].**" (Matt. 11:27; *cf* Lu. 10:22)

Also there are the witnesses from the gospel of John,

**"The person progressively believing and continuing to put trust into Me is not continuously believing and placing trust into Me, but rather, into the One sending Me, and the person continually gazing at and contemplatively watching Me is continuously looking upon (viewing and contemplating; watching) the One sending Me."** (12:44-45)

**"No one is presently going to, or progressively coming toward, the Father, except through Me (through means of Me, or, through the midst of Me)." (14:6)**

**"The one having seen Me has seen, and now perceives, the Father!" (14:9)**

These fly in the face of those who wish to bypass Jesus or "move beyond" Him as they endeavor to simply discover the god within us, as did the Gnostics of John's day. It is true that our real identity is that of being His children and that it is by His indwelling Spirit that Christ is within us. As Paul quoted in Acts 17:28,

**"we are also a family of the One** (His species and offspring; a family which is composed of the One)."

Peter spoke to a same or similar issue,

**"as also false teachers will exist (or: be) among you folks, ones who will stealthily introduce (bring in alongside; smuggle in) destructive choices (or: destructive sects or schools; heresies marked by, and which pertain to, loss or destruction) even repeatedly denying (disowning; disclaiming) the Sovereign Owner (or: Absolute Master) having purchased them (or: buying them at the**

gathering, or market, place)..."  
(2 Pet. 2:1)

This is a clear reference to the ransom paid by Jesus. Denying the Son is denying "**the Head of the body**" (Col. 1:18). Denying the Father is denying all that Jesus taught.

We see, below, in 4:2-3 (and in 2 John 7) that these teachers disputed Jesus Christ as "**having come and now continuing in flesh.**" "[A]nd when in 5:6 it is claimed in opposition to them that Jesus came *di' hudatos kai haimatos* ('by water and blood'), then everything points to the fact that they deny that the Christ is identical with the earthly, historical Jesus.... [which is] the dualism

of Gnosticism, which asserts the exclusive antithesis between God and the sensible world" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 38). Barclay points out that there are three main confessions of Jesus in the NT: as the *Son of God* (Matt. 16:16; John 9:35-38); that He is *Lord* (Phil. 2:11); and that He is the *Messiah*, here in this verse (*ibid.* p 68, emphasis original).

**23. Everyone continuously denying or turning his back on the Son does not even have (or: not even is he possessing; neither holds) the Father. The one habitually speaking like the Son (or: the one continuously confessing and avowing the Son; the one habitually**

speaking in accord with or saying the same thing as the Son) **also constantly has** (possesses) **the Father.**

Our relationship to the Father is shown by the verb *echein* (have; possess), as in 2 Jn 9.. We saw this same verb in vs. 20, above. There it spoke of "having" the anointing; here it speaks of having "**the Father.**" We can conclude that to have the one is to have the other, and likewise, confessing the Son equates to possessing the Father. Conversely, by turning one's back on or denying the Son (i.e., Jesus, the Human) one denies and turns one's back on God.

**24. As for you folks, let what you heard from [the] beginning be**

**continuously remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within you. When** (or: If; If at any time) **that which you heard from [the] beginning would remain** (should abide; can dwell; may stay and make its home) **within you, you also will continue remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within the Son, even within the midst of and in union with the Father!** (or: you will dwell both in the Son and in the Father).

For us, today, John's admonition would be, "Stay with the Scripture and its message." When His Word remains, abides, dwells and stays within us, we – by and through this – continue remaining and abiding "**within the Son, even**

**within the midst of and in union with the Father!"** This answers to John 15:4-10. This is the goal, our destiny, and it can be our present reality. We can want no more than this. This is the glory. Our understanding of this may increase, and the experience will progress, but it is as we actually live in and with Him that these are actualized. This is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

**25. And this is (continues being) the Promise which He Himself promised (or: promises) to us [other MSS: to you]: the Life of the Age**

(or: eonian life; life into the unseeable future; age-lasting life; Life having the character and

qualities of the Age [of  
Messiah]; life pertaining to the  
ages; Life for and on through the  
ages). [note: in Acts 1:4-5 the  
“Promise” was the Holy Spirit]

The Promise is the coming of the Age of  
Messiah, when the Holy Spirit indwells  
the New Humanity – the Last Adam, of  
whom Jesus is the Head and Source.

This is the Life:

**"Now THIS is (or: exists being)  
eonian life (living existence of  
and for the ages; life pertaining  
to the Age [of Messiah]):  
namely, that they may  
progressively come to  
intimately and experientially**

**know You, the only true and real (genuine) God – and Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary (or: as well as Jesus [as the] Anointed One, whom You sent off as a Representative)." (John 17:3)**

You see, this is the true *gnosis*, and it is all based upon union with the Father and the Son (John 17:21-26), and it is the true Promise. Today Christians are told that they should have material wealth and possessions. They primarily base this upon the lives of folks that lived under the old covenant – like Abraham or Solomon. But the wealth and possessions that those folks had did not

last, and neither did they bring those people into the kingdom. Consider what Jesus said about material wealth,

**"It continues being easier for a camel to pass through the midst of a needle's perforation (or: eye; hole bored or worn-through) than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God (God's sovereign reign and activities)." (Mk. 10:25; cf Mt. 19:23)**

How more plain could He make it? Yet we are repeatedly given OT promises (which applied to Israel, alone) about wealth and abundance, as they ask for money to support their ministries. But

seldom do we hear about "**the Promise**" which He Himself promised.

We find expression of this "eonian life," of the Life of the Age, in the covenant communities to which the letters of the NT were written.

**26. I write these things** [other MSS: But I wrote these things] **to you about the folks constantly trying to lead you astray** (or: periodically causing you to wander; repeatedly deceiving you), So here, again, we find the purpose for his saying these things: to warn them about the false teachers that had been among them – the wolves that Paul spoke of and the

**"impious ones, people**

**continuously changing the grace and favor of God into licentiousness, as well as repeatedly denying and disowning our only Sovereign and Lord (or: Supreme Ruler and Owner), Jesus Christ [= Messiah]"**

of whom Judah spoke (Jude 4) that **"came in unobserved."**

Being led astray or being deceived was not about immoral living, but about false teaching that would put the focus on the individual and not upon Christ or His body. It caused them to wander away from the Way, or Path, pointed out (the real meaning of "righteousness").

**27. and the effects of the anointing which you folks received (or: receive) from Him constantly remain (abide; dwell; make a home) within you folks, and you continually have no use (or: you are not constantly having a need) that anyone should keep on teaching you (or: be repeatedly giving you a course of lessons; coach you; instruct you), but rather, just as the effects of His anointing is continuously and progressively teaching you about everything (or: concerning all people), and is continuously true, and real, and is not a lie, even according as it taught (or: as He instructs) you: you are continuously abiding (remaining;**

dwelling; being at home) **within and in union with Him** (or, reading as an imperative: be constantly remaining, abiding, staying and dwelling within the midst of Him).

Barclay has pointed out something very significant in the first clause of this verse: "In the old days anointing had been the privilege of the chosen few, the priests, the prophets and the kings; but now it is the privilege of every Christian, however humble he may be" (ibid. p 69). And furthermore, its effects constantly remain "**within**" us. You may have heard some preacher or teacher characterized as having a "strong anointing on" her or him. It is Christ

within us and among us that gives us the effects of the anointing. Having a "strong anointing" finds no place in Scripture: you either have it by being "in Him," or you don't yet. I suspect that we have been misled by Darth Vader who said, "The force is strong within this one." This is just another term of religious elitism.

Note well that this first clause is once again addressed to the plurality of the group(s). We have the effects of the anointing because of being part of the body of Christ.

The context of the second clause is John's message concerning the false teachers: they and we do not need

teachers who possess esoteric knowledge or those who give instruction on things that are outside of the message and Word of Christ. But within this message, He gave us teachers of the true Reality (e.g., Eph. 4:11).

But as he continued in this verse, we see that the **"effect"** of His anointing **"is continuously and progressively teaching you [and us] about everything** (or: concerning all people), **and is continuously true, and real."** The word *panton* is a form of the word "all" that is both neutral and masculine, thus I have given renderings of both. Note that the teaching about everything is progressive. And in this Life we also learn about all

people.

Yet let us direct our gaze to the focus of all this teaching: it is concerning the present reality of our "**continuously abiding** (remaining; dwelling; being at home) **within and in union with Him**" – taking *menete* as a present indicative.

This same spelling can also be an imperative, thus the second rendering as an admonition.

28. **And now** (at the present time; in this moment), **little children** (born-ones; bairns), **you are continuously** (or, reading as imperative: keep on) **dwelling** (abiding; remaining; staying) **within and in union with Him, to the end that if** (or: whenever) **He** (or: it)

**may be manifested** (made visible and apparent; shown in clear light) **we can** (or: may; should; would) **have confident boldness** (freedom in speaking associated with citizenship; complete outspoken bluntness) **and may not feel or receive shame** (disgrace; dishonor; humiliation) **from Him, within His presence** (or: may not be shamed away from Him in the midst of His presence).

We have the same verb *menete* once again. And again, this is either a reminder of their realm of spiritual existence, or an admonition to remain there. But let us open our lens aperture to take in more light on the purpose of

our remaining in union with Him, introduced by the phrase "**to the end that.**" Traditional eschatology has put the following clause to some time in the future when Jesus will somehow physically appear either to the "end-time church" or to the world (the traditions vary).

I first chose the word "**manifested**" to trigger association with the KJV rendering of Rom. 8:19 ("the manifestation of the sons of God") in the reader, and because this is a good rendering of the Greek. But the parenthetical expansion should add clarity to this phrase. The literal means to show in clear light. Thus, to be made

visible so other folks can see something. In 2 Cor. 4:10-11 Paul uses this same verb in relation to Christ, so let us consider what he says,

**"... to the end that the life, also, of Jesus (or: so that also the life which comes from and is Jesus; or: so that Jesus' life) can (may; would) be set in clear light and manifested, within our body (or: in the midst of the body, which is us)!**

**For we, ourselves – the continuously living ones – are ever being repeatedly handed over into death (or: = continuously delivered into life-**

threatening experiences) –  
**because of Jesus – to the end  
that the life, also, of Jesus** (or:  
so that also the life which comes  
from and is Jesus; or: so that  
Jesus' life) **can** (may; could;  
would) **be set in clear light and  
manifested – within our mortal  
flesh!"**

I suggest that John is meaning something quite similar in vs. 28, here. Note Paul's repetition of the name, Jesus, and note the corporate (and corporal) manifestation to which he refers.

Remaining in union with Him gives us the "freedom of speaking" and "**confident boldness**" that the disciples

always sought from the Lord (Acts 4:29, 31; 2 Cor. 7:4) and Phil. 1:20,

**"that within nothing will I be put to shame (disgrace; embarrassment), but to the contrary, within all freedom of speech (boldness and public openness which comes from being a citizen) – as always, even now (at the present moment) – Christ will be made great (be magnified; be enlarged) within my body, whether through life, or through death!"**

Paul, like John here, does not want to be put to shame (they lived in an

honor/shame society). I suggest that both were referring to this life, when our life can set His Life in clear light for others to see, and thus will His sons (the called-out, covenant community) be manifested to them, that they are dwelling and abiding within Him – in union with His Spirit. This happens "**within His presence**" because it is His presence that creates the manifestation of His Life. Recall the illustration of the Vine in John 15. The fruit that Jesus wanted was the manifestation in the branches (us) which was generated by the flow of the sap (figure of the Spirit) from the Vine into the branches. It is the Vine that gives life to the branches and

that grows the fruit (the Fruit of the Spirit – *cf* Gal. 5:22-23).

**29. If you folks may have come to see (or: perceive), and should now know, that He is continuously One who constantly lives in accord with the Way pointed out (is right, just, fair, rightwised and in right relationship [in covenant]), you continue to know by experience that everyone habitually making or doing fair and equitable dealing (accomplishing that which is right and in accord with the Way pointed out; practicing justice; constructing righteousness; producing rightwised [existence]) has been born and now exists being a born-one (or: now stands**

begotten), **from out of the midst of Him** (and: with Him as the Source).

John concludes his reasoning on this section of the letter with an ontological metaphor of birth that echoes the reasoning that Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3:3-8. There birth "**back up again to a higher place** (or: being brought to birth again, from above)" resulted in both "**seeing**" and "**entering**" the kingdom of God (**God's reign and realm – the place of Sovereign activity**). In that same chapter, what was mentioned here in vs. 25 ("**the Life of the Age [of Messiah]**," or "eonian life") is associated there with "**habitually trusting and believing**" (vss. 15, 16 and

36).

In 5:12, below, John says "**The one continually holding** (or: constantly having; progressively possessing) **the Son continuously holds** (constantly has; progressively possesses) **the Life**," and in vs. 23, above, "**speaking like the Son**" means that one "**has the Father.**" Then in vs. 24, by the message (what was heard) remaining and dwelling within, one will dwell both in the Son and in the Father.

Here, in vs. 29, being born from out of Him is demonstrated, or recognized, by "**making or doing fair and equitable dealing** (or: practicing justice; producing rightwised [existence]);

accomplishing that which is right; etc.)."  
This corresponds to "keeping His  
implanted goals" in vs. 3, and "keeping  
His Word/message" in vs. 5.

Putting these ideas together we see an  
association, or an interweaving, of 1)  
being born of Him, from above; 2)  
seeing and entering the reign/kingdom;  
3) trusting and believing; 4) having the  
Son – which means having life: the life  
of the age of Messiah; 5) speaking like  
the Son – which means having the  
Father; and, because of being born from  
Him, 6) constructing fairness and equity  
and doing what is right. What all these  
ingredients produce is living in love  
within the covenant community. Vs. 29

says this happens because we have both seen and now know that Christ is the one who lives in accord with the Way (= covenant living), and those living like Him are living a life in covenant with the called-out community – living in the Light.



## Chapter 3

**1. You people at once consider (or: look and perceive) what kind of (what sort of; what unusual, foreign or exotic) love (or: acceptance) the Father has given to (or: in; for) us [other MSS: you], which we now have as a gift, to the end that we can (may; should; would) be called (or: named) God's children (born-ones; bairns)! And we are! Because of this (On account of this; Therefore) the System (the world; the realm of the secular and religious; the ordered arrangement of culture, religion, economy and government) is not habitually having experiential or**

**intimate knowledge of us** (does not know or have insight into us [other MSS: you]), **because it did not know** (or: it does not have an intimate, experiential knowledge of) **Him**.

Building upon the metaphor of our being born from Him, and thus our now being God's children, John now extracts the reality that such an action by God reveals and exhibits "**love**" and "acceptance." It is an unusual kind of love, a foreign acceptance, that God would call humanity His born-ones – folks did not normally expect this from God. This had only happened in special cases before. Furthermore, this love is a gift to us which we (corporate humanity)

now possess, and this gift means that we can, may, should or would (the verb is in the subjunctive) "**be called God's children.**" Now consider that this means we are His family. When God "calls" or "names" something or someone, it becomes what He has called it. And so John says, "**And we are!**" It is now a fact. The subjunctive of the previous statement is simply rhetorical, as John calls his audience to ponder with him the wonder of such a thing – that such a thing could actually be! – as his words embrace what has actually happened. Bultmann points out that "being born of God (2:29) and being a child of God are synonymous for the author" (ibid. p 47

note 15). Jesus gives us another view of this phrase in Matt. 5:9,

**"The ones who make peace and create shalom [are] happy and blessed because they, themselves, will be called God's sons (or: will be termed 'sons of and from God')!"**

John Gavazzoni points to the verb **"given"** in the first clause, and observes, "... a gift which is essentially ontological, the gifting of God's very Being, the gift of divine reproduction. 'The Father has life in Himself, and giveth the Son to have life in Himself (by birth). Indeed, God is reckoning upon a reality. He calls us His children

because our Primal Origin (*cf* Barth) is as those first birthed, then secondly as created. The emphasis of 'begotten' relationship, takes it beyond metaphor right up to as close as human language can take us into the Reality of God's very own Paternity and Filiality. The passion of Jesus speaking to God as Father in the Garden of Gethsemane expresses a relationship that defies being called metaphorical." (from a private email)

Note the corporate "**You people**" in the address, and the plural personal pronouns – the inclusive "**us**" (or the corporate "you" of other MSS) and "**we.**" He is speaking of the inclusion of all of us in the Second Human (or:

Mankind), the *eschatos* (or: last) Adam, as did Paul in 1 Cor. 15:45. God calling us His children was a creative pronouncement by God; it is the new creation of which Paul spoke in 2 Cor. 5:17.

Not everyone knows this yet, just as the Jewish leadership and the Roman government did not know that Jesus was God's Son. The secular system of culture, religion, economy and government does not have experiential knowledge of this, nor does it have the insight from the Light that John spoke of in 1:7, 2:8,10, above. We, the folks that have been existentially made aware of this, know of the Logos from John 1 that,

9. **It was** (or: He was, and continued being) **the True and Genuine Light which** (or: Who) **is continuously** (repeatedly; progressively) **enlightening** (giving light to) **every person** (or: human) **continuously** (repeatedly; progressively; constantly; one after another) **coming into the world** (or: the ordered system of culture, religion, economics and government; or: the universe) (or: It was the real Light, progressively coming into the world {organized system}, which is progressively

enlightening {or: shedding light on} every human).

10. **It was** (or: He was, and continued existing being) **within the world** (or: ordered system), **and the world** (ordered system; or: cosmos) **came to be** (or: was birthed) **through It** (or: by means of Him), **and the world** (ordered system) **did not have intimate, experiential knowledge of It** (or: did not recognize Him; had no insight into It).

2. **Beloved ones, now** (at the present time) **we continuously exist being God's children** (born-ones; bairns from

the standpoint of origin), **and it has not yet been made visible** (or: it is not yet apparent or manifested) **what we will proceed in being. We have perceived, and thus know** (or: are aware) **that if it** (or: He) **should be** (or: whenever it {or: He} may be) **made visible, apparent and manifested, [then] folks like to Him** (like-ones to Him; ones like Him; people resembling Him) **we will be existing, because we will continue seeing and will be progressively perceiving Him just as** (according and exactly as; in the manner that) **He constantly exists** (or: He is).

The first clause restates what he said in vs. 1 – emphasizing the point of the

present reality of our being God's children – using redundancy as a persuasive technique that is typical of Asian rhetoric, with which his audience would be familiar. But now he adds another facet: "**what we will proceed being**" has "**not yet been made visible.**" Things have changed, there is a new creation (or, to use Paul Tillich's term, there is a "New Being"), but we have an expectation of more to come – or a further unfolding of what is now present. In the second sentence, the subject of "**should be made visible**" is not expressed, so from the verb in the third person, singular, this can be rendered either "**it**" or "**He.**" The antecedent of the

verb – and thus, its subject – is most likely the "it" (i.e., what will be made visible) of the previous clause, but traditionally the subject has been taken to be Christ, the "Him" of following clauses. But John's line of thought has been about "**what WE will proceed in being**" – that we will be made visible, and we will resemble Him. Here in this verse, as elsewhere, I have expressed the future tense as a progressive future (the Greek future tense is durative, lineal, or progressive).

The verb (made visible; manifested), used twice in this verse, is the same verb that John used in 2:28, above, and I suggest that what is meant there is the

same as what is meant here: when we manifest Christ and when He is made visible in our lives, it makes us look like Him – and folks see Him in our lives. When the goal – Christ in His body: the expectation of glory – is made visible, apparent and is manifested, we will be **"folks like to Him."** Paul put it this way in Col. 3:4,

**"Whenever the Christ, our life** [other MSS: your life], **may be brought to light** (or: should be manifested), **you folks also will continue being brought to light** (will be manifested), **together with Him, within the midst of glory** or: in union with a

manifestation which calls forth  
praise; or: in a good reputation;  
or: = in His manifest presence).

(or: When Christ, the  
Anointing, can be  
manifested, then your  
life – even you yourself,  
together with Him –  
will be progressively  
manifested in His  
manifest presence)."

Now the question arises, How does "**He constantly exist**"? I suggest that the answer that most pertains to us is that He now exists within His Body, the called-out, covenant community. When we see Him manifested within others we are

seeing Him as He presently "is." As we see Him, we are made like Him – as Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 3:18 – for we are being transformed into His image and become the destiny for which God created humanity: to be His image-bearers. As Jesus said of Himself, "**The one having seen Me has seen, and now perceives, the Father...**" (John 14:9), so it should be said of us, "The person seeing us sees Christ, and perceives the Father." When He is manifested, folks see Him and not us. That is the expectation of His glory: a manifestation that calls forth praise to God. In proof reading this work for me, my sister Rebecca Mitchell inserted the following

here, "LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN" (KJV, emphasis hers).

3. **So everyone who continuously has** (or: habitually holds) **this expectation** (or: expectant hope) [**placed; resting**] **upon Him is [by this] constantly** (repeatedly; progressively) **purifying himself, just as** (according as; in the way that) **That One is** (or: exists being) **pure.**

The "**expectation**" is that which was expressed in vs. 2: being **like Him** (Jesus, the Messiah). The "**That One**" of the last clause also points to Jesus. With

"**Him**" as the foundation and resting place of our expectation – which is placed, or resting, "**upon Him**" as our strength, support and ability – the result is our being purified by His Life, to which we are joined. This is equivalent to what Paul calls "being in Him." His purity purifies us, just like the touch of Jesus cleansed those with skin eruptions (Mk. 1:40-42). Bultmann states, "Substantively *hagnos* ('pure') does not mean anything different from *dikaios* ('righteous') in 2:29; 3:7" (ibid. p 49). John has simply reached back to a metaphor of Jewish cultic ritual to give another picture of the same thing: right conduct within the covenant community

– living a life in the Way pointed out by Christ, and which is Christ – The Way, The Truth and The Life (John 14:6).

Jesus used the metaphor of needing to have one's feet washed (John 13:10).

This constantly keeps the community clean from the impurities of the way of life of society outside the group – e.g., be it a system of religion, or the arrangement of the stratification of economic groups which bring division among people in the world at large.

I find it interesting that one of the meanings of *hagnos* is "chaste" and a young woman of that time who was "chaste" had not "known" a man. The word that means not to know is *agnoeo*

(the "h" of the verb *hagnizo* is simply a rough breathing mark). I wonder if John was making a subtle play on these words, suggesting that the "pure" were those who were *a-gnostic*, i.e., not having the so-called "knowledge" of the Gnostics.

**4. Everyone constantly practicing** (habitually committing; progressively producing) **the error** (or: deviation; missing of the target; sin; failure) **is also constantly practicing the lawlessness** (or: habitually commits a lawless act, or progressively does the violation of custom), **and the error** (or: the failure to hit the target; the deviation; the sin) **exists being** (or: is) **the lawlessness**

(or: the violation of law or the act apart from custom is the mistake and the error).

In vss. 3, 4 and 6, "**everyone**" renders the Greek *pas*, which is the singular form of the word "all," which is an inclusive word, signifying in these verses either groups or classes of people. So although using a singular, John is still addressing hypothetical groups.

The definite article used with "**error**" (or: deviation from the Path, as given to them originally) refers to a specific error, or deviation, and we are drawn to understand that he is referring to the false teachers and "**the error**" of

Gnosticism. John is not making a moral statement here, but is referring to doctrinal error. The **"lawlessness"** is referring to a lack of **"the principle and law of, and which is, the spirit and attitude of 'The Life within Christ Jesus'"** that Paul described in Rom. 8:2. John means that these deviators are void of the custom that was received regarding the Messiah – the **"old implanted goal which [they] held from [the] beginning"** (2:7) which they were admonished to keep, guard, observe and maintain (2:5).

We should also keep in mind the present tense of the active verbs, **"constantly practicing or producing"** the **"error."**

This was a habitual behavior of the error of these false teachers which was progressively producing deviation from the reality in Christ. Cf Matt. 23:28; 24:12; and Paul in 2 Thes. 2:3-4

**5. You have also perceived, and thus know and are aware, that That One was manifested (made visible) to the end that He would in a point of time lift up and carry away (or: sustain, bear and raise up) the errors (or: those failures to hit the target; the mistakes; those deviations; the sins; [some MSS: our sins]), and yet error (failure to hit the target; deviation; sin) does not exist within Him (or: and in Him is no sin or failure).**

John uses the perfect tense in the first verb to affirm that they "**have also perceived, and thus know and are aware.**" He is taking them back to the cross, and "**That One**" who was historically manifested to carry away the errors that plagued humanity. Jesus addressed the errors in both the teachings and the behaviors of the Jewish religious leaders during His teaching ministry. Then He included everything into the one act of the cross – taking it all away. He removed all the error, but there was no error within Him: He is the Truth, the Reality. John 1:29 prophesied this,

**"Look!** (Pay attention, see and

perceive)! **God's Lamb** (or: the Lamb from God; the Lamb having the character and qualities of God; or, in apposition: the Lamb which is God), **the One continuously lifting up and carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System**

(or: habitually picking up and taking away the failure and error brought on by the organized system; progressively removing

the falling short and the missing of the goal from the world of culture, religion, economy and government [= from humanity and secular society])!"

But why is John bringing them back to this, here in vs.5? It is to bring them back to the One Who has all that they need – without any deviations into pagan mysticism or "secret doctrines."

**6. Everyone continuously remaining** (dwelling; keeping his residence; abiding; staying) **within and in union with Him is not habitually missing the target** (practicing sin; repeatedly failing

in his purpose); **everyone continually failing to hit the target** (habitually sinning; progressively in error) **has neither seen Him, nor come to know Him by intimate experience or insight.**

Here John returns to the group that has "**continuously remain[ed]**" within Him and in union with Him. This phrase "within Him (etc.)" refers to the covenant inclusion of the new creation, the New Being, as an existential reality. It is the key to not repeatedly failing and falling into error. He is our Path, our Way pointed out, our inclusion in the covenant. John calls up an echo of what Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:1-10. Then he exposes the emptiness and

lack of those that proceed into error and miss the target, which is life in union with Christ (both the Head, and the body). These false teachers do not have a special knowledge or spiritual experience of Him: they have not seen Him but have seen illusion; they have not come to know Him, but have only fantasies; they have no insight into Him Who is Love, but only pagan traditions of false gods. They set themselves apart as elite, rather than taking the foot towel of the servant. By disassociating their idea of the Christ, the anointing, from the character manifested in the historical Jesus, they have not come to know the Father either – who Jesus both imaged

and expressed.

**7. Little children** (born-ones), **let no one be constantly leading you astray** (misleading or deceiving you); **the person continually doing that which is in accord with the Way pointed out** (or: repeatedly practicing rightwisedom; progressively producing the justice, fairness and equity in right [covenantal] relationships) **is** (or: exists being) **just** (or: a person in accord with the Way pointed out; righteous; fair; equitable; rightwised; someone turned in the right direction, and is in [covenant] relationships), **according as** (just as) **That One is just** (is One in accord with the Way pointed out; is righteous, fair,

equitable and offers the right covenant relationships).

He again reminds them that they are born of God: children. But again he uses the diminutive: they are still young, not yet matured in Christ. So he reminds them not to let these false teachers deceive or mislead them into straying from the Path that accords "**with the Way pointed out**" – which is the right "covenantal" relationships of the rightwised community. And it is the person who is constantly doing, practicing and producing fairness and equity that is the just and fair person. "**That One**" (the Messiah) is the Pattern to Whom we are being conformed, through the renewing

of our minds (Rom. 12:2), through our union with Christ. Thus is John speaking to their minds.

**8. Yet the person habitually practicing** (repeatedly doing; progressively producing) **the error** (the failure to hit the target or accomplish his purpose; or: the sin; the mistake; the deviation) **is existing from out of the adversary who thrusts something through the midst, [with a weapon, or with ill-intent], creating a wound or division** (or: = is [operating] from [the influence of] the “devil”), **because this adversary is habitually sinning** (or: repeatedly missing the target; continuously falling short of the goal; constantly deviating

from his purpose) **from [the] beginning** (or: from [its] origin). **Into this [situation] was (or: is) God's Son manifested and made visible, to the end that He would unbind (loose; untie; destroy; disintegrate) the works and actions of the adversary who casts things through the midst of folks.**

John continues his theme, now associating this negative activity with someone – or a spirit, or an attitude – that thrusts something through the midst of the group (or, an individual) and causes wounding and division. The elitism of Gnosticism (or: today, perhaps of some "supernaturalism") was what could do just this. To understand this, let

us look at the end of Israel's history: the eschatological time of Jesus and the first century called-out which led up to the end in AD 70. This was when "**God's Son**" was "**manifested and made visible.**" It was the work of the cross that unbound the heavy burdens of religion put on the people by the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:4). It was the power of the resurrected life of Christ that set humanity free from the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1) from the strength of sin (the Law) – 1 Cor. 15:56. It was the Jewish leadership whose conduct made them to be described by Jesus as characterized as those "**who cast things through the midst of folks**" in John 8:44,

**"You folks, in particular, are (exist and have your being) from out of, and have your source in, the ancestor who cast [an object] through [someone] (or: the father, the devil; or: the devil father; or: the father – the one thrusting [words or issues] through [folks/groups] and dividing them), and you are habitually wanting (willing; intending; purposing) to be constantly doing your father's passionate cravings (full-rushing over-desires)."**

It was their religious works that Jesus

loosed away and destroyed via His cross, and His coming in judgment on Jerusalem – as he predicted.

But He also disintegrated the work of deception that is described in the Eden story of Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (foreshadow of the Law) which brought death to humanity (Rom. 5:12). So John is accessing the stories of both Israel and humanity in making his points regarding the false teachers.

Bultmann considers "to destroy the works of the devil" as "a variation on 'to take away sins'." (ibid. p 52)

**9. Everyone who has been given birth, and is now in the state of having been**

**born, from out of the midst of God is not habitually practicing failure to hit the target** (repeatedly doing sin; constantly producing error), **because His Seed** (sperm) **is continuously remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **within him** (or: within, and in union with, Him), **and he is not able** (or: he has no power) **to constantly fail to hit the target** (repeatedly sin; continuously deviate; go on failing; continue in error), **because he has been born forth from out of God.**

In this first clause we have the birth metaphor instead of the "**continuously remaining** (dwelling; keeping his residence; abiding; staying) **within and**

**in union with Him"** of vs. 6a, above, in regard to not constantly producing error. But then he expands the metaphor and speaks of God's seed, or sperm, remaining within this corporate person – another inclusive *pas* (all). Again, I suggest that John is speaking of the group as though being one individual. Christ is the Seed, and it is Christ within the group (or the individual) that prevents either the group or the individual from **"habitually practicing failure."** God's DNA remains within His Body and produces many members (1 Cor. 12:12). It is this true body that remains in union with the Anointed One and that has been born by the Seed of God that is not able

to constantly fail to hit the target or continue in error. The Seed remains, dwells, abides (as Jesus said that He would) – and this equates to a birth forth from out of God. I suggest that John is primarily referring to the corporate new human that is not able to continuously deviate from the Path.

Being "**given birth**" equates to what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:7,

**"It is necessary and binding for you folks to be born back up again to a higher place (or: for you people to be given birth from above)."**

Note the corporate plural "**you folks.**" He was referring to being born into the

kingdom, which is a metaphor that is equivalent to becoming a part of the Vine (or, grafted back into the olive tree of Rom. 11:17), or a member of the Body of Christ, all of which picture inclusion in the new covenant community, the firstfruit of the Second Human (1 Cor. 15:47).

The present tense (signifying habitual, constant or repeated action) is the key to understanding that he is not contradicting 1:7-8, above. The corporate "we" of those verses corresponds to the "everyone" of vss. 3, 6 & 9 of this chapter.

**10. [Both] God's children and the adversary's children are constantly**

**visible** (apparent; manifest) **within this [thing or situation]: everyone not practicing righteousness** (not habitually doing justice; not progressively constructing his life turned in the right direction to accord with the Way pointed out; not being fair or equitable; not being in [covenant] relationships) **as well as the one not continuously loving his brother** (= a believer, or fellowman) **is not existing out of God** (= is not living with God being his source of life and direction),

This is an amazing statement: you can tell whether or not one is born from God by observing the person's conduct. The distinction between "**God's children**"

and **"the adversary's children"** is whether their way of life is one of loving other people and living a life "turned in the right direction" in equitable relationships and covenant community – or, not. This applies to the individual, but John is addressing groups – "children." Those who have left the community (2:19) he is categorizing as **"the adversary's children,"** for they were not "participat[ing] more fully in the narrative that [should] now [be] theirs in Christ" (J.R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus have I Loved, but Paul?, A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity*, Baker Academic, 2011, p 26): they were "not habitually doing

justice; not progressively constructing [their lives] turned in the right direction to accord with the Way pointed out; not being fair or equitable; not being in [covenant] relationships." So their claim to be "begotten of God" (a claim of Gnosticism; cf *Corpus Hermeticus* XIII, cited in Bultmann, *ibid.* p 52 n 36; as I recall, C.H. Dodd also mentioned this in his work on the Gospel of John) was shown to be false by their behavior and their lack of remaining joined to the Vine (John 15) – which of necessity required remaining united to the local covenant community.

This lack of practicing righteousness (doing what is right [*dikaio<sup>s</sup>une*]) is

equated to "not continuously loving [one's] brother/fellowman." This group – the children of the adversary – was not living with God being their source of life and direction, and it was not participating as a part of the "holistically restored cosmos" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 32). They were adversarial to the rule of God through Christ and His called-out community, so they separated themselves into "an individualistic and escapist gospel" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 32). An elitist mentality is one that is divided, prejudiced (I owe this thought to Dan Kaplan) and is thus adversarial to the purposed unity of Christ. [note: I have taken Kirk's words out of his context that

regards Paul's narrative theology; I used his phrases because I see them as appropriate to John's context here]

**11. because this is the message** [other MSS: promise; or: complete announcement] **which you heard** (or: hear) **from [the] beginning, so that we are habitually** (or: to the end that we would or could progressively be) **loving** (accepting and participating in) **one another** –

He again returns to the original message of goodness which they had originally heard in the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah and Lord of All. That message was God's *agape*: love, acceptance and participation in one another. Here we

are instructed that love and acceptance of others is the characteristic of "**God's children**" (vs. 10). The verb "**loving**" is either indicative (first rendering), or subjunctive (parenthetical rendering). Being termed "born-ones from God" means existing (vs. 10) out of the sphere of God's Spirit, which is Love, and thus exhibiting the life of God and the love of God through loving our brothers, or our neighbors. This is the goal of God's dominion, and it is what the "world" needs now: accepting love.

The variant reading *epangelia* (promise, or, complete announcement) is well attested, and if this is the correct reading, then John is either referencing

the fulfillment of the Messiah, Israel's promise through the fathers, or he is saying that what they had been taught **"from [the] beginning"** was the "complete announcement," and they needed no further secret messages through mystic experiences. Christ brings the love of God.

12. **not [living] like** (or: not just as) **Cain. He was existing, and continued being, from out of the condition** (or: situation; or: one; thing; = influence) **causing misery and hard labor** (the unprofitable attitude; the worthless mindset; the wicked intent; the toilsome situation; the sorry plight), **and so he slaughtered** (killed by cutting his

jugular vein) **his brother**. And on what **score** (or: for what pleasure) **did he slaughter him?** Because **his works** (actions) **were gushed with misery and hard labor** (were wicked or evil; were toilsome; were unprofitable and worthless), **but those of his brother [were] ones in accord with the Way pointed out** (just ones; righteous ones; fair and equitable ones; rightwised ones).

John takes his audience(s) back to the story of Adam's sons and the narrative of the conflict between the two brothers, Cain and Abel (Gen. 4). The point is that Cain personifies the extreme lack of love: the killing of another person. This

is the dark backdrop to clearly show the Light of rightwised living and conduct that is fair and just: love and acceptance of one's neighbor.

Here John presumes that his audience knows the story by now. The adversarial issue was due to Cain's envy and animosity over what God wanted or accepted as a sacrifice, at that point of Israel's story of humanity. But John is using it as an example of those whose **"works (actions; = behavior and conduct; treatment of others) were gushed with misery and hard labor."** This adjective *poneros* was also used earlier in the verse to describe Cain's condition, situation, or that which was

influencing him. Unfortunately the dualism of pagan cosmologies has misguided the translation and interpretation of this word so as to personify it as "the wicked or evil one." Some bizarre teachings have been the result. But I think that we can understand John's meaning if we look back at the story of the judgment pronounced against Adam in Gen. 3:17-19 which tells of the gush of misery that was going to be the environment and condition of humanity's way of life. Cain was a farmer of the very ground that had come under the curse.

Not only this, the word *poneros* can be rendered: unprofitable attitude;

worthless mindset; wicked intent; toilsome situation; sorry plight. All these conditions or situations are a result of humanity's predicament: the estrangement and alienation of death that came upon mankind by one man's disobedience (Rom. 5:12). And as we review the story in Gen. 4, we see that the slaughtering of Abel was the result of Cain's attitude and thinking.

Furthermore, in the last part of this verse, the contrasts of the works of the two brothers are used by John to contrast covenant living in the Way of Christ, and hard labor (the root meaning of *poneros*) of religious works that are not what God desires. He desires proper treatment of

our fellow human beings, not the mystical works or "spiritual experiences" of the Gnostics – which works and experiences are worthless and brought about a sorry plight on the practitioners.

13. **Stop marveling** (Cease wondering; Quit being astonished), **brothers, if** (or: since) **the ordered System** (world of culture and religion; or: the estranged secular system of governmental control) **is constantly hating you** (habitually regarding you with ill-will).

As you can observe from the term "**ordered System**" (*kosmos*) along with the parenthetical expansion showing its semantic range, John can be referring to

a number of situations. If it is the system of the Jewish religion, then we see the parallel to how that corrupted system hated Jesus. Paul found the religious-economic system of the silver smiths of the Diana/Artemis cult treating him and his associates with ill will (Acts 19:24f). The governmental system of Rome often had ill-will toward the followers of Jesus. John is pointing out that this is to be expected. The story of the kingdom, reign, dominion and sovereign activity of God that had come to the point in history of being inaugurated by the Messiah was counter-cultural in every way. Its manifestation in Jesus and the covenant communities

proclaimed Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 11:15; 19:16). We see religious systems of our day that hate others, and kinship systems of race and culture that have historically done the same. The message of love's acceptance and the goodness of God stand in stark contrast to the "us-and-them" attitudes by people groups, and the prejudiced ego-centric mindsets of estranged humanity.

We see again that John is painting broad strokes of group and corporate situations.

**14. We ourselves have seen, and thus know (or: are aware), that we have walked together (or: proceeded to**

change, passing from) **out of the Death into the Life, because we are habitually loving the brothers** (= fellow believers; [some MSS: our brothers; {or: = our fellow human beings}]). **The person not habitually loving** [some MSS add: his brothers] **continues remaining** (dwelling; abiding; staying) **within the Death.**

We return to contrasting metaphors, this time Life versus Death. The defining difference between the two is a life of loving folks, or not. The fact of the called-out folks loving others gives evidence that can be seen, and thus known, that the group has "**walked together**" out of the Death and "**into the**

**Life**," this latter being the same thing as Paul's "**new creation**" (2 Cor. 5:17). The Light and the Life came with the advent of the Messiah (John 1:4-9), "the second exodus.... [and] the surprising climax of Israel's story" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 25).

The parenthetical amplification "proceeded to change, passing from" stresses the meaning of "change" inherent in the prefix *meta* when used in combination with a verb. However, as in the first rendering, it can also have the meaning of "together." The verb *bainō* means to step or walk, thus pass from one place to another. Either emphasis of the semantic range of *metabainō* gives

the picture of a change of place, and the plural number of the verb affirms the idea of a group walking together on a path or road, or stepping into something different. The perfect tense of the verb shows that this took place and was completed in the past, and that the result of the change of place continues on into the present.

Bultmann says that "since 'we' obviously characterizes the congregation as that of believers, it may be asked whether the basis *hoti agapomen tous adelphous* ('because we love the brethren') may also be understood simply as a characteristic of the congregation as a community of those who love," and

suggests that love may be understood "as a duty of the congregation" (ibid. p 55). Again John is speaking corporately, as seen by the plural "we's." Anyone that is not "**habitually loving**" remains in the old creation where folks are still dead, as Paul says in Eph. 2:

- 1. And you folks [who were] continuously existing being dead ones by (or: to; with; in) the results and effects of your stumblings aside (offences; wrong steps) and failures to hit the mark (or: mistakes; errors; times of falling short; sins)**
- 2. – within the midst of and in union with which things you**

**once walked about** (= lived your lives) **in accord** (or: in keeping; corresponding) **with** (or: as directed by) **the age of this ordered System** (or: down through the time period of this world of secular culture, religion, economy and government), **in line with the primary directive of the right and privilege of air: the Breath-effect of the One at the present time continuously operating within the sons of The Disobedience**

(or: down under the controlling aspect of the

authority of "the  
blowing" – of the Spirit  
of the One now  
progressively working  
internally in union with  
people having the  
character and qualities  
of incompletion;  
or: in correlation to the  
chief and leader of the  
privilege which comes  
from blowing: the  
attitude which expresses  
a lack of persuasion, or  
of not being convinced,  
which repeatedly  
energizes at the present

time;  
or: in keeping with the  
one in first position  
with regard to the right  
concerning the  
atmosphere – the  
attitude now habitually  
effecting inward action  
within the midst of  
people displaying non-  
conviction or an  
incompliant  
disposition).

Paul has rehearsed the condition in the  
story of the old, and John is reminding  
them that they have been turned in  
another direction (= been "justified")

and have **"walked together out of [that] Death."** It was walking out of an old way of life and into the new creation which exists within the sphere of the Christ – in union with the historical event of the Messiah. He is speaking of the death both of the Adam story, and of the death brought by the Law (Rom. 7:9-14). But God's story did not end there, but continued via the resurrection of the Messiah, which in turn brought in these Gentiles of Asia Minor into the story that began in Eden.

**15. Everyone constantly hating (or: regarding with ill-will) his brother constantly exists being a person-slayer (a murderer), and has not seen so as to**

**be aware that every person-slayer does not presently have (or: is not continuously holding) life having its source in, or having the quality of, the Age (or: eonian life) presently remaining within him (or: continuously dwelling and abiding in union with him).** This redundant, but expanding, statement is another example of driving the point home with the techniques of Asian rhetoric. John is bringing Cain back into view: the "**person-slayer.**" To say that such folks do not presently have or hold "**life**" is the same as what he said in vs. 14 about "**remaining within the Death.**" The new Age of Messiah has come, but these folks are not "**walking within the**

**midst of, and in union with, the Light"**

(1:7, above) but are still walking

**"within the Darkness"** (2:11, above).

They are dwelling in past chapters of the continuing story. The supposed elite teachers of the Gnostic way do not have the Life of the Christ presently dwelling within them. Eonian life is not supernatural, spiritual experiences or esoteric knowledge:

**"Now THIS is (or: exists being) eonian life (living existence of and for the ages; life pertaining to the Age [of Messiah]): namely, that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially**

**know You, the only true and real (genuine) God – and Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary (or: as well as Jesus [as the] Anointed One, whom You sent off as a Representative)." (John 17:3)**

It is intimate, experiential knowledge of the Person of God, and of Jesus.

**16. Within this we have come to know the Love (acceptance which drives to overcome estrangement and achieve reunion) by intimate experience: that That One placed (or: places; sets; deposited) His soul over us; we ourselves are also constantly indebted (obligated) to place [our] souls over**

**the brothers** (= fellow believers, or, fellow humans; = [God's] family). Truly knowing God, and Jesus, His Emissary, brings us intimate, experiential knowledge of the essence and character of God: Love which drives toward reunion, overcoming estrangement (Tillich). It was expressed by the Messiah embracing the cross – God's means of His placing His soul over us. This gives us another picture of what was said in 2:2, above, **"continually being a cover around our mistakes and errors, sheltering us from their effects."** It also evokes the story of Israel in Ezk. 16:8, which spoke of Yahweh entering into a covenant with

her by covering her nakedness (this reference reaching all the way back to the Eden story, Gen. 3:10-21).

The indebtedness and obligation to enter into the Messiah's story and expand it, doing the works that He did, echoes what Paul says in Rom. 1:

**14. I am** (or: I continue being) **a debtor to** (or: for; or: with) **both Greeks** (Hellenists) **and to** (for; with) **barbarians** (non-Hellenists: those who do not possess Greek culture); **to** (or: for; with) **both wise ones and to** (for; with) **those without understanding** (unintelligent ones; foolish ones; folks who

lack sense).

**15. In this condition (or: Thus so) – commensurate with me, the ready (willing; eager) one – [I] myself [desire and intend] to also bring and proclaim (or: announce) the message of goodness, ease and well-being (or: Good News)...**

Placing our souls over others is both loving them, and proclaiming the message of goodness, ease and well-being to them. Entering into the story of the Christ brings obligation and indebtedness: the justice that comes from God; the righteousness that is God's; the being placed in the Way and being

rightwised toward the Father – all have the character of being indebted to others to love them, accept them, and help them. So "justification" (*dikaio<sup>sune</sup>*) brings obligation and debt toward others, as both John and Paul instruct us.

**17. But whoever may continuously have the world's means of living (or: may habitually hold the sustenance of the life pertaining to the secular ordered System), and may habitually gaze upon his brother [who is] continuously having a need, and may close shut (or: would slam and lock) his intestines (= his compassions) away from him, how is God's love dwelling (abiding; remaining; staying) within him (or,**

reading as a future: how will God's love dwell in him)?

Now John brings his audience from the realm of ideas and words to the practical reality of inclusion in the covenant community – the heart of the "good works" of which Paul spoke in regard to the new creation:

**"for you see, we are (we continually exist being) the effect of what He did (or: His creation; the thing He has constructed; the result of His work; His achievement; His opus; the effect of His Deed): people being founded from a state of disorder and wildness**

(being framed, built, settled and created), **within and in union with Christ Jesus, upon good works** (virtuous actions; excellent deeds) **which God made ready** (prepared; or: prepares) **beforehand, to the end that we may walk about** (= live our lives) **within and in union with them.**" (Eph. 2:10).

How is God's love dwelling within our community if we, as a group, do not take care of those who have needs? This applies to us as individuals, of course, but we are part of Christ's body, and as Paul instructs us in 1 Cor. 12:26-27,

**"And further, whether one**

**member is continuing to experience the effect of something, or constantly undergoes suffering, all the members continually experience the effect or the suffering together with [it]; or if a member is being constantly glorified or is progressively receiving a good reputation, all the members are continuously rejoicing together with [it].**

**Now you folks yourselves are, and continuously exist being, Christ's body (or: a body which is Anointed; or: a body whose**

source and character is Christ) –  
**and individually [you are]  
members of a part [of it] –"**

We do not live or act as individuals, but  
as members of others as Paul said in  
Rom. 12:5,

**"thus we, the many, are and  
continue to exist being one  
body within Christ (in union  
with [the] Anointed), yet  
individually (or: the situation  
being in accord with one),  
members of one another (or:  
but still, [being] on one level,  
[are] members whose source is,  
and who belong to, each other)."**

We are thus instructed to view other

people as a part of us, and ourselves as a part of them. This is the *agape* love which is God. The story of humanity leads us from an individual to a family to a tribe to a people group or nation, and finally to "**One New** [p46 & others: common] **Humanity**" (Eph. 2:15).

**18. Little children** (little born-ones), **we should not be habitually loving in word** (by a word or thought), **nor even in** (or: by) **the tongue, but rather within action** (deed; work) **and truth** (or: reality).

Here we see the element of restatement, driving home the point in a succinct statement that echoes the message of Jacob (or: James) 2:18, 26 (see my

comments of this passage in *Peter, Paul and Jacob*, Harper Brown, 2012).

Living the message of the Messiah is our calling.

**19. And within this we shall come to know by our own experience that we continuously exist (or: are) from out of the midst of the Truth (Reality), and so before Him (in front of Him; in His very presence) we shall progressively persuade (prevail upon; convince; win over; reassure; set at ease; render tranquil) our hearts,**

These clauses need special attention.

First, note how often John has used forms of the word-family *gnosis*, as he speaks against the Gnostic heresy. The

covenant community "knows" by their own experience what "**the Truth**" (Christ) is: that it is the Reality (an equal meaning of *aletheia*) of the new creation.

Second, the group knows that they will **persuade**, prevail upon, convince, win over, reassure, set at ease and render tranquil their hearts. They will have a positive influence upon their hearts – the core of one's being – because of what he continues saying in vs. 20. But is this clause a statement about the far-off future, or an awareness of their sure foundation in Christ – and that they exist in His very presence (e.g., Acts 17:28), that they continuously live *coram Deo*? I

was introduced to this Latin term through the teaching of R.C. Sproul, and I have never forgotten it. A simple phrase that says so much. So I will quote from an article by R.C. from his Ligonier Ministries website (Feb. 23, 2009):

"The big idea of the Christian life is *coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life. This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God."

These folks know that because they are members of the covenant community that they are part of the restored humanity, and that their heart is no longer "desperately wicked" (as was the situation under the fallen creation – Jer. 17:9). **"And so"** they will set their hearts at ease "in His very presence."

**20. because, even if our heart may continually condemn** (censure; know-down by experience), **God is constantly greater than our heart, and He knows all mankind,** (all people; or: everything; all things) **by intimate experience.**

What an assurance: **"God is constantly greater than our heart."** This applies as well to those who have not yet been

"born of God" but are yet "children of the adversary," for,

**"Yet God constantly stands together with His own love [flowing] into us** (or: But God continuously puts the urge for accepting-reunion, from, and which is, Himself, together into the midst of us), **because during our still continuing to exist being** (= while we were yet) **failures** (folks deviating from the goal; ones missing the target and making mistakes; sinners; outcasts), **Christ died over our [condition and predicament]** (or: on our behalf; for the sake

of us)." (Rom. 5:8)

A "desperately wicked" heart is no problem for God, because His plan was to give us a new one (Ezk. 11:19). **"He knows all mankind (all people) by intimate experience."** Nothing surprises Him. And do not overlook that He knows all by intimate experience of and with all humanity. He is an imminent God, with everyone. It was by this that Jesus knew what was "in humans" (John 2:24, 24; *cf* Lu. 16:15). So **"even if"** our heart may be constantly condemning, God overcomes both the condemning and its effects, because "God continues being greater than our heart."  
You will note that I do not give "us" as

the object of the verb "**condemn**" in this verse. For the pronoun to be rendered "us" it should be in the accusative, *hemas*. But it is *hemon*, the genitive (our), as in vs. 19. Thus, the pronoun "our" goes with the word "heart." John is talking about our inner being condemning anyone or anything. There is no expressed object of the verb.

**21. Beloved ones** [other MSS: Brothers], **if our heart should not be constantly condemning or censuring** (or: would not repeatedly experience negative insights or habitually have knowledge which leads [some MSS add: us] down), **we constantly have confident freedom in speaking**

(boldness from our citizenship) **toward and face to face with God,**

Bruce Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., UBS, 1994, p 643-4) lists eleven different MS readings for the first clause. Westcott and Hort follow B and readings in Origen which omit *hemon* (our). The Nestle-Aland text puts the word in brackets before the verb since there are a number of good witnesses for it being there (and I have thus included it) but lists the readings for the word a second time only in the footnotes. In the parenthetical expansion I include in brackets "us" as an object of the verb, since there are a number of textual

traditions which include *hemon*, even though to be the direct object it should be in the accusative.

But this may simply be scribal error. John's point is that with the absence of condemning thoughts we can have freedom in our speaking with God. The inference is that if we have condemning thoughts about anything or anyone, our speaking with the Father may be hindered by those thoughts. Keep in mind the parenthetical expansion "boldness from our citizenship." Here John is referencing our membership in the "**Jerusalem which is above**" (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24). We have "**face to face**" access to our heavenly Father.

This last phrase echoes Heb. 10:19-22 and calls to mind Rom. 5:1, "**we continuously hold and progressively have** [other MSS: let us (or: we can) habitually retain and enjoy] **peace and harmony face to face with God.**"

**22. and whatever we may continuously ask** (or: habitually request), **we keep on progressively receiving from Him, because we are regularly keeping** (attentively watching over, guarding and observing) **His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives of purpose and destiny) **and are constantly doing** (performing; constructing; producing) **the things [that are] pleasing and**

**acceptable in His sight** (or: before Him).

Note the present tense of the verbs "**ask**," "**receiving**," and "**keeping**." The lineal action that this tense expresses shows habit, and even progression, as a part of the community's way of life. Here John speaks of reciprocity in the covenant living that is in rightwised relation to God (implied by the word "Him" as the One that is asked, and the One that gives). Keeping the goals that were implanted by the proclaimed message, and "**constantly doing**" things that accord with those goals, give Him pleasure.

The receiving often comes through other

members of the community. This verse calls to mind the story and teaching of Jesus, e.g., in Matt. 7:7-12.

**23. And this is His implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of the end in mind): **namely that we could, should and would be continuously believing, progressively trusting and habitually faithful** [other MSS: would at once place faith and trust] **in and by the Name** (or: constantly loyal to and for the Name; habitually full of faith with the Name) **of His Son, Jesus Christ, and thus should be constantly** (or: habitually; progressively) **loving** (accepting; overcoming estrangement to)

**one another, precisely** (or: accordingly; correspondingly) **as He gave [the] implanted goal** (or: gives an impartation of the finished product within, with an inward directive of the purposed end and destiny) **to us, for us and in us.**

Pistis: faithfulness, trust and belief (or: conviction), along with *agape*: love, acceptance, the drive to overcome estrangement or alienation, are the destiny of humanity. They are shown forth through the covenant community when it abides in union with Jesus Christ through the power and ability inherent in taking on His Name. He, via His Logos, gave the impartation of the finished product (Christ) within the members of

the group. Bultmann, noting that **believing** is mentioned before **loving** suggests that this indicates that love has its source in faith (ibid. p 59).

The dative form of "**the Name**" gives us a number of possibilities of understanding just what His Name means in relation to our belief, trust, loyalty and being filled with faith. Jesus told His disciples to immerse folks "**into the Name**" (Matt. 28:19). Reading the form here as the locative function of the dative, John instructs them to trust "**in,**" i.e., "in union with" or "in the sphere of" that which His Name represents: His person, identity, character and authority. This last aspect leads us to the next

function of the dative, the instrumental, as it is "by" the Name, i.e., by the power and authority inherent in our Owner's Name, that we are enabled to continue believing, to be progressively trusting and to be habitually remaining faithful. His Name gives us His authority and His ability as we identify ourselves with Him.

"Loyalty to and for the Name" presents us with another aspect of life "in Christ," and it is "with the Name" that we are filled with faith. In these expanded renderings I have also given more of the semantic range of the verb *pisteuein* which normally has only been translated as "believe." All of this comes to us as a

gift which is imparted into us. We are able to constantly and progressively love others corresponding to the fact of His having placed this purpose and destiny within us, and among us.

The last, expanded phrase gives the different functions of the dative form of the plural pronoun *hemin* (us). John continues in his corporate expressions, as we also see by the inclusive plural verbs. The Messiah's directives of His purposed end for humanity were placed within us via the message that was spoken to us, and is for us. John's redundancy here, of the second clause of vs. 22, shows his emphasis on the **"implanted goal."**

**24. And the person habitually watching to attentively keep His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives of destiny) **continuously remains** (dwells; abides; stays) **within and in union with Him, and He Himself within and in union with him. And within this we are constantly coming to know by intimate experience that He is continuously abiding** (dwelling; remaining; staying) **within us and in union with us: from out of the Spirit** (or: from the midst of the Breath-effect; forth from the attitude) **which He gives** (or: at one point gave) **to us** (or: in us). And now again, the repetition

characteristic of Asian rhetoric is seen in the first clause. But now John informs his audience that the person (an expression of the one new man) that is habitually "**watching to attentively keep**" these directives which incorporate the goals and destiny of this new humanity "**continuously remains (dwells; abides; stays) within and in union with Him.**" But note the solidarity of Christ with us. There is reciprocity: for "**He Himself [remains] within and in union with**" the person, or group. Each member has the responsibility to be habitually watching and keeping, but not as a lone individual – rather as a member of a body.

Their experience confirmed that "**He is continuously abiding**" with them, and this happened through the Spirit, the Breath-effect which produced an attitude of Love, which He gives (or: gave) to and in them. The verb "give" is in the aorist tense, so I have given two possible renderings since this tense is the fact form and does not give a sense of time or type of action.

It is the giving of the Spirit that has the effect of His **continuously abiding within us**.



## Chapter 4

**1. Beloved ones, stop believing** (or: you must not continually believe or put trust in; being loyal or pledging allegiance to) **every spirit** (or: expression of some influence; breath-effect; attitude), **but rather, you folks must constantly examine, test and prove the spirits** (influences; attitudes) **to assay** (or: prove) **if they are existing from out of God, because many false prophets have gone** (or: come) **out into the ordered System** (world of societal culture, government, economy and religion) **and continue there.**

If we look at the last clause of this

sentence, we see that he is talking about "false prophets," by which he probably means the false teachers of the Gnostic groups. However, there were false prophets even within Israel just as there were false Messiahs, so this would have applied to any religious group. But the question naturally arises: What does he mean by "believing" or "putting trust in" or "pledging allegiance to" these spirits, and what does he mean by his use of the word *pneuma*? I have inserted other words, parenthetically, to express its semantic range: attitude; breath-effect; expression of some influence.

I suggest that he means "Do not trust what they say or believe their message."

Or, "Stop following after them from some misplaced sense of loyalty or allegiance, as they leave your covenant community" (*cf* 2:19, above). But why the word "**spirit**" (*pneuma*)? Recall the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:3, "**The destitute folks [are] happy in spirit and attitude...**" Here the sense seems almost to mean one's "mood," or "disposition." And then in John 6:63b we read,

**"The declarations** (gush-effects; spoken words; sayings; results of the Flow) **which I Myself have spoken to you folks are** (or: continue to be) **Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect;

attitude) **and they are** (or:  
continue being) **Life.**"

Were these words of the false teachers  
"spirit and death"?

Note in vss. 2 & 3, below, that he refers  
to a spirit, attitude or influence that  
**"speaks."** Does this lend support to the  
understanding that John is referring to  
the message or to the teaching? Or,  
perhaps he is referring to the "essence"  
or "mindset" that these folks have. Are  
they claiming that their "spirits" are  
really God, and so John is instructing  
them not to simply accept this at face  
value?

Verses 2 & 3 seem to answer the  
question of how they were to **"examine,**

**test and prove" them. Paul advised in 1 Cor. 14:29,**

**"Now let two or three prophets be speaking, one after another, and let the other folks continue thoroughly sifting and sorting so as to fully evaluate and reach a decision."**

Paul is here telling them to use their spirits to sense if there is a "right spirit" in these folks, and to use their minds and understanding to judge the matter. They should compare what these folks have said to the message that they had originally been taught about the Christ. Jesus had prophesied that false prophets

would come (Mk. 13:22; Matt. 24:11, 24).

It is instructive to note that these "spirits" have gone out into all the systems of their society. We likewise find them today in our work places, schools, political entities, religious groups and families. Discernment is a much-needed gift for the body of Christ. Bultmann points to *einai ek* (**existing from out of**) "which designates the origin and thereby the essence" and cites Schnackenburg, p 224, as being "correct in stressing the following: 'One's basic nature may be inferred from his practical behavior....'" (ibid. p 61 n 1).

**2. Within this you continually come to**

**know by experience** (or: be progressively becoming acquainted intimately with) **the Spirit of God** (God's Breath-effect, influence and attitude): **every spirit** (breath-effect; attitude; influence) **which constantly speaks in accord with** (says the same as; speaks like; or: confesses and avows) **Jesus [the] Christ [as] having come and now continuing in flesh** (= in a physical body), **continuously exists being** (or: is) **from out of God** [other MSS: every spirit confessing Jesus Christ to have come in flesh is forth from God],

The first understanding that is mined from this verse is that when listening to a

person speak, or when considering the teaching of a group, or when evaluating the content of a message, if this person avows, or this group "says the same thing as," or the content of the message "accords with" the fact that Jesus is the Christ that historically came as a human, in flesh, then we can be assured that this person, group or message exists with the source being God.

The second insight that we can mine is that we know the results based upon our own experience of folks and groups – we don't have to wait for some special decision or personal opinion by someone else. Our own acquaintance with the teachings in the gospels and in

the letters of the Scriptures that affirm this fact tell us what is truth, and what is a false teaching, so we can recognize whether or not the "**Spirit of God**" is being demonstrated by what is being said.

The third consideration is that John can mean that the spirit of Jesus Christ has come in the person or group that is bringing the message, or that their "attitude" can be seen to have been "influenced" by what Jesus has said. In other words, if you can discern God's Breath-effect or the character of Jesus in what they say or who they are, then you can conclude that they are "**from out of God.**"

John has given the criterion by means of which the testing (vs. 1) should be done. The verb "know" is in a form that is either indicative (my first rendering) or imperative (the parenthetical rendering). I inserted "[the]" after "**Jesus**" because Jesus and Christ are in the accusative, making them a predicate accusative and the object of the verb. The emphasis is not just that Jesus is the Messiah (*cf* 2:22), but also that the Messiah (Anointed One) has come in flesh, as in 2 John 7.

The other manuscript readings present what we first mined from this verse.

3. **and every spirit** (influence; attitude; breath) **which is not habitually**

**speaking in accord with** (speaking like; or: avowing; confessing) **Jesus** [some MSS add: {the; as} Lord, having come in flesh] **is not out of** (does not originate in) **God. And this [spirit, expression, or speech which is not in accord with Jesus] is** (or: continuously exists being) **of the anti-anointing** (or: that which pertains to the antichrist; from something in the place of Christ) – **which you folks have heard that it is constantly** (repeatedly; habitually) **coming, and now** (or: presently) **exists within the controlling ordered System** (or: is in the world of religion, economy, government and culture; or: has being in the realms of the secular and the

religious) **already** (before now).

The first clause is basically a restatement of vs. 2, telling us that the reverse is also true. Not "**habitually speaking in accord with** (speaking like; or: avowing; confessing) **Jesus** [some MSS add: {the; as} Lord, having come in flesh]" means that the spirit under consideration "**is not out of** (does not originate in) **God.**"

He goes on here to define a term (*anti-christos*) of which I have given three definitions: **of the anti-anointing**; that which pertains to the antichrist; from something in the place of Christ. I also expressed these with three different functions of the genitive/ablative case in

constructing the prepositional phrases.

The different functions can also be switched with the optional definitions.

This term was seen in 2:18, and like there it here refers to the heretical

teachers of John's day. "The mythological figure of the antichrist is thereby demythologized and

historicized" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 63).

The present tense of the verb "**come**" is given three expressions of the lineal action that is inherent in this tense. This "antichrist" constantly, or habitually, or repeatedly comes. And you will note that it comes in people. It exists within the entire "**controlling ordered System**" and was with them in that first century

world, in all that system's various forms. We see the same thing today, and can observe its presence throughout the history of the "church" system, as well as in other religions and in political institutions. The economic system of slavery is the black background that puts in sharp contrast the light of the freedom that came through the Messiah. The spirit of antichrist is whatever is **"not habitually speaking in accord with,"** or "speaking like" Jesus! And again note John's emphasis on and rhetorical repetition of "speaking" – this has to do with the message of the Gnostic teachers, and the issues of their hearts which are being displayed in their

words.

In place of "not confessing or speaking like" in the first clause, some early witnesses (e.g., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen) have *luei* (thus: "and every spirit which destroys or annuls Jesus...") which gives a striking reading. The Vulgate also follows this reading.

**4. Little children (born ones), you continuously exist from out of God (or: you exist with God as your source; you originate your being from God), and you have conquered (overcome) and are now victorious over them, because greater is the One (or: He) within you than the one within the ordered**

**System** (the person in union with the world of religion, culture, society, economy and government; or: the individual centered in either the secular or the religious).

There is of course an element of tenderness in the term "**little children**," as John speaks as the Father to them. And we see his acceptance and drive toward overcoming any estrangement, and to bring about reunion, when in vss. 7 & 11, below, he employs the endearing term *agapeto*.

Next he affirms that they are confessing and affirming the positive avowal that he described above, in vs. 2. They, as a group, "**continuously exist from out of**

**God.**" They are not like those false teachers, and in fact (here John grows more exuberant) they "have overcome" these false teachers "**and are now victorious over them.**" John is now declaring "accomplished" the purpose of this letter! By the very fact of these covenant communities being "**out of God**" – which is a phrase equivalent to Paul's "**in Christ**" – they have the victory over those antichrists. This is an echo of what he said to the young men in 2:13-14. What wonderful assurance for them – and now for us.

You see, not only are they "**out of God**" but God (the Greater One) is within them. This corresponds to Paul's "**Christ**

**within you folks."** This also corresponds to the **"great Chief Priest having passed through the atmospheres"** (Heb. 4:14) that was greater than the chief priest of the **"ordered System"** of Judaism.

The "one within the world" has normally been interpreted to refer to "the devil," but that has to be read INTO this context, for as we see from the following verse, John was referring specifically to **"They themselves,"** i.e., the false teachers. Having a different understanding of some verse or passage does not constitute a person as a "false teacher." The sent-off emissaries such as John, Paul, Peter, Apollos, etc., probably had

different understandings of the message of goodness (*cf* 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). Rather, the false teacher usually represented a false system of belief, such as the Gnostics or the Judaizers. This is why John refers to them in the plural.

**5. They themselves exist being from out of that ordered System** (or: they exist with the world as their source; they originate their [sense of] being from the System). **On account of this they continually speak from out of the System** (they habitually speak out of the world [as a source and perspective]), **and the ordered System** (world of ideas: culture, religion and education, as

well as the control of economy and government; the arranged realm of the religious as well as the secular)

**constantly listens to and hears them.**

The folks who adhere to these other systems of belief will naturally listen to these false teachers, because they are speaking the doctrines of those systems – be they Gnosticism, the system of the Old Covenant, paganism, Roman imperialism, or whatever. We can find application of this statement in the philosophical systems of economics, education and political ideologies, as well.

**6. We, however, continuously exist (or: are) from out of the midst of God. The**

**person habitually and progressively coming to know God by intimate experience is continually hearing us** (or: listening and paying attention to what comes from, or pertains to, us). **He who does not exist from out of God is not hearing** (or: listening to) **us. From out of this we constantly know by intimate experiences the Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect; influence; Attitude) **of the Truth** (or: of reality), **and the spirit** (influence; breath-effect; attitude) **of wandering** (deception; error; straying).

Here is the stark contrast. We have our being in the midst of God. Those coming to know God listen to and hear us. Those

out of the systems of society and religion listen to the false teachers, and pay attention to them – and that is because they are not "**from out of God.**" The source of their ideas and messages is some "system," not God. Note here that John uses the verb "**hearing** (listening)" – he is talking about the message and teaching from God versus what comes from the false teachers. He finally contrasts these messages as either "**the Spirit of the Truth**" as opposed to "**the spirit of wandering**" – i.e., straying from what they had heard "from the beginning," the teachings of the disciples of Jesus. The Attitude and influence of the Truth are words of Life.

Those who listen and hear the true message show themselves to be "**from God**" and to possess God's Spirit – "**the Spirit of the Truth**," which is Christ: the Way of covenant inclusion. This is a reference to John 14:

16. "**and I Myself will ask** (make a request of) **the Father, and He will give another Helper** (One called alongside to give assistance, relief, comfort and encouragement; Paraclete) **of like kind to you folks – to the end that He (or: It) can continue being** [other MSS: would be constantly remaining and dwelling] **with you folks on**

**into the midst of the Age –**  
**17. "the Spirit of the Truth**  
(or: the spirit and breath of  
reality; the Breath-effect and  
Attitude which is Reality),  
**whom** (or: which) **the System**  
(world; ordered arrangement of  
religion, politics and culture;  
controlling system) **has no**  
**power** (is not able) **to receive,**  
**because it is not habitually**  
**gazing upon It** (or: Him) **with**  
**contemplation** (continually  
viewing and watching it with  
attentive interest), **nor is it**  
**coming to intimately and**  
**experientially know It** (or:

**Him). Yet YOU folks are progressively knowing It (or: Him) by intimate experience, because It (or: He) is continuously dwelling (remaining; abiding) alongside you folks – in your presence – and It (or: He) continuously exists (or: is; [other MSS: will be]) within, in union with, and among you people.**

**18. "I will not leave you abandoned or send you off as orphaned ones (or: folks without family). I am repeatedly (or: habitually) and now progressively coming**

**toward you people.**

*Cf* 5:6, below; also John 15:26; 16:13.

**7. Beloved ones, we are (or: can and should be) continuously loving one another, because love (or: the urge toward reunion and acceptance) exists continuously (or: is) from out of the midst of God, and every one continuously loving has been born, and exists being a born-one, from out of the midst of God, and constantly experiences intimate knowledge of God (or: comes to know by experiences from God; gains knowledge and insight by the experience which is God).**

John again returns to his main theme in the passage in 3:11-23. This is the

central focus of the message of goodness, and is the purpose for the called-out community. The goal that Jesus spoke of in John 17:20-23 was for the group to be one as they are sent into the aggregate of humanity, and that their maturity in this oneness would bring the knowledge of Him to the world. And as we see, His love brings "the urge toward reunion and acceptance." The verb of the first clause is either the subjunctive (the parenthetical rendering) which informs them of what they can and should do, or it is the indicative (the first rendering) which affirms what the group is normally doing. Many translators render the subjunctive as an admonition in the

sense of "let us" be doing this. I tend toward the indicative because they received His word which brought the Love; and furthermore, they have been born from out of that love, and have come to know Him – so it follows that they were (and we are) continuously loving one another.

He again affirms that by constantly loving they show to the world that they have been born from God, and already habitually experience the intimate knowledge of God which the Gnostics are trying to obtain. This pronouncement can instruct us today, as well, as the lure and enticements of "spiritual experiences" attempt to draw us away

from the simplicity of Christ.

**8. The one not habitually loving has not come to know God by intimate experience, because God continuously exists being Love (or: for God is Love and Acceptance).**

There is no need for special routines or religious practices to have intimate experience, insight and knowledge of God. A life of loving others, accepting them, seeking to overcome all estrangement and alienation within them and draw them into reunion with God and humanity is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And this is because Love is the very essence of God. John is here equating loving with experiencing the

knowledge and insight of Who and What God is. You want to know God? Love people.

My first rendering of the last clause gives the ontological/existential meaning of *eimi* (to be; to exist). Many understand this to be a statement of God's essence, and almost a definition of God. Most translators render *eimi* as a copulative and simply say "is," as in my parenthetical alternative, and commentators such as Bultmann disagree that this is a definition, citing parallel structures such as 1:5, "God is light," and John 4:24, "God is spirit." His point is well taken, but I also see this pronouncement as descriptive of how

God "exists" in His creation, e.g., in His existential entry into the cosmos via the incarnation and the giving of His Spirit at Pentecost, to name just two. What He is to humanity is His essence in relationship to humanity. As vs. 9 states, He has made Himself clear to us as being Love through the sending of His Son.

But the point of this verse, within its context, is that love describes the nature of the covenant community – in contrast to the community of the false teachers, which John describes as not loving other people. Cf 2:9, 11; 3:10, 14-15, 17.

**9. Within this, God's Love is instantly manifested** (or: was at one point made

visible; is made apparent and clear) **within us** (or: among us), **in that** (or: because) **God has sent** (dispatched) **His uniquely-born** (or: only-begotten) **Son as a Representative** (Envoy; Emissary) **into the ordered System** (world of society, culture, religion and government; or: the cosmos; or: = the aggregate of humanity), **to the end that we would live** (or: can experience life) **through Him.**

The verb tense of "**manifested**/made visible" or "made apparent and clear" is aorist: the fact tense, so I have given both the simple present and the simple past, but in each case emphasizing the "snap-shot" or "point of time" aspect.

Because God sent His uniquely-born (a reference to John 1:18) Son into the world, God's love was and is manifested and made clear within and among us, so the goal and destiny of humanity is to live (experience Life) through Him. The reference to the sending of the Son recalls John 3:

**16. "For thus God loves the world** (the universe; the ordered arrangement; the organized system [of life and society]; or: = all mankind), **so that He gives His uniquely-born** [with other MSS: the only-begotten] **Son,**

(or, reading wste as an

adverb: You see, **in this manner** God loves the sum total of created beings as being the Son: He gives the Only-begotten One; or, reading wV te: For you see, [it is] in this way [that] God loves the aggregate of humanity – even as it were His Son: He gives the uniquely-born One), **to the end**

**that all** (or: everyone) – **the one habitually believing, putting confidence and**

**trusting into Him – would not lose or destroy himself, or cause himself to fall into ruin, but rather can continuously have** (or: would habitually possess and hold) **eonian life** (age-durative life with qualities derived from the Age [of the Messiah]; living existence of and for the ages).

John is accessing the story of the incarnation (another argument against the Gnostics and pre- Docetists) and this calls to mind Paul's narrative of the Messiah in Phil. 2:

7. "... **He empties Himself** (or: removed the contents of

Himself; made Himself empty), **receiving** (or: taking; accepting) **a slave's form** (external shape; outward mold), **coming to be** (or: birthing Himself) **within an effect of humanity's** (mankind's; people's) **likeness.**

**8. And so, being found in an outward fashion, mode of circumstance, condition, form-appearance** (or: character, role, phase, configuration, manner) **as a human** (a person; a man), **He lowers Himself** (or: humbled Himself; made Himself low; degrades Himself; levels Himself off), **coming to be** (or:

birthing Himself) **a submissive, obedient One** (one who gives the ear and listens) **as far as** (or: to the point of; until) **death – but death of a cross** (torture stake)!"

And this was the manifestation of what God is like; a manifestation of Love. God gave us His Son so that we can live. Delivering us from death and sin frees us to live in Him and to love as He does.

**10. Within this exists (or: is) the Love, not that we ourselves have loved** [other MSS: not that we ourselves love or accept] **God, but in contrast, that He Himself loves us and sends (or:**

urged toward reunion with us and sent)

## **His Son as a Representative**

**(Emissary): a cleansing, sheltering covering around our sins** (failures to hit the target; errors; mistakes; deviations).

John is rehearsing this again so that we will do as God does: He puts a cleansing, sheltering covering around our sins and failures so that other people will not see them, and thus we in turn will not feel shame. But not only does this shelter and cover us, He cleanses us. We should also note that God's actions are the cause and source of *agape*: He "urged toward reunion with us and sent His Son." We see here an echo of Israel's Temple cultus and the blood put

upon the mercy seat, which brought removal of sin for the entire nation on the Day of Atonement. This repeats the same metaphors of 1:7 and 2:2, and the concepts in 3:5 and 3:8b.

**11. Beloved ones, since thus (or: in that manner) God loves (or: loved) us, we also are constantly indebted (or: under obligation) to habitually love and accept one another.**

The communities of Christ are called to imitate God – to be like Him. This was the goal set forth in the Genesis story: humanity was formed to be in the image and likeness of God. We are now at the conclusion of that story. The word "**indebted**" calls to mind Paul's

metaphor of the Owner (Lord)/slave relationship. We were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23); we are under obligation to reflect our Master. John's last clause is a repetition of vs. 7a, above, and parallels 3:16b. It is really hard to miss his point.

12. **No one** (or: Not even one) **has yet once** (or: ever yet) **gazed upon God as an object in a theater** (as a public spectacle). **If we are** (or: may be) **habitually loving** (urging toward reunion, acceptance and participation in) **one another, God constantly remains** (dwells, abides) **within us, and His love** (or: the love, which is Him,) **is existing having been brought to its goal and is**

**now matured, perfected and has reached its destiny within us, and among us.**

The thought expressed in the first sentence is a reflection of John 1:18a, but here a different verb is used, as you can observe by my detailed rendering. In the former the verb carries the sense of perceiving in order to know. Here John seems to be placing a blow to folks who boast of visions in which they can observe God as a spectacle or as someone on a stage. Here we see that our relationship with God is realized only in mutual love.

John now returns to "loving and being in participation with one another." If the

community does this, God remains within His temple (us), and His very Essence and Being are brought to their goal. **His Love** (*autou* as a subjective genitive, or as apposition, "which is Him") has matured and reached its destiny within us, and among us. This is what Paul calls "**the expectation of the glory**" (Col. 1:27). The realm of "the glory" is simply loving-acceptance of others, with a drive toward reunion and inter-participation which drives away estrangement. The topic of remaining/dwelling/abiding is taken up again in 13, and once more in 16b where the verb is repeated three times, and there the inter-penetrating union of Love

is both the vehicle and the realm of the dwelling.

**13. Within this we are continually knowing by experience that we are constantly remaining (dwelling; abiding) within the midst of, and in union with, Him and He Himself within us, because He has given to us from out of His Breath-effect (or: Spirit; Attitude).**

All this has come about "**because He has given to us.**" The source of the gift (which we see and experience to be Himself) is His Breath-effect, or Spirit. He also gives us His attitude, which, as we see, is an attitude of Love and Acceptance. This abiding union, which

is within the midst of Him while He is within the midst of us (which = interpenetration; or: reciprocal dwelling, *cf* 3:24a), comes from the gift of His Spirit, and is in the very realm of God. This is a relational union, but I suggest that it is also an existential union of our spirits as the Family of the God, who is our Father.

**14. And we have gazed upon this public situation, and are repeatedly testifying (giving witness and evidence) that the Father has sent forth (dispatched as a Representative) the Son – [the] Savior of the world (or: Deliverer of the ordered and controlling System of religion and secular society;**

Restorer of the universe; or: = the Rescuer and Healer of all humanity). The term "**public situation**" refers to the historical experience that was referenced in the opening lines of this letter. What they saw was what God did in the incarnation. The "**repeatedly testifying,**" etc., had been the work of the first and second generations of disciples. The message has continued to be "**that the Father has sent forth the Son**" in the Person of Jesus. His goal and destiny was to be "**[the] Savior of the world** (i.e., the aggregate of all humanity)." This was the demonstration of the Father's love for all of His creation; all of His people. *Cf* John

4:42.

**15. Whoever may speak in accord** (confess; avow; say like words; say the same thing; agree) **that Jesus exists being God's Son** (or: is continuously the Son which is God), **God continuously dwells** (abides), **remaining in him, and he himself within God.**

These repeated, redundant thoughts and expressions are the height of Asian rhetoric. Speaking the same message and confession are again stressed.

Reciprocal dwelling is again stressed. I have presented another example of the genitive of apposition in the parenthetical alternative, "the Son which is God," for you to consider. This could

be an ontological statement about Jesus, or a functional statement which references Israel's history. How this would be understood depends upon one's understanding of who Jesus is, or how the term "son of God" is being used – e.g., if it is in reference to Him being the Messiah, or the King: God's anointed (*cf* Ps 2; 2 Sam. 7; Ps 89:26-27 – referring to David; and Ex. 4:11 – speaking of Israel).

**16. And we have come by intimate experience to know and have believed, trusted and are convinced of the Love which God has (or: holds) continuously within (or: among) us. God exists continually being Love**

(God is Love), and the person continuously remaining (dwelling; abiding) within, and in union with, the Love, is continuously remaining (dwelling; abiding) within, and in union with, God – and God constantly dwells (remains; abides) within him and in union with him.

The Love, which is God, is "within (or: among) us." Remaining and dwelling within that Love (which God holds within {or: among} us) means that we are "remaining (dwelling; abiding) within, and in union with, God." And again we see the reciprocal dwelling; the interpenetrating abiding. Note again the corporate connotation in the "we,"

"us" and the rendering of *en* with a plural as "among." He uses "the person" to represent the group in his repeated description of the reciprocal solidarity with the covenant community. However, although addressing a group, what he says also applies to the individual cells of the "body."

The verb *echō* means both to have (or: possess), and to hold (and thus, possess or maintain and guard). God has, and **holds** His Love (which He is) within and among us. This calls to mind Paul's wonderful words in Rom. 8:

**35. Who or what will separate, divide or part us away from the Love of and from Christ**

(or: the separation-overcoming love which is Christ; [other MSS: the God's love within Christ Jesus])?

**17. Within this the Love has been brought to its goal, been matured, reached its destiny and is now perfected with us, to the end that we may continuously have confident freedom of speech (the boldness of a citizen to speak publicly without fear of punishment) within the day of sifting and separation (distinction, evaluation and decision; judging; judicial proceeding; or: administering of justice), because just as That One is, we also continuously exist being: within the**

## **midst of this ordered System**

(or: because in this world of culture, religion, economy and government, even we, ourselves, progressively exist – correspondingly as, and to the according level as, That One continuously exists and is progressively being).

**"The Love"** is God's love, just as the love spoken of by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:7 is also God's love:

**"[Love] continuously covers all mankind; it is habitually loyal to all humanity; it constantly has an expectation for all mankind; it is**

**continuously remaining under  
and giving support to all  
people."**

The goal and destiny of God's love is That Love being lived and put into action within humanity as a covenant community. This desire and urge to overcome human estrangement in other people gives us confidence in our speaking openly about God's love for people and His desire for them to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:18-20). But what about the phrase that follows John speaking of confident freedom of speech? What is "**the day of sifting and separation**" (distinction, evaluation and decision; judging; judicial proceeding;

or: administering of justice)"? In 3:21, above, **"we constantly have confident freedom in speaking** (boldness from our citizenship) **toward and face to face with God**" – **"if our heart should not be constantly condemning or censuring."** And in 2:28 John speaks of this same confident boldness and freedom, along with **"and may not feel or receive shame** (disgrace; dishonor; humiliation) **from Him, within His presence** (or: may not be shamed away from Him in the midst of His presence)." These situations have traditionally been interpreted as being at some future time, when "Christ returns," or at the "Judgment seat of Christ." Jesus

spoke of the same, or a similar, situation in Matt. 10:

**15. "Assuredly – I now say to you folks – it will be more endurable in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in [the] day of separation and decision, than in that city (or: it will be more supportable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in a day of judging, than for that town)!"**

Now observe that He spoke here in terms of "**in the land...**" and "**than in that city...**" The setting of His pronouncement was here on earth, as it had always been in the history of Israel, and not off in some "spiritual realm."

Jesus also spoke of Jerusalem being left abandoned, as a desert place (Matt. 23:38; Lu. 13:34-35) and referred to the temple being destroyed in Matt. 24. In Lu. 19:42-44 He wept over Jerusalem, saying **"days will arrive upon you, and your enemies... will cast up a mound beside [you and] a staked fortification.... Because you do not know the season of your visitation."**

History tells us of the events of AD 70 – the Day of the Lord, when Jerusalem and the surrounding territories were "sifted," separated off for judgment. The story of Israel is a story of God repeatedly bringing judgment upon their land. Their story is exemplary, and all of humanity

has been inserted into their story with progressive changes as the chapters continued to be written. See the article, "Coming Versus Present," at the end of the comments on this letter. His presence is always with us – He lives in His Home: His Temple. And when we need it, it becomes a **"day of sifting and separation."**

Let us turn to the final clause of this verse, and it will become even more clear to us:

**"because just as That One is,  
we also continuously exist  
being: within the midst of this  
ordered System  
(or: because in this world of**

culture, religion, economy and government, even we, ourselves, progressively exist – correspondingly as, and to the according level as, That One continuously exists and is progressively being)."

We are within the systems of our society, and He is here, too – going through it all with us, experiencing what we experience, progressively bringing His sovereign influence and dominion into all levels and realms of existence. We must look with the eyes of the Spirit to see this. Things are not like they seem to be. The first century communities that were called out of their cultures and

religions to be the Light of the world did not outwardly look different, and they still physically lived within those systems (in them, but not of them). But these expressions of His covenant with humanity were like the mustard seed of the parable given by Jesus. The Vine which began as Jesus the Messiah, into which was first engrafted His disciples and later the ethnic multitudes (Rom. 11:17f), has grown and increased to fill the entire globe (*cf* Dan. 2:35b).

Because He, the Vine, remains joined to us "**within the midst of this ordered System,**" we have confidence that His prayer (John 17:15) will be answered:

**"I am not now making a**

**request to the end that You should pick them up and carry (or: remove; take) them out of the System (world; ordered arrangement of culture, religion and government; secular society), but rather that You should observe, guard, protect, maintain, care for and keep them out of the worthless or bad situation, the sorry plight, the effect of the knavish and good-for-nothing person, the oppressive toil and the base or evil influence."**

This would seem to speak against the idea of a physical "rapture" of the

community. With these thoughts in mind, I suggest that vs. 18 is not an aphorism, but a continuation of the context. The fear which they might have had may have been associated with concerns about the coming eschatological judgment.

**18. Fear does not exist within the Love, but rather perfect love (mature love; love having reached its goal) repeatedly (habitually; progressively) throws the fear outside, because the fear constantly has and holds a pruning (a curtailment; a checking; restraint; a lopping off – thus, a correction). But the one habitually fearing or dreading has not been perfected within the Love (has not**

been brought to the destined goal of maturity – in union with love).

The "**perfect love**" is God's love that He holds (vs. 16, above) within and among us, so that we may in turn express that love (along with the absence of fear) to those around us. Note the present tense of the verb "**throw**." This shows that situations that may ordinarily cause fear are repeatedly arising in this life.

The word "**pruning**" (*kolasis*) is an agricultural term, and care of a vineyard or an orchard should always be kept in mind when we come across this term.

Bultmann referred to its use in Matt.

25:46 where it is often rendered

"punishment," but which I suggest spoke

of the judgment that was about to come upon God's people (there termed the "kids" – immature goats – of His herd) in AD 70, while the "sheep" (always a reference to His disciples) were ushered into the kingdom activities, as seen in the book of Acts. Bultmann cites Luther's understanding of the context here as fear having its own agony, and then he concludes that the concept of "the eschatological *kolasis* ('punishment') is historicized like the concept of *krisis* ('judgment') in John 3:19; 5:24, which corresponds to the statement in 3:14 [above] that those who love have already passed out of death into life" (ibid. p 74, brackets mine).

Fear often brings a "checking," a "restraint" of our proposed activities. But the love of which John has been speaking gives us confident boldness to speak freely, even in the face of danger. So it is in this way that His love throws the fear outside of the community. Fear cannot exist with such Love that accepts outsiders and seeks to overcome their estrangement and bring them into union with the covenant community.

The next sentence states the antithesis and describes those who have not yet been born into the body of Christ, or to an immature believer who "has not been brought to the destined goal of maturity – in union with love."

19. **We ourselves are** [some MSS add: now] **habitually loving** (or, as a subjunctive: can and should be constantly loving) **because He Himself first loved** (or: urges to reunion with) **us.**

John here describes the covenant community that has confident boldness of speech (vs. 17) and has no fear (vs. 18) because God (and Christ) loved us first (or: because He Himself first "urges to reunion with us"). The verb of the last clause is in the aorist, giving the fact of the historic act of God giving us His Son, but also giving the timeless sense that He – being Love – from His very nature drives toward reunion with all

humanity (the aggregate of the humans that compose the world).

**20. If anyone may up and say, "I am constantly loving God," and yet may be habitually hating (or: would keep on regarding with ill-will) his brother, he is a liar (he exists being a false one).**

**For the one not habitually loving his brother (= member of the community, or, fellow human) – whom he has looked at and now sees – he continues being unable and has no power to be loving God, Whom he has not seen (or: looked at).**

John is saying here that to love God requires that we love others. This makes perfect sense if we realize that God also

lives in other people, not just ourselves. In 2:10 he said the person habitually loving his brother dwells in the Light, but 2:9 & 11 tell us that hating a brother means dwelling in the Darkness (that which existed before the coming of the Day; that which does not belong to the community of Light) and being a liar. So being devoid of love and compassion puts one in the same categories as "hate" and "darkness," and someone in these conditions is unable – has no power – to love God. Such conduct also makes the person "a person-slayer" (3:15). Being a liar separates this person or group from the reality from God (1:6; 2:4, 22). Loving God means solidarity with

others, and this is because "**God in this way loves the aggregate of humanity**" (John 3:16).

21. **And we continuously hold** (or: have) **this implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward and purposed directive of destiny) **from Him, to the end that the person continuously loving God can, should and would also habitually love** (accept and drive toward reunion with) **his brother** (= his fellow believer, or his fellow human being).

Repetition for emphasis is once again seen in this verse. But he also points to the fact that the person "**continuously loving God**" has the ability, opportunity

and duty to love and accept other people and seek to bring them into the covenant community, delivering them from their alienation and death. This speaks of practical acts of inclusion and doing the work of a paraclete: giving aid and assistance where it is needed. The **"implanted goal"** is for the community to live the life of Christ on the earth, to continue His mission and bring His deliverance to humanity. It means to act like Christ, and to act like God, reflecting His character to the world. Daniel Kirk puts it this way, "The community he forms around himself is the continuation of Jesus' presence on earth" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 60). Kirk also point

us to the Sermon on the Mount, where in Matt. 5 Jesus says,

**44. "Yet I, Myself, am now saying to you folks: Be constantly loving your enemies (urging toward reunion with, and accepting as persons standing on the same ground, those folks hostile to you; [comment: this could have applied to the Romans, as well as to personal enemies]), and be habitually praying over (on behalf of) the people continuously persecuting you –**  
**45. "so that (by what means) you folks can be birthed (may**

come to be) **sons of your Father – the One within [the] atmosphere and in union with [the] heavens – because He is repeatedly making His sun to rise back up again upon bad (evil; wicked) folks as well as [upon] good (virtuous) folks, and He is habitually sending rain upon fair and equitable people (those in right relationship; those within the Way pointed out; just ones; rightwised ones) as well as [upon] unfair and inequitable people (those not in right relationship; those not in the**

Way pointed out; unjust ones).

**46. "You see, if you should happen to love and participate with the ones constantly loving you folks, what wage or reward do you continue holding (or: having)? Are not also the tax collectors constantly doing the very same thing?**

**47. "And further, if you folks should only greet and welcomely embrace your brothers, what are you continuing to do [that is] excessive or extraordinary? Are not also the folks of the**

**ethnic multitudes** (the nations; the pagans; the non-Israelites) **constantly doing the very same thing?**

**48. "Therefore, you folks will exist being ones that have reached the purposed and destined goal: finished and completed ones; mature and perfected ones – in the same way as your heavenly Father (or: your Father which has the qualities of, and is characterized by, the atmosphere) constantly exists being One that is the goal and destiny: finished, complete, mature, perfect!"**

The message of Jesus, Paul, John and the other NT writers is the same: love people.



## Chapter 5

**1. Everyone (All) continuously believing, constantly convinced and progressively trusting that Jesus is (or: exists being) the Christ (the Anointed One; = the Messiah) has been brought to birth and is now a born-one (= is a child) from out of God. And everyone continuously loving (urging toward reunion with) the One bearing and giving birth (the Parent) should and would also love (accept in unity) the person having been born (the child) out of Him.**

If we keep in mind that the purpose of John's letter was to take a stand against

the Gnosticism which claimed similar union with God through their mystical experiences, then his repeated insistence that this comes from the imparted trust and belief that Jesus is the Messiah becomes more understandable. In John 3:7, speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said, **"It is necessary and binding for you folks to be born back up again to a higher place** (or: for you people to be given birth from above)." Notice the plural pronoun that Jesus used: **"you folks"** – He was referring to the entire nation. Here, John is telling these groups that "all" (*pas*), as a collective but inclusive singular, "the trusting and believing" are children of God – folks

brought into the community of Christ by a birth from out of our Parent.

It only follows that if we love our Father, we should also love our siblings – the other children brought into being from "**out of Him.**" So if we truly do the first, then we will also do the second.

**2. Whenever we are (or: may be) habitually loving God, and then may be habitually doing or producing His implanted goals (impartations of the finished product within; inward, purposed directives), in this [condition and situation] we progressively come to know by insight and intimate experiences that we are [also] normally loving God's children.**

Bultmann saw the two participle phrases of the first clause (**habitually loving God... habitually doing or producing His implanted goals**) as forming a hendiadys [two words or thoughts, but one thing meant], meaning that "loving God" should be interpreted as "doing or producing His purposed directives." (ibid. p 77) In this he has hit the mark dead center.

I rearranged the clauses of the Greek to help the English reader understand what John was saying. We see the same idea of "loving God" equaling "**doing or producing His implanted goals**" in what Jesus said in John 14:15,

**"If you are habitually loving**

**Me** (or, as a subjunctive: would continue loving Me), **you WILL continue** [other MSS the subjunctive: can; should] **observing** (noting and keeping watch over; guarding and preserving; keeping in view; holding in custody; [other MSS, the imperative: Be observing]) **My implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives; interior purpose and destiny)."

This is entirely in line with what John has been saying in ch. 4, above. And when we are abiding in love of, for and

from God, **"in this [condition and situation]"** we come to realize that **"we are [also] normally loving God's children."** Loving others is the normal fruit of God's love dwelling within us. There simply is not the one without the other. The hermit or person who withdraws from community cannot love God in the way that our Messiah has taught us to love Him.

**3. You see, that we would continuously observe His imparted and implanted goals is itself the Love of God** (or: the love which pertains to God; the Love which is God)  
(or: For this exists being love from God so that we can progressively watch over,

keep, maintain and guard His interior finished product) – **and His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives) **are not heavy** (weighty, thus, burdensome) – So John goes on to clearly define "living out His directives and goals (His imparted 'end in view')" as being "**the Love of God.**" This is put another way in the alternate parenthetical rendering where I again reverse the clauses and render "**God**" as an ablative (God being the source of the love) instead of a genitive. In the parenthetical expansions of the first rendering, the first gives the subjective genitive (love that we would have which pertains to God, or, our love

for God). The second is the genitive of apposition (the Love which IS God), pointing to Himself as the Love that is within us as we produce His destiny in humanity by injecting His Love into them.

That His impartations "**are not heavy**" reminds us how Jesus instructed His listeners,

**"You see, My crossbeam** (or: the yoke which is Me; the balance beam that comes from and pertains to Me) **is useful and kindly obliging, and My load** (the burden that is Me and which pertains to Me) **continues being light** (not heavy)." Matt.

11:30

He has called us to enter into His rest (Heb. 4:10-11) and simply produce His fruit (John 15). But the fruit is love for others, expressed in practical ways.

**4. because everything (all) having been born from out of the midst of God continuously overcomes** (habitually conquers and is progressively victorious over) **the controlling System** (ordered world or religion, secular culture, economy and government). **And this is the victory** (or: conquest) **at once overcoming** (conquering; victorious over) **the controlling System** (ordered world of religion, culture, economy and

government): **our trust, confidence and faith!**

The subject of the first clause (**everything**; all) is neuter, so this is not referring to people (as some have erroneously rendered it; e.g., Nyland and the NIV). The next sentence makes this clear, as well, since we observe that it is "**trust, confidence and faith**" that is "**overcoming**" whatever controlling system that would put us in bondage. I expanded the rendering of this aorist participle by the phrase "**at once**" to indicate the point in time aspect of the verb tense. The faith, trust and confidence which the work of Christ has given to us is instantly victorious over

situations which arise from the systems within which we live. What is being overcome by the fruit of His Spirit is not people, but systems of control and management, as well as our own internal system of dealing with people which has been erected as a defense mechanism. Bultmann, however, sees in the aorist a reference to the past event and the **victory** of the Christ event – and of course this sense of the aorist is also correct in that it has in view the Victory of Christ who is:

**"the One presently and progressively giving the Victory (or: the overcoming) to us, in us and for us through our**

**Lord (Owner; Master), Jesus, [the] Christ!"** 1 Cor. 15:57.

By bringing the Victory of our Lord into our situations – through the faith that He gives us – we bring victory into those situations. John's focus is still the communities as a whole, for it is "**our**" trust, confidence and faith. The gift that He has given is to people at large (in the text, literally, "**the faith of us**" – which could also be rendered "the trust that pertains to us; the confidence that [now] belongs to us"); the gift that forms covenant communities around Him.

**5. Now who is the person continuously overcoming (or: progressively conquering) the ordered System**

(world; secular realm; religious arrangement) **if not the one continuously believing, progressively trusting and being constantly loyal to [the fact] that Jesus is (continuously exists being) the Son of God (God's Son; or: the Son who is God)?**

Here John makes it personal and presents the person or the group that is **"continuously believing, progressively trusting and constantly loyal"** as the one being continuously victorious over the world's systems in our society. The faith is to be lived, and it is specifically the faith, trust and loyalty to the fact that Jesus is God's Messiah. It is in this way that the "world" is overcome.

Bultmann suggest that from 2:22, and the following verses, that pronouncements such as are made in this verse have in view Gnostic theology and christology. Although they accepted Jesus Christ as the Savior, they did not believe that the historical Jesus was the Christ. (ibid. p 79) Cf 4:2; 5:1.

**6. This is the One at one point coming through water and blood and breath (or: spirit; Breath-effect), Jesus Christ. Not within the water alone (or: not in only water), but rather within the water and within the blood (or: in union with water and in union with blood; [other MSS add: and within spirit; note: figure of a human birth, or**

natural lineage]), **and then there is the breath – that which is continuing to give evidence** (or: and the Spirit {Breath-effect} continuously exists being the One repeatedly testifying), **because the breath is** (or: Spirit or Breath-effect exists being) **the Truth and Reality!**

(or: and the spirit is the One {or: one} continuously witnessing that the Spirit is The Truth! or: the breath is that which constantly gives testimony that the Breath-effect is reality...)

The manuscripts vary on this verse. Most modern versions follow MSS B,

Y, 1739\*, the Majority text, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, which read only "**water and blood**" in the first clause, omitting "**breath** (spirit; breath-effect)." I included this third word on the basis of its being in MSS Aleph, A, 614 and 1505, and also since MSS P, a number of later MSS, as well as a number of Vulgate MSS read "spirit and blood." Ambrose, 945, 1241 and the margin of 1739 all read with only the word "spirit." John's gospel may instruct us here where we read in ch. 3:

**5. Jesus decisively replies,**  
**"Certainly it is so, I am saying**  
**(laying it out; = pointing out) to**  
**you, unless anyone (or:**

someone) **may be born forth from out of water and spirit** (or: – even Breath-effect and attitude –) **he continues being unable** (he remains having no power) **to enter into God's realm** (or: reign; kingdom; sovereign activity and influence).

However, the "**water and blood**" readings are widely accepted due to the fact that this verse is read as being in opposition to the false teachers. *The NIV Study Bible*, Gen. Ed. Kenneth Barker, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1995, p 1911, has the following note on this verse:

"Water symbolizes Jesus' baptism, and blood symbolizes his death. These are mentioned because Jesus' ministry began at his baptism and ended at his death. John is reacting to the heretics of his day... who said that Jesus was born only a man and remained so until his baptism. At that time, they maintained, the Christ (the Son of God) descended on the human Jesus, but left him before his suffering on the cross – so that it was only the man Jesus who died..."

Bultmann sees in this verse an

affirmation of the historical Jesus being the Son of God. It has been further recognized that the idea of "**coming through**" signifies the way in which He came, but here the word "**spirit**" would align with the incarnation story in Lu. 1:35, as well as the report of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him at His baptism. The second clause of the second sentence also has a variety of MS readings, which correlate to the variations in the first sentence in those particular MSS, so I included "spirit" in the parenthetical readings, but we have the word "spirit; breath" in the next clause (with no textual variations). In this next clause I rendered *pneuma*

first as simply "**breath**" since it seems to correlate to the preceding "**water and blood**" as being with them in a natural birth. But the parenthetical renderings may give us another picture to consider. The Spirit of God within the believers, and among the community, continuously gives evidence of the presence of the new Reality into which they have been birthed. It is the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the Truth and the Life. The Spirit of God (God's Reality and Truth) bears witness for Itself through the revelation of the Messiah that has been given to us, imparted as "the anointing."

As to my rendering *pneuma* as "**breath**" the second time, the breath means that

there is life, and this reaches all the way back to Gen. 2:7, the giving of life to the first Adam, and then traces the story of humanity to the last Adam (the corporate Christ; the Second Humanity) in 1 Cor. 15:44-49 where Paul also reaffirms God's purpose of creating humanity: to bear His image (vs. 49). We are corporately this new Humanity (Eph. 2:25 – Jew plus Gentile as "one"), and then individually we follow Paul's admonition as a member of this new Humanity. In Eph. 4, he puts it this way,

**23. and then to be continuously renewed** (or: from time to time, or, progressively made young again) **by** (or: in; with) **the**

**spirit** (or: attitude; breath-effect)  
**of your mind** (or: from the mind  
which is you),

24. **and to enter within** (or:  
clothe yourselves with) **the new  
humanity** (or: the person that is  
new and fresh in kind and  
quality) – **the one in accord  
with and corresponding to God**  
(or: the person at the Divine  
level) – **being formed** (framed,  
built, founded and settled from a  
state of disorder and wildness;  
created) **within the Way  
pointed out** (or: in union with  
fair and equitable dealings with  
rightwised relationships, justice

and righteousness; also = in covenant participation) **and reverent dedication** (or: benign relationship with nature) **pertaining to the Truth** (or: in intrinsic alignment with reality).

Note: "being formed within the Way..."

This is the corporate part of it, for we walk His Path in union with the entire community: one body, temple, bread (1 Cor. 10:17 – a figure for our being food and life-sustenance for others, as we continue His life).

**7. Because there are three constantly testifying** (or: ... that three progressively give evidence; or: seeing that the normal witness bearers exist

being three):

**8. the breath** (or: spirit; Breath-effect) **and the water and the blood, and these three are [coming; proceeding] into the midst of the One** (or: exist [leading] into one [reality]; are existing into the one thing; or: = are in unison; or: = are in agreement, or are for one thing). Were it standing by itself, this pronouncement (unfortunately divided into two verses) could present us with an enigma. But it is a continuation of vs. 6, whose subject is Jesus, the Messiah who came by means of water and blood (= natural birth) and breath. Or, taken figuratively, came through immersion (baptism) and the blood of His cross,

and now through the agency of His Spirit. Taken either way, each bears testimony and gives evidence to the historical Jesus being the Messiah, God's Anointed, and the breath of His words (in His teaching and speaking to people) brought Life (*cf* John 6:63). His life and His words are constantly testifying of God's love for humanity. The second part of the message here (vs. 8) shows that these three aspects that compose the Second Human are, or exist being, "**into the midst of the One.**" I have suggested two secondary verbs, "**[coming; proceeding]**," since the preposition *eis* is a preposition of movement into the midst of something.

These three elements of the Last Adam come into the midst of God (**the One**) to compose the Messiah. The parenthetical amplification suggests other ways of understanding the final clause, for your consideration.

Verse 9 continues John's thoughts here, showing that the three of vss. 7 & 8 are the testimony and evidence "**of God,**" signifying that the Christ is the work of God, the purpose of God, or as John the immerser said, "**the Lamb of God.**" It is also "**God's testimony**" of His love for humanity, and His evidence, or testimony "**concerning His Son.**" In vs. 10 we will see the appropriate conclusion of this line of reasoning, which is "affirmation

concerning His Son."

**9. Since (or: If) we are habitually receiving the testimony (the witness; the evidence) of humans (or: from people), the evidence of God (God's witness; testimony from God; or: the testimony and evidence which is God) is (or: exists being) greater, because it is God's testimony (or: the witness which is God) that He has testified (given as evidence; witnessed) and it now exists available as evidence (or: testimony), concerning His Son (or: round about the Son which is Him; about the Son Who originates from Him).**

The evidence from God, or God's testimony, came through the Words of

Jesus, His life and actions, and through the giving of the Holy Spirit. As the Word (*logos*) and as the Breath-effect (or, Spirit), the testimony "is God" (here presented as the genitive of apposition for the word "God"). God gave the testimony through the giving of the Son and the Spirit. His Son is the evidence, and the life of His Son within the called-out covenant community is further available evidence of God's new work: the new creation.

**10. The person continuously and progressively believing** (or: keeping confidence and habitually putting trust) **into the midst of God's Son constantly holds** (or: has; possesses) **the testimony**

(witness; evidence) [p74 & A add: of God] **within himself; the one not believing in God** [A reads: the Son] **has made Him out to be** (or: has construed Him) **a liar, because he has not believed or put trust into the evidence** (testimony; witness) **which God has attested and affirmed concerning His Son** (or: shown as proof round about the Son from, and which is, Him).

The testimony has been given, the evidence has been manifested in clear light, and through the message that they had received the Word of testimony comes into the very being of both the individual and the community, creating the new life of God's dominion. The one

not believing this testimony (be this an individual, or the groups such as the Judaizers or the Gnostic false teachers) by not accepting the evidence and the testimony does not make out the messenger to be a liar, but God to be a liar – since the testimony comes from God: "This is my Son..." As to understanding the significance of the genitive of apposition "which is" in the alternate rendering of the final clause, consider Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ..."

This calls to mind another word concerning those of Christ's covenant community. In John 3:33 we read,

**"The one receiving** (grasping;

taking in hand; getting hold of)  
**His witness** (or: testimony;  
evidence) **certifies** – **by setting**  
**a seal** (= giving attestation) –  
**that God is true** (real; genuine;  
truthful)."

11. **And so this is the evidence** (or:  
exists being the testimony, witness and  
attested affirmation): **that God gives**  
(or: gave; grants) **Life pertaining to,**  
**and having the quality of the Age** (life  
whose source is the Age [of Messiah];  
eonian life; Life of, for and on through  
the ages) **to, for and in us, and this very**  
**Life continuously exists within His Son**  
(or: is in union with the Son which is  
Him)!

The life was exhibited in the life of Jesus, and then within the life of the covenant community which He formed around Himself via His Spirit. The Age of Messiah had arrived, and is also referred to by Jesus as the kingdom, reign, sovereign activity and dominion of God (or, especially in Matt., of heaven). This life, with its authority and power, was given to His disciples, and passed on from them – via the Message – to others in ever increasing concentric circles until today it has filled the whole earth. And this Life, which the believer constantly possesses (vs. 10), is also the evidence, the testimony, the witness and the attested affirmation. *Cf* John 11:25;

14:6.

**12. The one continually holding** (or: constantly having; progressively possessing) **the Son continuously holds** (constantly has; progressively possesses) **the Life. The person not continuously holding** (constantly having) **God's Son does not now have** (or: hold) **the Life.**

Since the Life of the age of the Messiah is within the Son, it logically follows that whoever, or whatever group, continuously holds, constantly has and progressively possesses (various expressions of the present tense of the verb, and its range of meanings) "**the Son**" continuously holds and

progressively possesses "**the Life.**" It would appear here that John is instructing us that "the Son" is "the Life." You do not hold or possess an experience or a spiritual realm of being, but the Person. This is why we are told to call Him "**Father,**" not "Creator," or "Source." He is all three, but Jesus came to show us our Father. Both the words Father and Son are words of Family – and this is what God is, else how could we be His children, and Jesus be our brother (Rom. 8:29). In seeing and understanding the metaphors and social aspects of our relationship to one another, let us not forget that we also exist. We are beings. And to use Paul

Tillich's term, He is the Ground of our being.

The second statement of this verse simply describes a womb that God has closed for the time being, as we witness a number of times in the early part of our story, in the book of Genesis. Such a person or, corporately, such a group is like the field that needs to be burned off in order to plant a crop (Heb. 6:4-8), or like the path that has been trodden down by many folks walking on it, or like the section that has shallow soil, not deep enough to support the roots of the Seed.

**13. I write these things to you folks to the end that, having seen, you may know that you are presently holding**

(you folks constantly and continuously have) **Life pertaining to, and having the qualities of, the Age** (life whose source is the Age [of Messiah]; or: eonian life; Life of, for and on through the ages) – **for the folks** (or: in and among the ones) **continuously believing and putting their trust, confidence and reliance into the Name of God's Son.**

Despite what the false teachers may have told them, John is writing this letter to affirm that they indeed presently and constantly possess this Life of the Age of the Messiah, and which lasts on into the ages. Note again his corporate reference in the plural pronoun and verbs. They have the life and will be able to birth

others into inclusion in the covenant, for they are the Jerusalem which is above – the new Eve – the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). The identity markers of such a group are His faith which was injected into them, making them to continuously believe, trust, and have confidence – all of which have sent their roots deep **"into the Name of God's Son."** This last phrase recalls 3:23, above. Against the false teachers, John once again reminds his readers that they have all that they need, that the new Age has come, and that their focus should be on God's Son who's Name they have taken for their identity and for their life.

**14. And this is the freedom of speech**

**with outspoken boldness inherent to citizenship which we constantly have toward, and hold face to face with, Him: that if we ourselves should keep on asking or persistently request anything in line with (or: down from; in the sphere of; that accords with) His will [A reads: Name], He is continuously hearing us.**

There is no fear in the covenant communities; instead they have the confidence from being citizens of the New Jerusalem which Christ has established. This includes the freedom to boldly "**keep on asking**" regarding their needs, and He constantly hears these persistent requests. The topic of asking

is put in the plural, with the contingency that the request be **"in line with His will."** Rather than these requests being about individual needs or desires, it would seem this is referring to the needs or questions that pertain to the community. And when they accord with and are in the sphere of His will, He is habitually hearing **"us."** This does not preclude individuals making personal request of their Father, but the focus of this letter has been in regard to corporate situations. His presence within the community is affirmed by our holding **"face to face"** access to Him (Eph. 2:18; 3:12).

**15. And if we have seen and are thus**

**aware that He constantly hears, and listens to, us, whatever we may keep on requesting concerning or for ourselves, we have seen and are aware that we habitually have (or: hold; possess) the requests (the things asked for) which we have asked – and now stand requested – from Him.**

The phrase "**concerning or for ourselves**" reflects the middle voice of the verb. The communities are encouraged to make corporate requests about their concerns, and they "**have seen and are aware**" – based upon their experiences of God's faithfulness – that they "**habitually have (hold; possess) the requests.**" What a statement of trust

and confidence. The verb "**asked... requested**" is in the perfect tense, showing that he is speaking of requests that had previously been made, and that "**now stand requested**" from Him. This last clause demonstrates the faith that they have been heard, and that their request has been granted.

**16. If anyone of you may happen to see his brother (= fellow believer, or, fellowman) habitually failing to hit a target (sinning; making mistakes), with a failure (error; offense; deviation) not with a view toward (= that would lead to) death, he shall continue asking (repeatedly make a request) and He will continue giving life to him – for those**

**habitually failing to hit a target**  
(erring; sinning) **not [leading] toward**  
**death. There is a failure to hit a target**  
(a mistake; a deviation; sin) **[which**  
**leads or points] toward** (or: with a  
view to) **death** (perhaps: = bearing a  
death penalty, [within that culture]). **I am**  
**not saying that he should ask about**  
(or: concerning) **that one.**

Here we see John speaking in regard to  
some individual, in contrast to his  
corporate expressions in the previous  
verses. Note the singular pronouns and  
tense throughout this verse. Issues  
concerning an individual's mistakes or  
failures should be kept private,  
**"because love is constantly covering**

(habitually throwing a veil over; progressively concealing; [and with other MSS: will be covering]) a **multitude of failures, mistakes, errors, misses of the target and sins**" – 1 Pet. 4:8. The person who happens to notice this situation can make repeated requests to God regarding his brother, and God will "**continue giving life**" to that brother for that situation or problem. The last half of the verse deals with a "failure, error, deviation, sin" that points a person toward death and may well lead him there. Death here may be used as a contrast to the Life of which John spoke in vss. 11-13, above. So this may not refer to physical death, although in

serious offenses against society it might well lead to physical death, just as Jesus used the literal dump (Gehenna) outside Jerusalem – where for serious crimes the Romans would dump the bodies of those whom they had crucified – to warn folks from pursuing a negative path (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30). John is most likely referring to those who cut themselves off from the flow of life in the body, by following after the false teachers.

Experience has often shown us that the fruit of their error is what is required to show them the error of their ways. The writer of Hebrews spoke of such a situation in ch. 6:

**4. For you see, those once**

**being enlightened, besides tasting** (= experiencing) **the heavenly gift** (or: the granted bounty from the One [holding sway] upon the atmosphere) **and after being born** (or: coming to be) **partakers** (participants; partners; associates) **of set-apart spirit** (or: of a holy Breath-effect; or: of [the] Holy Spirit),

**5. and then tasting** (= experiencing) **a beautiful gush-effect of God** (or: an ideal result of the flow from God; or: God's fine speech; an excellent declaration pertaining to God; a

profitable thing spoken, which is God) – **besides abilities and powers of an impending age, 6. and yet then falling by the side** (or: falling aside along the way), **[are] powerless and unable to be repeatedly renewing again into a change of mind: [they are] continuously crucifying again in themselves** (or: to, for or by themselves) **the Son of God, and [are] constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace.**

But this is not the end of the story, for our writer continues the story, by way of restatement, in the agricultural metaphor

in the following two verses:

**7. For you see, a piece of land which is drinking (= soaking in) the rain often coming upon it, and producing vegetation (pasture; produce) fit for and useful to them through whom it is habitually being cultivated, [is] also continuously sharing in and partaking of a blessing from God;**

**8. but when repeatedly and progressively bearing forth thorns and thistles [it is] disqualified (worthless; unable to stand the test [for planting a**

new crop]) **and [is] close to** (or: near) **[the] curse** (or: [the] curse is at hand), **the end** (the resultant situation) **of which [the thorn, briars, thistles and the field is] into [a time of] burning** (or: = the field ends up being burned off).

This is a time-honored agricultural practice for preparing a field for planting a crop – the competition has been removed and the ground has been enriched by the ash. This is an example of how God uses death in our lives (the burning off of an unwanted crop – even if we are reaping what we sowed – causing the death of unwanted "fruits of

death" in our lives so that our soil will be ready to receive His Seed). So praying against this kind of dealing from God in a person's life would be a mistake. Sometimes people need to go through a metaphorical death (their lake of fire "second death") in order to be resurrected back into His Life.

17. **All injustice** (contrariness to the Way pointed out; inequity; unfairness) **is a failure to hit the target** (deviation; error; sin; a failure toward the Purpose), **and yet there is failure to hit a target [that is] not toward death** (or: deviation [that does] not [lead] to death).

In the same way of the first clause, All

injustice is an absence of Love.

Contrariness to the Way pointed out is anti-Christ, Who is the Way. Social injustice and inequity means a lack of the Christ-Life. It is the call of the covenant community to inject the Christ-Life of love, acceptance and fairness into our society (or, as Bultmann would have said, "Rightwise it.").

Nonetheless, as we aim our lives toward Christ as our target, or horizon, our flesh nature can at times cause our "arrow" to stray to the side or fall short. This is still a failure to hit the target, but it is not one that is orienting us, nor leading us, toward death.

**18. We have seen and thus know that**

**everyone being a person having been born from out of the midst of God is not habitually failing to hit the target (erring; deviating; sinning; falling short of the Purpose), but rather, the person at some point being born from out of God habitually keeps a guarded watch over himself (or: keeps himself; [other MSS: for instead, the One born from the midst of God continuously watches over and keeps him]), and so the fellow (the one; the person) that causes misery or painful labor is not habitually touching him**

(or: the disadvantageous and worthless situation does not repeatedly lay hold of him; the

base fellow is not constantly assailing him; wickedness and evil are not continuously fastening upon him; the misery-gushed [attitude] is not repeatedly affecting him).

The first statement, giving a variation of 3:9, tells us that those that are included in the covenant do not have a habit of deviation or of "falling short of the Purpose." That is not the way of life for the called-out community. Their habit is to watch over themselves, and, as Jesus said to His disciples, to "Abide in [Him]."

The New Man is the one that resides "in Christ" (which means being connect to

the community, as well as to the Spirit) and so the "**fellow that causes misery... is not habitually touching him.**" The parenthetical alternatives for this last clause express the semantic range of the word *poneros* that has traditionally been assumed to refer to "the devil." Consider these four alternate ways of translating the Greek to get a wider understanding of what John was including in the words that he used.

**19. We have seen and thus know that we are continuously existing from out of the midst of God, yet the whole ordered System (or: the entire realm of the religious and the secular) is continuously lying outstretched** (lying

as asleep, idle or dead; reclining) **within the gush of misery** (within the disadvantageous, laborious and worthless situation; within the sorry plight; in union with wickedness and evil; in the midst of the misery-gushed [attitude and existence]),

Because the community has been born from out of God, we now continue to exist from out of God. He is our source of the Christ-Life. We have been made aware that,

**"within the midst of and in union with Him we continuously live** (or, as a subjunctive: could be constantly living), **and are constantly**

**moved about and put into motion, and continue existing (experiencing Being)" (Acts 17:28).**

By comparison, **"the whole ordered System"** is continuously **"lying outstretched within the gush of misery."** This is a graphic description of the human predicament that is not yet experiencing membership in His body, the covenant community. They are "lying asleep within the disadvantageous, laborious and worthless situation," and need to be rescued from it. They are "idle or dead within the sorry plight." They are "reclining in union with wickedness, in the midst of the misery-

gushed attitudes and existence." This is the world around us. They need the Light; they need the Life; they need the Truth that brings the Reality of the New Creation. The living water needs to gush up out of the midst of the community of loyalty to Christ, and give drink to the thirsty.

**20. yet we have seen and thus know that God's Son has arrived and is continuously here, and He has given thorough understanding** (comprehension; faculty of thought; intelligence; intellectual capacity; input throughout the mind) **to the end that we would constantly know** [other MSS: so that we constantly know] **by experience**

**the True One** (or: the true, the real and the genuine), **and we constantly exist within and in union with the True One** (or: in the real [situation]; in the midst of Reality): **within His Son, Jesus Christ. This One is the True** (Real; Genuine) **God, and Life pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age** (or: life having its source in the Age [of Messiah]; eonian life; Life of, for and on through, the ages).

The first clause, following "**we have seen and thus know**" is an illuminating statement about the "coming" of Christ. The verb is the present tense of *heko*. It means "the result of moving toward and reaching a point; as being in a place."

The Son of God (Christ) "[**had**] **arrived**" in John's time, and was "**continuously [there]**." He resides within His Temple, lives with His Body and dwells among His Covenant Community that has been called-out of religions and cultures so as to be the Light of their world, a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14). Stop looking at the literal sky or physical clouds.

Of this, He has given us "**thorough understanding**" (*dia-noia*: throughout the mind; full intellectual capacity, comprehension and intelligence). The reason for this is so that we, corporately, "**would constantly know by experience the True One**" (God; Christ). This could also refer to the real and the

genuine – as opposed to the false that the Gnostics presented. Furthermore, "**we constantly exist within and in union with the True One**" – or "in the real [situation] and in the midst of Reality." Then John identifies the True One: "**His Son, Jesus Christ.**"

The last sentence makes a profound statement: "**This One** [just identified as His Son, Jesus the Messiah] **is the True (Real; Genuine) God, and Life pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age [of Messiah].**" What more needs to be said? *Cf* John 11:25; 14:6.

**21. Little children (born ones) keep yourselves in custody (or: guarded)! – away from the idols (the external**

appearances; the forms; or: = false concepts)!

Because Jesus is the True God – and the Way, the Truth and the Life – stay away from other religious concepts and things that worship external appearances (be they religious, secular, economic or political). Keep and guard yourselves from pagan ideas and doctrines.

Bultmann suggests that this closing remark "must have the meaning of an admonition not to fall prey to false teachings..." and footnotes Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament*, pp 115f,

"In Qumran the warning against idols is a warning against

apostasy from the community with its strict observance; in ordinary Judaism the warning is against any heathen cultus; in 1 John there is a general warning against any taint of paganism in Christianity." (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 90; p 91 n 44)

*ZZZZZZ*

# COMING VERSUS PRESENT

The words translated as "come" or "coming" in the common translations have not normally been rendered accurately. In this study we will look at these two forms of this one Greek word, and at a word that is a synonym.

Following this is a short review of a couple other words that have also been misunderstood through mistranslation. The first word, which is normally found in the Greek lexicons and dictionaries in the form of the 1st person, singular, is

*erchomai*. Its basic meaning is: come; go.

The present tense in the Greek language primarily signifies continued, repeated, habitual or progressive action, and within context can signify something that was presently happening. We find this partly presented correctly in the Amplified Bible in Mt. 7:7-8,

"Keep on asking and it will be given to you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds and to him who keeps on

knocking it will be opened."

What is not fully rendered are present indicatives in verse 8 (receives; finds). These should also be given the force of the Greek present tense, e.g.: keeps on receiving – or: presently receives; habitually receives; repeatedly receives; progressively receives. The same applies to the verb "finds." Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation renders all the verbs and participles accurately in these two verses.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the present tense is seldom presented in the common versions. We will now consider how these two versions rendered the present participle of our word *erchomai* in Rev.

1:4 and 1:8.

Amplified: "is to come."

Wuest: "is coming."

The Amplified (with most other translations) gives a present participle rendered as an infinitive; Wuest renders it correctly as a participle, but gives no sense of the kind of action that the verb indicates: continual or habitual, etc.

I will now present my translation of *erchomai*, giving both meanings "come" and "go" in the present tense, and then *heko* in the future tense. First is the present participle *erchomenos*, given in **bold**:

Rev. 1:4, "the One Who was, and continued being, and the One Who is

**continuously** (or: repeatedly; habitually; progressively) **coming or going...**"

Rev. 1:8, "the One Who was and continued being, and the One **presently and continuously** (or: progressively) **coming and going...**"

These expanded renderings of "coming or going" or "coming **and** going" give a very different understanding of what is being said. But before we form any conclusions, let us look further:

Rev. 2:16, "You must change your mind (your way of thinking), therefore! Yet if not, I **am repeatedly** (habitually) **coming** swiftly in you (to you; for you) [note: the 'you,' is singular], and I will wage war (do battle) with them within

the broadsword of My mouth."

Rev. 3:3, "Continuously keep watch (or: Guard [it]) and change your way of thinking, [and turn to God]. If ever, then, you should not be watching, I **will** (or: may) **arrive** upon you as a thief, and under no circumstances would you know what hour I **will** (or: may) **arrive** upon you." Here the verb "**arrive**" is *heko*. Within the context of the 1st century churches to which John sent this letter, ch. 2:1 has a revealing verb in the present tense: "the One **continuously walking about** within the midst of the seven golden lampstands..." In 1:20 we have the identity of these lampstands: the "churches," or "called-out communities."

The resurrected Christ is **continuously walking** among our midst! Does this not recall what Jesus said in Mt. 18:20?

**"You see, where there are two or three people that have been led and gathered together into My Name, I am there (in that place) within the midst of them."**

That place is the gathering of the ecclesia, the "church."

In John 14:18 we have Jesus' promise:

**"I will not leave you abandoned or send you off as orphaned ones (or: folks without family). I am repeatedly (or: habitually) and**

**now progressively coming toward you people."**

Then in vs. 23 we have:

**"... and My Father will love him, and, facing toward him, We will come to him and will be making (constructing; forming; creating; producing) a home (an abode; a dwelling place; a place to stay) with him (or: at his side and in his presence)."**

Here we have a future tense of the verb **"come."** But note the circumstance and requirement for this, stated in the first part of the verse:

**"If anyone continues (or: may**

be habitually) **loving Me, he will be constantly watching over so as to observe, guard, preserve and keep My word** (My thought, idea and message)..."

So Jesus said that anyone who does this has the promise of Jesus and the Father making their abode with him.

Returning to Rev. 3, we have this promise in vs. 20:

**“Consider! I have stood, and continue standing upon the door (entrance), and I am constantly knocking; if ever anyone may (or: can) hear My voice (or: sound) and would**

**open the door, I will enter  
(come or go in) toward him,  
and I will eat the evening meal  
with him, and he with Me.”**

This was a present situation in the church of Laodicea, one of the communities to which this letter was sent. This was not some future event, unless we place an artificial construction upon the plain reading of the text. As it pertained to them at that time, so it pertains to us. He walks in our midst, and when necessary knocks on the door of the gathering, seeking a covenant meal with us.

Now let us move to Rev. 21:3-4,

**"Consider! God's tent (the**

Tabernacle of God) [is] **with mankind** (the humans), ‘**and He will live in a tent** (dwell in a Tabernacle) **with them, and they will be** (will exist being) **His people, and God Himself will be with them** [some MSS add: their God].’ [Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10; Jer. 31:33; Ezk. 37:27; 2 Chr. 6:18] **And He will anoint** (smear; or: wipe away) **every tear from their eyes. And death will no longer exist** (or: the death shall be no more) – **neither will mourning** (sadness; grief), **nor an outcry, nor hard work**

(painful toil; misery) **exist any longer** ([they] will be no more), **because the FIRST THINGS went** (or: passed) **away."**

These verses are traditionally set as speaking of a future time and event, but note all the OT references in vs. 3: these reference Israel's history, but point to the fulfillment in the Messiah. Note that there ARE tears in the context of vs. 4, above, but He promises to wipe them away, or anoint them. Now look at the last phrase of vs. 4: "the first things went, or passed, away." This is an echo of Paul in 2 Cor. 5:17,

**"Consequently, since someone [is] within Christ** (or: if anyone

[is] in union with [the] Anointed One), **[there is] a new creation** (or: [it is] a framing and founding of a different kind; [he or she is] an act of creation having a fresh character and a new quality): **the original things** (the beginning [situations]; the archaic and primitive [arrangements]) **passed by** (or: went to the side). **Consider! New things have come into existence** (have been birthed; or: It has become new things; or: He has been birthed and now exists being ones of a different kind, character and

quality)."

The last clause here carries us back to Rev. 21:5 where the verb "**make**" is in the present tense.

The tabernacle later became the temple, in Israel's story. So in 1 Cor. 3:16 we have Paul saying,

**"Have you folks not seen, and know, that you people continuously exist being God's Temple** (Divine habitation; holy place and holy of holies; inner sanctuary), **and God's Spirit is constantly dwelling** (God's Breath is making Its home; the Wind which is God is housing Himself; the Attitude from God

is progressively co-habiting)  
**within the midst of you folks?"**

This is a present existing situation and realm of being!

In Eph. 2:22, Paul puts it this way:

**"within the midst of** (or: in union with) **Whom you folks, also, are continuously and progressively being formed a constituent part of the structure** (or: being built together into a house) – **into God's down-home place** (place of settling down to dwell; abode; permanent dwelling) **within [the] Spirit** (or: in spirit; or: in the midst of a Breath-

effect and an attitude)."

Speaking of "dwelling," Jesus told His disciples that a branch needs to dwell and remain within Him (John 15:4-5).

He has many branches (or: members, as Paul put it in 1 Cor. 12:12, and He is the Head of those member-branches, as in Col. 1:8). Col. 1:27 tells us that Christ within us IS the expectation of the manifestation which calls forth praise (or: the expectant hope of glory). At the same time we are told in Eph. 2:6,

**"He jointly roused and raised (or: suddenly awakens and raises) [us] up, and caused [us] to sit (or: seats [us]) together within the things situated upon**

**[thus, above] the heavens within and in union with Christ Jesus."**

Then in Col. 3,

**1. Since, therefore, you folks were awakened and are raised up together in the Christ** (or: If, then, you are aroused and raised with the Anointed One), **be constantly seeking and trying to find the upward things** (or: the things being above), **where the Christ is** (exists being), **continuously sitting within the right [side]** (or: at the right [hand]; = at the place of receiving, and in the

place of honor and the power)  
**of God.**

**4. Whenever the Christ, our life** [other MSS: your life], **may be brought to light** (or: should be manifested), **you folks also will be brought to light** (will be manifested), **together with Him, within the midst of glory** (or: in union with a manifestation which calls forth praise; or: in a good reputation; or: = in His manifest presence).

(or: When Christ, the Anointing, can be manifested, then your life – even you yourself,

together with Him –  
will be manifested in  
His manifest presence).

This second alternate rendering of vs. 4 means that whenever your life manifests Christ, then your own life will also be set in clear light and manifested, together with Him, in that situation. This applies to right now.

Next we proceed to a 1st century situation, noted by Paul concerning himself, in Gal. 1:16, where he says, "**to unveil** (reveal; uncover; disclose) **His Son within the midst of me.**" He uses the same word in regard to all God's sons in Rom. 8:19,

**"For the looking away and**

**watching with the head stretched forward alertly** (or: peak expectation; premonition; intuitive opinion; or: = the concentrated and undivided focus) **of the creation is constantly receiving and taking away from out of the unveiling of God's sons** (or: = the uncovering and revealing of folks who have the character and qualities of God).

The compound verb which I have rendered "**constantly receiving and taking away from out of**" is the word *dechomai*, which means: to take into

one's hands; to receive. To this verb are prefixed two prepositions which modify the verb: *apo* (away from) and *ek* (from out of). This word is wrongly translated as "looking for, or awaiting" in the common versions. We have this same word again in vs. 23, where it states that,

**"we ourselves also continually sigh and groan within (in the center of) ourselves, continuously accepting, and with our hands taking away from out of, sonship**

(the open recognition and placing as a son; the setting in position of

one having the quality and character of the Father; the placing in the Son; or: = technical adoption [Greek or Roman law])."

Rightly rendering this word also gives a different understanding to Heb. 9:28 which ends a chapter that has been speaking of the work of our Chief Priest, Jesus, and His finished work on the cross, in which He fulfilled once and for all the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement. I have translated this verse as follows:

**28. so also, the Christ – being once borne (or: carried) close**

**into the many** (or: being offered once unto and for the many) **to carry failures** (errors; sins mistakes; deviations; misses of the target) **back up again – will be made visible** (will be seen) **forth from out of the midst of the second** [place (cf 9:3,7 & 10:9; {comment: = the holy of holies})] – **apart from failure** (apart from sin; apart from a sin offering; apart from error in attempting to hit the target) – **IN those** (or: BY those; to those; for those) **habitually receiving** (or: progressively taking) **from out**

**of the midst of Him,**  
**[progressing] into a**  
**deliverance** (or: [leading] into a  
rescue; with a view to health  
and wholeness; into the midst of  
salvation).

Much of what applies to us now has  
been erroneously postponed to some  
future time, robbing us of our present  
enjoyment of our inheritance in Christ.  
The Lord constantly comes to us, yet is  
also continuously present with us.  
Another word that has sometimes been  
mistranslated "coming" is the Greek  
*parousia*. This word is composed of  
*ousia*, which is a present participle of  
the word "to be; to exist," and means

"being." Prefixed to this is the preposition *para*, which means "beside; along side of," so *parousia* means being alongside, or, being present – as opposed to being absent. But this is for another study.

## COMMENTS ON 2 JOHN

Robinson places the writing of this letter in the same general period as that of 1 John, AD 60-65.

**1. The old person, to a chosen-out (selected) Lady (feminine form: mistress; lord, female owner or authority), and to her children (born-ones), whom I love in truth and in union with reality (or: I truly love), and not I only, but also all those having come to know the Truth by personal experience and are now having insight of Reality,**

I have given the literal meaning of the word used for the writer. It is often rendered, "The elder," but this presumes an organizational structure that may not have existed at this early date. Bultmann states that "It is improbable that the term is the title of an office; in that case, one would expect the text to read: ... 'the elder of the church at...' In an earlier period the term could mean simply the 'old man'" (ibid. p 95). The assumption by other scholars that this letter is from a later date leads them to conclude that it meant the later office of an "elder" in the church system, such as with the letters of Ignatius. Tradition has identified this person as John, the writer of the other

letters in this collection, and many believe him also to be the author of the gospel of John. Similar statements are made in all of these documents.

Scholars differ as to the significance of the word *kuria*, to whom the letter is addressed. It is the feminine form of the word "lord; master; etc." as shown above. Some take this to be a specific woman in a place of authority (perhaps the leader of the local group), or even a property owner. Others assume that it is a technical word to signify the called-out covenant community itself, with "her children" referring to the members of that community. Whichever the case, the letter is written to a specific person, or

community.

If written to a community, then the word "old person" may have been used in a communal way signifying the writer had a relationship with them as being a part of their community, and was their leader. "Elders" was a term that referred to the older people within a community, and from their wisdom and experience they naturally function as the leaders. But it was not normal for there to be just one elder in a community. The leadership was usually a group. If this was written to a woman who was the head of her household (which may have comprised the entirety of the called-out folks of that town or area), then the term which he

uses to identify himself may simply have been a relational term by which he had been known to them, a term of endearment and honor. He expresses covenant love for them which has its source in the reality which came with the resurrection of the Messiah, and in the Truth that had been brought to them.

He affirms that these folks, and perhaps others by now, have come to know (*ginosko*) the Truth by personal experience, and are now having insight of the Reality of the new arrangement between God and humanity – what Paul also calls "the new creation." Using the word Truth, which also means Reality, instead of the term Christ may be setting

the tone of this letter as a polemic against the gnosticizing false teachers of that time and place – just as 1 John is understood to be written.

**2. because of the Truth and Reality [which is] continuously remaining (abiding; dwelling; staying) within us – and shall continue being with us on into the Age;**

Note the affirmation of the Truth (which also refers to Christ Himself – John 14:6) constantly dwelling with "us."

This inclusive plural pronoun shows that John considered these folks a part of the greater body of Christ. The term "**Age**" (*aiōn*) signified an indefinite period of time whose end could not be discerned.

In the Jewish world view, "**the Age**" referred to the Age of the Messiah, and since the story of the Messiah that had come to these folks had its roots in the story of Israel, this was probably John's meaning. This Truth and Reality of the new covenant would continue to be with them into the unforeseeable future into which this Age would extend. This was another way of saying that Christ would be with them from then on.

3. **grace** (or: Joyous favor), **mercy** [and] **peace** [= shalom] **will continuously be with us from beside** (or: in the presence of; along with) **God the Father, and from beside** (or: in the presence of; along with) **Jesus Christ,**

**the Father's Son, within Truth** (or: in the midst of reality) **and Love**.

The Truth and Reality that he spoke of in the previous verse have three central components, which are also qualities of God the Father and Jesus Christ: "**grace** (or: joyous favor), **mercy [and] love**."

These have their source in God and Jesus Christ, and are always present alongside of them (the Greek preposition is *para*). So since we have the Father and the Son (vs. 9, below), we have grace, mercy and peace. And all this is "**within Truth and Love**" – which also describe God, so this indicates the sphere within which the joyous favor, the mercy and the peace have come to

humanity – as well as the environment within which humanity exists (Acts 17:28).

**4. I was made exceedingly glad and joyful (or: was greatly graced) because I have met with and found folks from among your children [who are] continuously walking about within Truth (or: = living their lives in union with reality), according as we took in hand an implanted goal (impartation of the finished product within; inward purposed directive) from beside the Father.**

The verb "**met with and found**" indicates that John had experienced a personal encounter with some of "her

**children."** So he was not a stranger to this group, and thus had a relationship with them. He had observed their conduct and found their lives to be in union with this new reality of the covenant community that the risen Christ had gathered around himself.

I rendered the verb *lambano* with its very literal meaning, "**took in hand**," to stress metaphorically the personal involvement in "receiving" (a usual translation of the word) a gift with intent to make use of it. John spoke frequently in 1 John (e.g., *cf* 2:7 & 8 there) of the "**implanted goal**" – the impartation of the finish product (Christ) within us, which embodies His inward purposed

directive: just love people!

The Greek word *entole* is often translated "commandment." I have opted instead for rendering it from the meaning of the elements of the word, *en* (in; within; in the midst; in union with; inner; inward) and *telos* (purposed end; goal; destiny; finished product). As just one example, when a father tells his child something that he wants the child to do or be, by his words he implants the goal of the desired action or being into the child's mind and heart. He imparts something from his mind or heart with a view to the finished product by or within the child. It can come in the form of a command or a directive, but its essence

and meaning is the desired result – not the form in which the goal is given. As we see here, the context is familial. The word or thought comes to us from our Father, and as you see below in vs. 5, the intent of the goal is a love that is lived out to other people. He imparts this destiny into our very DNA, our heart and being – by placing Himself within us and thus we become "**one spirit**" (1 Cor. 6:17) and act from out of our renewed nature. Love is not commanded, but rather imparted via His Word of Truth, and the new Reality – it is His Seed that is planted within us (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9). It is the sphere of the life of the covenant community.

The last phrase "**from beside the Father**" points to our unity with Him, as well as to the unity of the Father and the Son – the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:22-23. This also recalls 1 John 1:3.

**5. And so now I am asking you, Lady, not as writing a new implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of destiny) **to you, but one which we have had from [the] beginning** (or: one which we originally had), **to the intent that we may continuously be loving each other.** We meet this title "**Lady**" once again, rather than the more normal "brothers" – if he was speaking corporately – or, "little children," as we find in 1 John. It

is almost an echo of the letters written to the called-out communities in Rev. 2 & 3, where the messages were addressed **"to the agent"** of the covenant group within each city. Of course, if this **"Lady"** is actually an individual, the head of a household, then this is quite reasonable.

This verse is almost identical to 1 John 2:7 (*cf* John 13:35-35), but here that "directed destiny" is simplified: **"Be continuously loving each other."** In this, the idea of community and interpersonal involvement can easily be seen. He is not talking about mere words, "I love you brother," but the entire sense of *agape*, as distilled from

the writings of Paul Tillich:

"the whole being's drive and movement toward reunion with another, to overcome existential separation; an ecstatic manifestation of the Spiritual Presence; acceptance of the object of love without restriction, in spite of the estranged, profanized and demonized state of the object" – *Systematic Theology III*, pp 134-138.

**6. And this is Love: that we may be continuously walking about** (= go on living our lives and ordering our behavior) **according to** (or: down from;

in line with; on the level of; in the sphere of; commensurate with) **His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished destiny within; inward directives). **This is the imparted and implanted goal, even as you heard from [the] beginning** (or: even which you originally heard): **that you would** (or: could) **be continuously walking about within it** (= go on living your lives in union with it)!

Something more that I want to point out about His "inward directives," is that this is simply the leading by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14) – and He does this because we are His sons and daughters, His family. Take note of the expanded

meanings of "**according to**" (*kata*). In 1 John 2:3 he states it differently. There we are to "keep, guard, observe and maintain" the internalized goals. Here we are shown the quality and extent that we are to "keep... maintain" them, as we live our lives. Furthermore, part of the implanted and imparted goal is the very living in union with it, and ordering our lives "accordingly." But the redundancy of this concluding clause is typical of the Asian rhetoric, a kind of communication that the recipients of that time and area would have been quite familiar. He was emphasizing his point. (*cf* 1 John 5:3; John 14:35)

**7. Since many wandering-astray folks**

(or: many who lead astray; many deceivers) **went out into the ordered System** (world of religion, secular culture, economics and government) – **those not continuously speaking like** (saying the same thing as; confessing) **Jesus presently coming in flesh** (= a physical body; or: = in [their] inner self): **this is the person wandering astray, even the one in opposition to Christ** (the one instead of Christ; the one in place of Christ; or: the anti-anointing) –

Like 1 John, he now turns to addressing the issue of the false teachers and continues speaking on this topic through vs. 11. These admonitions are virtually

the same as those presented in 1 John 2:18-27 and 4:1-6. This may be an indication that this was an individual letter, repeating what he had previously sent out in the general letter (1 John), but found that this particular group had not received that one.

See the comment on this topic in 1 John 2 & 4 for a more complete explanation of the last clause here.

**8. be continuously seeing to yourselves (looking at yourselves), to the intent that you people would (or: may) not destroy (or: lose) what we [other MSS: you folks] did (produced; worked for), but rather may receive back full wages.**

He is describing the life of the community like a building project, or a crop planted – familiar metaphors in Paul and Jesus. This negative admonition is the reverse side of the "keeping, guarding, observing and maintaining" that he spoke of in 1 John 2:3, and elsewhere. Paul gave a similar admonition in 1 Cor. 3:6-23. There Paul speaks of the "**the wisdom** (cleverness; skill) **of this world System** (or: pertaining to this ordered and controlling arrangement of culture, religion and politics; or: from this secular society)" in vs. 19, then cites Ps. 94:11 that says, "**the reasonings** (thought processes; designs) **of the wise**

**ones, that they are and continue being fruitless and to no purpose" (vs. 20).**

These were examples of those community members or groups that built upon God's "house" with wood hay and straw – things that would not stand the tests of God's dealings (fires). In vs. 14 Paul told them,

**"If anyone's work which he built upon [it] will remain, he will receive wages (pay; compensation)."**

John is saying the same thing here. He is using, as did Paul, analogies from the physical life of the community to point out that God's reign is in many ways

similar. But our wages and rewards are things of the spirit. When we sow love into people, we reap love back.

**9. Everyone leading forward** (going ahead; leading in advance; [some MSS: transgressing]) **and yet not remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within Christ's teaching does not have God; the person remaining** (dwelling; abiding; staying) **within that teaching, this one continuously has** (or: holds; possesses) **both Father and Son** (or: the Father and the Son).

The false teachers thought that they were "leading in advance," or pressing forward in the realm of spirit and glory. But their self-centered efforts to be

spiritual blinded them to the fact that they were not loving others, meeting their needs, serving them – as Jesus taught and demonstrated. They were on a religious quest into the heights, but forgot that the good news is that God had come here to dwell with people and make their communities His home. They were caught away in the raptures of their own imaginations and deceptive experiences, while leaving Lazarus outside their doors (Lu. 16:19-31). And they are unaware that they do **"not have God."** They have illusion.

But the group that remained in union with Christ's teaching **"has** (holds; possesses) **both Father and Son."** The

verb that John used here is astounding, and the present tense instructs us that this is our constant possession. Can we hold and possess God? Yes, because He has given Himself to us as a bridegroom gives himself to his bride. Paul teaches us that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the called-out community (Eph 5:25). We have and hold both God and one another, in love. And as Christ loved His covenant family and "**gave Himself for her**" so are we to love others, thus carrying on the life and mission of Jesus.

**10. If a certain person is continually coming toward you and yet is not normally carrying** (or: habitually

bearing; continually bringing) **this teaching, do not repeatedly take him into a house, and do not continuously say to him, "Rejoice!"** (= giving him a greeting). 11. **You see, the person continually telling him to be rejoicing** (= greeting him as an associate) **is continually sharing in common his worthless deeds**

(having fellowship with his acts which bring a gush of misery; maintaining partnership with his wicked and evil works; participating in his painful, toilsome and useless actions).

To understand what on the surface seems like a harsh admonition, we need to first

of all note that the verb "**take**" is in the present tense. They were not to "**repeatedly**" bring such folks into "**[the] house**" – i.e., into their covenant community, for the called-out groups of that day met in homes. They were not to receive them into union with their love-community because their false teachings were void of love, which was the very essence of the covenant group. Their teachings were self-centered and divisive, and promoted prejudiced elitism.

Verse 11 gives the reason for this behavior, which at first glance can seem un-Christlike. Telling them to "**Rejoice**" in their teachings would be hypocrisy

and give a false approval of what they were teaching. Furthermore, in that culture, such a greeting was a marker of social union with the person, and as John said, would indicate that the covenant community was in continued **"sharing in common with [their] worthless deeds."** The parenthetical expansions of vs. 11's final clause paint the dire picture of joining such folks in common partnership with their group. This is in line with Jesus separating His sheep from His kids, in Matt. 25:31-46, and His taking the kingdom away from the corrupt Jewish leadership (of which this very parable spoke). In the same way Jesus spoke of shutting the door to those

that did not have the "oil" of the Anointing so as to be the Light of the world, when they tried to enter the wedding festivities (symbol of the celebrating of the arrival of the age of the Messiah – Matt. 25:1-12). [*Cf* also Matt. 10:14; Lu. 10:10] We can love folks that are caught in such deception, but until they are joined unto the Lord in His Truth and Reality, there must for a time be a separation from what they are doing or teaching.

**12. Having many things to write to you folks, I resolved not to – by means of paper and ink. For I am expecting (or: hoping) to come to y'all and to speak mouth-to-mouth, so that our [other**

MSS: your] **joy can be "having been filled"** (= be completely happy)!

13. **The children of your chosen-out** (selected) **sister** (= female fellow believer; or: = sister community of summoned forth folks) **draw you to themselves** (= greet you).

John, the old man, was being to them a father. His solidarity with them is unmistakable. The word normally translated "greet" here (*aspazomai*) literally mean "to embrace," and thus "**draw**" to oneself. This is a beautiful picture, and is instructive, for John uses it of those who were in another town, where John was staying – but it was used of welcoming someone into a

person's house, in direct contrast to what he had advised in vs. 10. The children (probably = members) of her "**chosen-out sister**" were including her (the "you's" of vs. 13 are singular, so this closing is speaking directly to the "elect Lacy") and her "children" into the house (body) of Christ, welcoming them as joint-participants in the Messiah.

Although this was a letter that was perhaps written to an individual woman, the message has obviously been for the entire congregation that likely meets in her home.

My normal indicator of a "you" being plural has been to add the word "folks," or "people," but I decided to end these

comments with a smile, and follow J.R. Daniel Kirk's suggestion, "y'all" for plural personal pronouns (ibid. p 58). As to the MS differences on "**our** [your]" in vs. 12, Nyland's translation resolves this by rendering the clause: "so that we will be totally happy" (ibid. p 483). On this same phrase, see: 1 John 1:4; John 15:11; 16:24.

# COMMENTS ON 3 JOHN

Robinson places this letter in the same time period as 2 John.

**1. The old person, to Gaius, the beloved one, whom I myself am continuously loving in (or: within the midst of) truth and reality (or: truly loving).**

This is obviously a personal letter to a man that was likely a dear friend (vs. 2) who would have known John by this curious reference to himself. From this we are to assume that it was written by

the same person as 2 John. In this opening we see again the importance to John of "**truth and reality**," as he uses the word *aletheia* to set the scene, the realm of this new creation "within the midst of" which he dwells.

**2. O beloved one! I am continuously having** (or: thinking and speaking) **goodness, ease and well-being** (or: wishing and professing loudly; claiming) **concerning all things [for] you to be constantly having a prosperous journey** (or: to progressively travel a good path; to habitually be prospered unto success; to be continuously helped along the Way) **and to be constantly sound and healthy [in mind, thought**

**and body] just as** (or: to the same degree as) **your soul** (inner being; or: = your life) **is progressively being prospered on its journey** (helped along the Way; prospered unto success; caused to travel the Good Path).

What an expression from a heart of love. This form of address, "**O beloved one**" was common among Christians (*cf* Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 4:14; 10:14; 1 Pet. 2:11), but it could also have been used from close personal relationship, and argues for the rendering "**old person**" in vs. 1, as likewise in 2 John. The first verb of the first clause is commonly translated "pray" and it might fit into the category of this English word. It is *euchomai*, a

shortened version of the usual *proseuchomai*. Ann Nyland, in an extended note in her volume *The Source New Testament* (ibid. p 250-1), stresses that it does not mean "pray" (and here Bultmann concurs, ibid. p 97), but rather "claim, or vow." The literal meaning is "have goodness, ease and well-being." It would seem that John is experiencing the goodness, ease and well-being while he is considering everything concerning Gaius' "journey" in life.

**3. You see, I was made exceedingly glad (or: I am caused to greatly rejoice) at the coming of the brothers (= fellow believers or members), from time to time, and their bearing witness of your**

**[being] in the Truth, according as you yourself are continually walking about within Truth**

(or: testifying to the reality concerning you in correspondence to the fact that you yourself are habitually living your life in union with truth and reality).

His "**having goodness, ease and well-being**" (in vs. 2) from considering Gaius' situation in regard to the Truth, gained expression in his greatly rejoicing when his associates brought the news about him. The parenthetical alternate rendering presents another way of understanding the Greek of the last

clause. Both readings make sense. The same sentiment is expressed in 2 John 4. The reason for the joy is Gaius' conduct in life. Gaius is actually living out what he was taught when he learned of the presence of the Messiah.

**4. I do not presently have greater joy than from these things: that I am repeatedly hearing that my own children (born-ones) are continuously walking about within the Truth (= living their lives in union with reality).** Again we see the closeness of their relationship: John considers Gaius as one of his own children in this new reality. Gaius is continuing the story of Jesus, walking the Path of the Truth

within the Life of the Messiah (John 14:6). In observing this relationship, we can think of Paul referring to himself as a father to the community in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:15). In these examples we are instructed concerning the family characteristics of the reign of God – Who is our Father.

**5. O beloved one! You are continually doing** (performing; constructing; forming; producing) **a faithful and loyal thing** (act of loyalty and allegiance), **whatsoever you yourself may work unto** (or: actively accomplish into the midst of) **the brothers** (= fellow believers and members of the family) **and unto** (or: into) **the strangers** (or:

foreigners) –

John commends Gaius' work and accomplishments within the covenant community – the local family members – and also "**unto the strangers.**" This last term can apply to itinerant missionaries (as Bultmann suggests, p 98), but it would not be limited to such folks. The communities were to be a light unto the ethnic multitudes (or: nations), and so this comment could refer to his hospitality to and care for alien residents, or visitors from other countries. As with Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39), bringing God's sovereign activity to foreigners is an important means of extending Christ's

existential presence into the world. Notice also John's referring to Gaius' active accomplishment as "**a faithful and loyal thing**" – a central aspect of "believing into" Christ: acts of loyalty and allegiance, which are voluntary charitable actions. The living-out of our allegiance to Him is a core quality of being the "kingdom" and of being "in Him."

**6. who bear witness of you for the love** (or: testified to your love) **before** (in the sight of; in the presence of) **[the] called-out community** – **[for] whom you will do** (or: perform; produce) **beautifully** (finely; ideally), **sending [them] forward** (or: escorting them on; =

attending to their needs in their travels, giving them supplies and finances) **in a manner worthy of God** (or: = in a way equal to God's value of them),

Again, this could refer both to the missionaries (or, itinerant teachers), or to actual foreigners. Members of either category would "**bear witness of [his] love,**" either within the community or to the people to whom these folks were "**sent forward.**" Note the parenthetical paraphrase of this term, showing the practical consideration involved for folks being sent on. Treatment of people in this manner expresses "God's value of them," so in doing so we are true representatives of our King.

**7. for they came out for the sake of** (or: went forth in behalf of) **the Name,** **continually taking** (or: receiving) **not even one thing from the nations** (the ethnic multitudes; the non-Israelites).

Probably the best reading of this verse is to see it as referring to the itinerant missionaries, but like the Queen of Sheba of old, pilgrims from nearby countries could well have traveled to the closest towns of Asia minor to learn more about this new teaching, and may have done it on their own without seeking support from the residents of those nations from which they came. Notice "**for the sake of** (in behalf of) **the Name.**" This designation presents a

picture to us of 1) the importance of the "Name" that it would be used to designate the whole of the Christian movement of that time; 2) the fact that the name "Jesus," or "Jesus the Messiah," was considered the embodiment of the message, or as vs. 8 puts it, "**the Truth;**" or 3) that either the name Jesus, or the designation Christ/Messiah, was shorthand for "the Way, the Truth and the Life."

**8. We ourselves, then, are constantly obligated to continuously take [them] up, while placing ourselves underneath to support such people as these, to the end that we would progressively come to be folks working together (co-**

workers) **in** (or: for; by; with) **the Truth** (or: reality).

So here John describes the responsive quality of the loyal community of faith: actually attending to the needs of such folks. It is this care for those with needs that makes us "co-workers" with God (1 Cor. 3:9), or as John puts it here, "**folks working together in the Truth.**" On this last phrase, also consider the meanings on offer from the prepositions that represent the other functions of the dative case: for the Truth; by the Truth; with the reality [e.g., of the new creation]. As is often the case throughout the NT, there is no expressed preposition for this phrase – thus the options, based

upon the case of the noun.

**9. I wrote something to (or: for) the called-out community, but Diotrophes, the one constantly liking to be their leader (to be pre-eminent among them and dominate them), is habitually not thoroughly receiving or accepting us (or: repeatedly not fully acknowledging us).**

Since no accusation of false teaching is brought up, Bultmann (saying that Harnack long ago pointed it out) suggests that it is an issue of "congregational organization" (ibid. p 110). From John's characterization of Diotrophes' conduct of liking to dominate people, Bultmann is probably

correct. However, it may have been that there was a personality conflict between Diotrefes and John, and the former did not want to acknowledge anything whatsoever that John may have said to the group. Verses 9 and 10 peel back the layers of ordinary human relations to give us a peek at some of the things with which the folks whom the Messiah sent out had to deal.

**10. Because of this, if I can come, I will remind him of his actions (or: call to mind his works and bring them up [for discussion]) which he is repeatedly doing (or: progressively producing) by worthless, irresponsible and abusive words – unjustified charges**

(or: in messages causing a gush of misery; by ideas leading to painful labor; with evil or wicked verbal expressions; by laying out thoughts leading to a bad situation), **continually speaking nonsense of us or gossiping against us, and then, not being satisfied or content upon these things, neither is he himself fully receiving or accepting** (showing complete hospitality to) **the brothers** (= fellow believers; Family members; [or: = the itinerant missionaries of 5-8, above]). **And further, those continuously intending** (or: determining) **[to do so] he is habitually hindering** (or: forbidding) –

**even casting [them] out of the called-out community!**

Whatever the issue was, John is not at all concerned about being able to handle things when he arrives. He will address the issue with him. We see from the verb tense which John chose that this man has a habitual problem (Bultmann says, "The present tense indicates the customary conduct of Diotrophes..." *ibid.* p 101) and is causing disruption and division within the covenant community and denying hospitality to strangers.

We find in this verse the same intensified verb "**fully or thoroughly receiving or accepting**" (*epi-dechomai*) that John used in vs. 9 in regard to himself and his

associates. Here we see it as signifying "receive (as a guest)," i.e., show complete hospitality to someone. It is not clear from the text whether those whom Diotrephes excludes from the communities are members of the community, or the strangers to whom he refuses hospitality. Bultmann thought the former, suspecting that they were "followers of the elder, or at least his line of thinking in the congregation" and footnotes Schnackenburg (note 13) as also interpreting it this way (ibid. p 101).

**11. O beloved one [i.e., Gaius]! Do not have the habit of imitating this ugly thing** (or: that which ought not to be; the

base; the worthless; that which is of bad quality; the malicious; the wicked; the evil), **but rather the Good** (or: the thing of excellent quality; the virtuous)! **The person habitually doing good** (progressively producing virtue; repeatedly creating excellence) **is continuously existing from out of God; the one habitually doing what is ugly** (base; what ought not to be; worthless; evil) **has not seen or perceived God.** The "**ugly thing** (that which ought not to be)" had two parts: the denial of hospitality and the casting of folks out of the community. The "**Good and virtuous**" refers to acts of hospitality and inclusion of strangers or foreigners. In the

restatement of Asian rhetoric, John emphasizes his point by connecting the dots: "**The person habitually doing good** (progressively producing virtue; repeatedly creating excellence) **is continuously existing from out of God,**" while those doing "**what is ugly, etc.**" have "**not seen or perceived God.**" Bultmann describes the last two statements of this verse – connected without a conjunction – as "antithetical parallelism."

**12. Demetrius has been attested** (= has received supportive testimony) **by all and by the Truth itself. Now we ourselves are also continuously bearing witness** (or: testifying), **and**

**you have seen, and so know, that our witness** (testimony; evidence) **is** (exists being) **real and true.**

Nothing is known of this Demetrius. He may have been the bearer of this letter to the community, and thus the recommendation. John says that all the folks of their area attest to him, as well as "**the Truth itself**" (which may refer to Christ, the new Reality evident in Demetrius, or the truth of the revelation within the message that they live). The "**we**" of the second sentence refers to John and his associates, and he calls to their experiential knowledge of John and his circle of friends – that their testimony and evidence is "**real and**

**true**" for they have **"seen"** it. The verb **"seen... know"** is the second perfect form *oída* of the obsolete *eidō* (to see).

**13. I have been having (or: holding) many things to write to you, however, I do not normally want to be constantly writing to you by means of pen and ink!**

This is very similar to John 20:30, but its purpose is simply to say that he would say all that when he next sees them, as vs. 14 explains.

**14. So I am continuing in expecting (or: hoping) to see you immediately, and then we will speak mouth to mouth!**

This "mouth to mouth" is the same thing

as "face to face" – i.e., in their presence. John expected this to be "**immediately**" – the familiar *eutheos* that is frequently used in the Gospels.

**15. Peace** (or: Harmony; [= Shalom]) **to you. The friends continually greet** (pay respect to; send salutations to) **you. Be continuously greeting the friends by name** (= individually).

The closing of this letter corresponds to the Jewish wish, which actually signified well-being and prosperity. The Greek term also carries the meaning of "Harmony," which would be most appropriate in consideration of the activities of Diotrephes. The first "**friends**" refer to John's associates, who

were likely also friends of Gaius. Note the singular "**you**" (no "folks" added), as this is a personal letter. He again uses the word "**friends**," now to describe those of Gaius' community. This time it might be referring to the associates of Gaius in the same way that John used it of his own circle of friends, or, he might be using it emphatically to refer to those who supported John and Gaius and who opposed the assumed "authority" of Diotrephes.

Here, as indicated in the parenthetical paraphrase, "**by name**" was an idiom meaning "individually." In this we see John emphasizing the intimacy of his relationship to them.

# COMMENTS ON JUDAH (JUDE)

## BLASPHEMY

## BLESS, and CURSE NOT

John A.T. Robinson sets the writing of this letter from AD 60-62. The author may have been one of the twelve disciples of Jesus (Lu. 6:16; Acts 1:13) or the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). From vs. 1, below, it is likely to have been the latter. It is a letter that is not written to a specific called-out, covenant community, but to all who have

been called to follow Jesus – to the one new humanity (Eph. 2:15b).

The main purpose for this writing is to warn the communities about false teachers who may join their assemblies. Herein we are given a picture of some of the challenging situations which the first century Christians faced within their local groups, and this "becomes of the greatest interest for the history of the earliest church and [is] by no means without relevance for today" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 157; brackets mine). Like the letters from John, much of what the writer warns about is found in the Gnostic thought of that time, and ever since. Similar to other NT writers, he

bases his arguments upon examples from the history of Israel (the OT) and also cites Apocryphal literature (9, 14).

Verses 8-16 give descriptions of these folks (in Judah's day). The letter ends with exhortations (17-23) and then a "resounding and magnificent doxology" (Barclay, *ibid.*) in the last two verses.

**1. Judah, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of Jacob (= James), to those having been, and yet being, loved** (accepted recipients of the drive for reunion; [other MSS: set-apart and made holy]) **within God [the] Father, even** (or: and) **Jesus Christ; to kept and maintained folks, to called ones**

(or: for the people being loved

in union with and within the midst of Father God, and now being watched over, guarded and protected in and by Jesus Christ – to invited ones):

Although none can be certain – and there are other suggestions, tradition assumes that this Judah is the brother of Jesus, as well as of Jacob (James). That he refers to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ expresses his abject allegiance to the Messiah and identifies him as a committed follower of Jesus. Paul, Peter and Jacob all used this term to describe their relationship to our Lord and Owner (Rom. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jacob 1:1). The letter is written to people or groups

who have elsewhere been designated as followers of Jesus Christ, the called-out communities, members of the new covenant and the new creation, or as Paul referred to them, those "within and in union with Christ." Here Judah uses the perfect tense for the participles (showing a past completed action with a result that lasts into the present time) to describe them as "**those having been, and yet being, loved**" (*cf* 1 John 3:2; Eph. 1:6) and "**kept and maintained folks**" (*tereō*) and then uses the adjective "**called** (or: invited)" to complete their picture. The participles are passive, indicating that the action happened TO them so that they continue

to be loved, kept and maintained. The adjective "**called**" gives the same sense of a permanent condition.

The sphere of this action by God (by implication of the passive) is "**within God [the] Father.**" The additional phrase "**even (or: and) Jesus Christ**" gives us the equivalent of the Pauline phrase "in Christ." This first phrase recalls Paul's statement to the Gentiles in Acts 17:28,

**For you see, within the midst of and in union with Him we continuously live (or, as a subjunctive: could be constantly living), and are constantly moved about**

**and put into motion, and  
continue existing  
(experiencing Being). Even  
as certain of the poets  
down among you people  
have said,**

**'You see, we are also a  
family of the One (or: we  
even continuously exist being  
a race whose source is the  
One; or: we also are His  
species and offspring; we are  
even a family which is  
composed of the One and  
which is the One).'**

This quote of their poets shows that Paul regarded God's family as being more

than just the covenant community. The parenthetical alternate rendering gives the picture that Judah is writing this "for the people being loved within and within the midst of Father God" who are "now being watched over, guarded and protected" (other meanings of *tereo*). The "in and by Jesus Christ" expresses the dative form of the word "Christ." If the dative form of "Christ" corresponds to preposition *en* (within), as do the words "God" and "Father," then the conjunction *kai* may be seen as joining "Father God" and "Christ" as a unity, as expressed by rendering it "even." This would be the figure of speech *hendiadys*: "two words used but

one thing meant," as is sometimes found in the Greek of this period. However, by positioning the first participle "loved" between the two in the Greek text, it is more likely that separate references are being made, and the first "**within God [the] Father**" is being accomplished "by" and "in" Jesus Christ – as also suggested by "**even.**"

Expanding the definition of "**loved**" as meaning "accepted recipients of the drive for reunion," as per Paul Tillich's definition, discloses the posture of our Father, as well as both His action unto us and His desire for us to be in union with Him. Paul expressed this by a different word in 2 Cor. 5:19,

**as that God was existing within Christ** (God was and continued being in union with [the] Anointed One)

**progressively and completely transforming [the] aggregate of humanity** (or: world) **to be other [than it is]** (or: progressively bringing [the] ordered System into another level or state; repeatedly changing [the] universe to correspond with other [conditions; perceptions]; progressively altering [the] ordered arrangement of culture, religions, economy and

government to be in line with another one; habitually and progressively changing [the] secular realm [of humanity] from enmity to friendship; reconciling [the] world [of mankind]) **in Himself, to Himself, for Himself and by Himself, not accounting to them** (not putting to their account; not logically considering for them; not reasoning in them) **the results and effects of their falls to the side** (their trespasses and offences), **even placing within us the Word** (the Idea; the

Reason; the message) **of the corresponding transformation to otherness** (or: the full alteration; the change from enmity to friendship; the conciliation).

Such an opening certainly would promote trust and confidence that God was intimately involved in their lives.

**2. May mercy, peace and love** (unambiguous acceptance; reunion's urge) **be multiplied to the full to you** (or: be increased to fill you; be multiplied to fullness in, for and by you folks).

We should see in this benediction the core character of the message of

goodness, ease and well-being. Mercy and compassion are characteristics of our Father as He relates to humanity. We should also act and relate likewise. His presence is what brings His peace to us. And His unambiguous acceptance and love's reunion-urge are things which Paul tells us continually remain and habitually dwell with us (1 Cor. 13:13). These three are Who God is, the last one echoing 1 John 4:7-8. "God is Love." The last part of this verse expresses the vital, constant, growing, filling and increasing nature of God. Judah expresses God's desire for us to be full of Him. He echoes Paul in Eph. 5:18 where he speaks of being "**continuously**

**or repeatedly filled full in spirit** (within [the] Spirit; within the midst of [the] Breath-effect; in the sphere of attitude; in union with [the] Breath)." Also, in Eph. 1:23 we read of "**the One Who is constantly filling all things within all humanity.**"

**3. Dearly loved friends, while progressively making all haste and performing every diligent effort to proceed in writing to you concerning our common, communal deliverance** (or: the rescue, salvation, health and wholeness belonging equally to several of us, and in which we share and participate as partners; [Aleph & others add: and life]), **I possessed a**

**compressed and constraining necessity to write to you, progressively urging and encouraging [you] to be in the habit of strenuously contending** (or: to continue adding to the contest; to be repeatedly on top, in combat of the public games; to repeatedly fully participate in the race course) **by the faith, in the trust and with the loyalty and confidence having been once for all given over to, for and in the set-apart folks** (or: sacred groups).

The way he addresses them recalls 1 John 3:2 & 4:1. Although a general letter, because of what he affirms in vs. 1, he knows that the recipients of this letter are folks that are loved by God, as

well as by himself. In regard to the remaining part of the verse, Barclay writes, "It had been Jude's intention to write a treatise on the faith which all Christians share; but that task had to be laid aside in view of the rise of men whose conduct and thought were a threat to the Christian Church" (ibid. p 158). David H. Wheaton suggests that this was also due to "activities of false teachers" (*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer, A.M. Stibbs, D.J. Wiseman, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1970, p 1275). Especially considering the last half of the verse which sounds similar to such as 1 John 2:24, "**As for you folks,**

**let what you heard from [the] beginning be continuously remaining (abiding; dwelling; staying) within you,"** it seems likely that he is writing to combat some form of Gnosticism.

Although he has just spoken peace to them, in vs. 2, now he encourages them **"to be in the habit of strenuously contending."** We should note the metaphor that Judah employs: it is not one of war, but of the public games – a wrestling, participating in athletic contests, a running or an adding to the contest with folks who had come into their group or communities. The issues that needed to be addressed were conduct and ideas. They are admonished

to do this "**by the faith,**" or "**in the trust,**" and "**with the loyalty and confidence**" which had been "**once for all**" given over to them. By, in, and with these aspects of "what [they] heard from [the] beginning," they were to overcome these opponents to their covenant living. *Cf* 1 Pet. 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:5-8. The path of following Jesus the Messiah is one of interaction both inside the community and outside in the society at large. Here the contest is within the covenant group. And it has continued this way for 2000 years.

A word should be said about "**our common, communal deliverance,**" even though Judah did not go into a teaching

on this. That he uses the phrase is itself instructive. Our "**deliverance**" is held in common, or, as I amplified this phrase: "the rescue, salvation, health and wholeness belonging equally to several of us, and in which we share and participate as partners." The adjective is *koinos*, a cognate of *koinonia*. Our salvation is not individual or personal: it is "**communal**, belonging equally to several of us, and in which we share and participate as partners."

**4. For you see, some people came in unobserved, from the side – those having been previously written of old into this judgment** (or: people having from long ago been written into the

effects and result of this decision): [to exist being] **impious ones, people continuously changing the grace and favor of God into licentiousness, as well as repeatedly denying and disowning our only Sovereign and Lord** (or: Supreme Ruler and Owner), **Jesus Christ** [= Messiah].

The stealthy entry into the fellowship shows that they did not at first reveal themselves as they truly were. Verses 5-7, below, give historical examples from Israel's story, and prior to that, of the kind of people to which Judah is referring. But let us first consider the enigmatic clause that describes them in the first part of this verse: "**those having**

**been previously written of old into this judgment** (or: people having from long ago been written into the effects and result of this decision)." I suggest that this is speaking of "predestination" only in the sense that the decision was made by God in the Garden of Eden. This clause describes the predicament of humanity, the condition of those existing outside the life of Christ. It once applied to everyone. The covenant communities have been "called-out" of that death into union with the Messiah.

The context to which Judah was writing was the Gnosticism as was discussed in my comments on 1 John. They denied and disowned the historical Jesus as the

Christ. This led to what is described in verses 5-7, as these folks gained entrance into the called-out communities.

**5. But I am purposing and intending to remind you [p78 adds: brothers] – you folks having once seen and thus being aware of all this – that the Lord [= Yahweh; other MSS: Jesus (= Joshua); some read: God] after delivering (rescuing; saving) a people out of Egypt's land, [in] the second [phase] brought to ruin and loss the folks not trusting, believing or being loyal.**

He is recalling for them their history book (if they were Jews), or God's story into which they have now been inserted (as former Gentiles; *cf* Rom. 11:13-26).

That was the Exodus story that began in Ex. 3 (the first phase), but in Num.13:31-14:37 we see phase two, referred to in this verse.

But since Judah is referencing this story, we should keep in mind that except for the "spies" that brought the bad report about the promised Land, the rest of the people received the care and provision of Yahweh for forty years – for the rest of their lives, until the older folks of that generation had died. They had been saved out of Egypt, and God kept covenant provision for them. They continued to be led by the Spirit of God. But they did not enter into His rest (Heb. 4:1-6). This did not mean that they

ceased being a part of the people of God, any more than Moses, who also did not enter into the Land. So we need to draw a complete analogy in regard to the folks spoken of here by Judah.

**6. Besides that, those agents** (or: folks having or bringing a message) **not guarding** (keeping watch over; maintaining) **the beginning of themselves** (or: the rule of themselves), **but to the contrary, after leaving away from** (= abandoning) **the personal dwelling place** (one's own abode or habitation), **He has guarded, kept watch over and maintained under gloom** (or: thick darkness) **by imperceptible** (or: in unobservable, but

effecting-all) **bonds, with a view to a judging** (a sifting and a separation for evaluating; a making of a distinction and a deciding) **of a great Day** (or: pertaining to or whose source is a great day; or: which is [the] great Day).

Because of "transliteration" (instead of "translation") of the Greek *angelos* and rendering its plural "angels" instead of "**agents**" or "folks having or bringing a message," and due to non-canonical fanciful stories of "angels," this verse has been turned into mythology in traditional interpretations because of reading sections of *The Assumption of Moses* and the *Book of Enoch* into the text of *Judah* which we are now

investigating.

But another interpretation is viable, which reaches back into the canonical story in the book of Genesis. I suggest that those "**agents**" were the ones that were given dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26) and had a "**personal dwelling place** ([their] own abode or habitation)" in Eden. These were Adam and Eve. They did not **guard "the beginning of themselves** (or: the rule of themselves)," but "**to the contrary, after leaving away from the personal dwelling place [Eden]"** God "**has guarded, kept watch over and maintained [them; = humanity, their corporate body] under gloom** (or :

thick darkness) **by imperceptible bonds.**"

We find Jesus coming **"to publicly proclaim, as a herald, to (for; among) captives a release and liberation"** (Lu. 4:18) and to **"constantly shining in the dim and shadowed places, and keeps on progressively giving light within the gloomy darkness where there is no light** (or: within the midst the obscurity of The Darkness where there is no light of The Day; or: = in the ignorant condition or system)" (John 1:5a). But like these of whom Judah speaks,

**"mankind loves the darkness** (or: the people love the dimness of obscurity and gloom; or: the

humans loved the realm of the shadow) **rather than the Light, for their works** (deeds; actions) **were continuing to be bad ones** (unsound ones; wicked ones; laborious ones; toilsome ones that created bad news; wrongful ones)" – John 3:19.

Notice that God "**maintained**" and "**kept watch over**" these folks "**with a view to a judging of a Great Day**" – which we see at the cross of Jesus, the beginning of the Day of the Lord. He took the judgment of humanity upon Himself and gave us His life. But not everyone has yet been existentially given birth into this new creation, for as Paul said, it is

**"every person in his own class and order"** (1 Cor. 15:23). Humanity cannot see their bonds, for they are **"imperceptible"** (Greek *a-idiois*: not-seen; un-perceived).

A parallel passage is 2 Pet. 2:4,

**4. For since (or: if) God did (or: does) not spare agents (or: folks having a/the message) – but who at one point were (or: are) straying from the goal (or: when failing to hit the mark; at missing the target; upon committing error) – but rather gave (or: gives) them over into an act of judging – of being repeatedly pruned (cut back for**

correction), **while being constantly watched over, kept, maintained and protected – giving [them] the experience of Tartarus** [Hellenistic mythological term and concept: the subterranean world; *cf* LXX, Job 40:15 (the marshlands and wild areas around the Jordan River) and 41:23 (the caverns and lower parts of deep waters and the abyss)] **in dark, gloomy pits** (caves; caverns) [other MSS: in ropes (or: chains; bands; cords); = in bondage].

The clause "**gave them over into an act of judging – of being repeatedly**

**pruned** (cut back for correction)" calls to mind Rom. 1:24. The description of their resultant state of being in Rom. 1:25-32 expands upon 4b, above. This has been the story of unredeemed humanity. But the Light has come:

**"It was** (or: He was, and continued being) **the True and Genuine Light which** (or: Who) **is continuously** (repeatedly; progressively) **enlightening** (giving light to) **every person** (or: human) **continuously** (repeatedly; progressively; constantly; one after another) **coming into the world** (or: the ordered system of culture,

religion, economics and government; or: the universe) (or: It was the real Light, progressively coming into the world {organized system}, which is progressively enlightening {or: shedding light on} every human)" – John 1:9.

**7. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about them [= Admah and Zeboyim – cf Deut. 29:23], in like manner (or: turn) to them, being given to fornication and outlandish prostitution, and then going away after different flesh (= unnatural vice; or: = a different expression of alienation that was formed by the existing System),**

**are continuously lying before [us as] – an example** (a specimen; an effect of a thing pointed out or presented to sight) – **continuing in undergoing an experience of justice** (the Way pointed out; fairness and equity; what is right) **from fire pertaining to the ages** (or: of eonian, or age-lasting, fire; of a fire of undetermined duration whose quality and character are the Age [of the Messiah]).

He returns to Genesis for another example. Again it is a story of judgment that happened to people that simply ended their lives early here on earth. There are many such examples in the OT Scriptures. God brought justice to

Sodom and Gomorrah just as He did with Egypt in the time of Moses. It was justice **"from fire pertaining to the ages,"** in other words, pertaining to life here on earth during the ages. That fire did not continue burning, once the fuel (what it was burning) was burned up. An interesting thing is that Jesus also referenced that story in Matt. 10:

**14. "Also, whoever may not welcome and receive you men, nor even listen to your words or hear your message, as you are going outside, from out of the house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.**

[note: Hospitality in those times

and countries involved having a servant wash the feet of their guests; further: Jews did this when they left a Gentile country, so this would indicate that this town was being regarded as polluted and unholy, and in the same category as the Gentiles; comment: this could be a metaphor to shake off that incident, so as not to let their “humanity” cling to them]

**15. "Assuredly – I now say to you folks – it will be more endurable in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in [the] day of separation and decision, than**

**in that city** (or: it will be more supportable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in a day of judging, than for that town)!"

So we see that the physical judgment in Gen. 19:24 was not the "end" for those people, even though it was eonian, or age-lasting, fire – or a figure of the fire that pertains to the judgment that would come in the Age of the Messiah. We can read of what Paul revealed of this fire to test the work that people have done in building the community (i.e., God's temple) in 1 Cor. 3:9-17. There, in vs. 15 we see that,

**"If anyone's work will be burned down, he will incur a**

**loss** (sustain the damage; forfeit [it]), **yet he himself will be saved** (rescued and delivered; healed and restored to health; returned to his original state and condition), **and as in this way – through Fire!"**

God had Ezekiel use Sodom as a figure for comparing Jerusalem's "abominations" and to speak of the judgment that was going to come upon Jerusalem (Ezk. 16:48-55). Jerusalem's final destruction (in the story of Israel) came in AD 70 through the Romans. These are specimens of eonian fire that **"are continuously lying before [us as] an example."** Judah is simply saying that

God periodically brings judgment in the earth.

**8. In like manner, indeed, these dreaming ones** (folks continuing in sleep, or with imaginary experiences) **also pollute flesh** (= their or others' bodies; or: = the estranged human nature). **They are continuously setting aside lordship** (or: ownership systems) **and are repeatedly blaspheming** (speaking injuriously of and slandering; vilifying; obscuring the light of; misrepresenting) **reputations** (or: opinions; notions; glories; manifestations which call forth praise).

So just as Jerusalem and Sodom "**pollute [d] flesh**" so do these folks that

had slipped into their community. And how were they "polluting" the community? By "**polluting flesh**," or "**setting aside lordship**" or "**blaspheming reputations**." The "flesh" was often a figure of the natural life or "the estranged human nature." This may have been immoral living (a characteristic of some versions of Gnosticism that reasoned that if the material world was evil then it did not matter how you treated it or what one did with his body), or false teachings that led them astray. By setting aside ownership systems they were setting themselves up as being above local customs and laws. They made

themselves to be people of special privilege. Speaking injuriously, misrepresenting people, vilifying folks and obscuring the light of a person's reputation or of what they taught were all examples of "**blaspheming** [someone's] **reputation.**" This could also be just in the form of putting other peoples' "notions" or "opinions" down. What is being described is an absence of Love. Notice that to "obscure the light of a manifestation that is supposed to call forth praise" can refer to what these folks do to people, or to the light of the community. 2 Pet. 2:10 gives a parallel verse. [note: see the short study on blasphemy at the conclusion of the

comments on Judah]

Judah characterizes them as "**dreaming ones**," or "folks with imaginary experiences." Thus, he is likely referring to the type of religious behavior such as Gnosticism produced. Wheaton states that "*Dreamings* suggests that the false teachers may have claimed to receive some of their teaching by means of visions" (ibid. p 1276).

9. **Yet Michael** (The One Who is like God), **the ruling agent** (the first, chief, or original messenger), **when making a distinction** (a discernment; a thorough separation) **to the adversary** (or: the slanderer; the one who thrusts things through folks or situations, and thus

causes divisions; the “devil”), **reasoned** (deliberated; spoke thoroughly; discoursed [as in using the Socratic dialectic method]) **concerning the body of Moses. He did not assume to bring a blasphemous or villainous judging upon [him]** (or: to bring in addition a judging characterized by an abusive distinction or a slanderous decision; or: bring an added evaluating which hindered the light), **but rather, He said, "The Lord [=Yahweh] might hold you in added honor** (or: set a value upon you; put respect upon you; award you)." Several early church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria and Origen, said that Judah has here quoted the

*Assumption of Moses*, and thus most commentators agree. This is an early first century Jewish work of non-canonical apocalyptic literature. Recall that Paul cites Hellenistic literature: Aratis, in Acts 17:28, quotes of Menander in 1 Cor. 15:33 and Epimenides in Tit. 1:12. But Paul also reinterpreted the story of Sarah and Hagar in Gal. 4. We saw Ezekiel and Jesus making other use of Sodom in the comments on vs. 6, above. The question then arises: should this non-Biblical story about Michael, Moses and the adversary be taken as cosmological or ontological reality, or like Paul's use of Greek plays and poetry – as a literary

tool? I suggest that Judah is using this Jewish literature to make his point. For Michael (found in Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1 and in Rev. 12:7 – both examples of apocalyptic literature: highly figurative and symbolic) I have parenthetically inserted the Hebrew meaning of the name, since we know so little about this character in those two stories. The eighteenth century Bible expositor John Gill says of this name, "By whom is meant, not a created angel, but an eternal one, the Lord Jesus Christ; as appears from his name Michael, which signifies, 'who is as God'" (John Gill's Exposition of the Bible, from BibleStudyTools.com).

Also, I gave a translation of *arch-angelos*, "**the ruling agent** (the first, chief or original messenger)," to help us decipher this symbol in the story.

Creation's first and ruling agent was Adam, in the Genesis story of creation. He was made in God's image – and thus was "like God" in form if not in character. So we have once again entered into God's story of humanity – not into a myth about "spiritual hierarchies" such as we find in dualistic pagan religions. In the figurative setting which forms the preamble to the book of Job, we find God "**making a distinction**" about Job to the adversary (Hebrew: *satan*), and "**reasoning**

(deliberating; discoursing)" with the adversary concerning Job's character and situation. I suggest that this is a parallel image. The point of the picture which Judah is painting here is about "speaking respectfully of people" – especially leaders, and he is using this Jewish myth to do so. Michael **"did not assume to bring a blasphemous or villainous judging upon [him]."** Not blaspheme satan? No, not even this tool of God. Paul tells us to "Bless, and do not curse." Furthermore, the **"body of Moses"** most likely does not refer to his physical body any more than "the body of Christ" refers to His physical body in the writings of Paul. Here Judah uses it

as a tool of his illustration. John Gill, in referring to this phrase in this verse, states, "it is best of all to understand it of the law of Moses, which is sometimes called Moses himself, [*cf* John 5:45; Acts 15:21; 21:21; 2 Cor. 3:15]; and so the body of Moses, or the body of his laws, the system of them; just as we call a system of laws, and of divinity, such an one's body of laws, and such an one's body of divinity" (Gill, *ibid.*).

Now let us consider the word that Michael used. It is from *epi*, upon, and *timao*, to hold in respect, to honor, to value, to award – and thus you see the combined parenthetical amplification in the translation. It is also used in negative

connotations, and thus can mean, to assess a penalty upon, or, to respectfully reprove, admonish or chide. But there is no reason not to keep the core meaning of the root: honor, value and respect – especially in an honor/shame-based society such as we find in our first century contexts. Since this passage is contrasting Michael's actions to the negative actions of those who "came in unobserved," I chose the positive translation of *epitimaō* – perhaps turning the *Assumption of Moses* account on its head.

**10. Yet these folks constantly blaspheme** (slander; speak injuriously of; villainize; hinder the light of) **what**

**indeed they have neither seen nor understand** (or: know; perceive), **but what they naturally** (instinctively; by generation; by sprouting and growing) **are continuously acquainted with** (or: are versed in; became masters of), **in these things they are progressively being corrupted** (spoiled, ruined).

So now you see his point of the literary citation in vs. 9. It was for extreme contrast. These false teachers hinder the Light of the message of goodness, ease and well-being (the Gospel) and slander what others teach about the Truth of Jesus Christ. They use their "**natural**," fleshly reasoning [Rom. 8:7, "**the result of the thinking** (disposition; thought

processes; mind-set, outlook) **of the flesh** (= the estranged inner being) [**is; brings**] **enmity, alienation and discord [streaming] into God** (or: hostility unto, or active hatred with a view to, God)..."] and with this **"they are progressively being corrupted."** [note: see the article, BLESS and CURSE NOT, that follows the article on BLASPHEMY, at the end of these comments]

11. **Alas** (or: Tragic is the fate) **for them, because they pass along by the way of Cain, and they are** (or: were) **poured out to the wandering** (or: deception) **of Balaam's wages, and they lose and destroy themselves in**

**Korah's contradiction** (opposing idea; anti-word; message in place of the Logos).

In contrast to the three blessing in vs. 2, we have the three negative actions in vs. 8, and now three negative examples from Genesis and Israel's story. Even these false teachers are being woven into the tapestry of Israel's history, for from the beginning of creation light and darkness, good and evil, life and death, blessings and cursings all present contrasting roles in God's epic drama of the story of creation, of humanity, and their goal: redemption and reconciliation through the Christ. Cf Gen. 4:1-16; Nu. 22-24: 31:16.

But let us consider these negative comparisons. Cain was judged, but was also shown mercy and a measure of protection (*cf* 1 John 3:12). Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet of Mesopotamia was hired to curse Israel, but Yahweh caused him instead to bless Israel, and among the oracles attributed to Yahweh are prophecies considered to be Messianic (Nu. 24). Israel eventually killed him, and his infamy is recorded best in Rev. 2:

**14. But still I am holding down a few things against you: you have there those continuously strong to be retaining the teaching of Balaam, who**

**instructed Balak to thrust a snare in the sight of the sons of Israel to eat things offered to forms (or: sacrificed to idols) and to commit prostitution.**

Visionaries and prophets can sometimes proclaim truth and be held in high esteem by the community, but they can also lead folks astray into pagan ideas and corrupt practices. What they say should be judged by the group (1 Cor. 14:29).

Korah's story (Nu. 16) was one of rebellion against the community leadership which God had established. Here he is cited to represent those

within the communities that brought "contradiction (opposing idea; anti-word; message in place of the Logos)" which would cause division among the members. Nonetheless, his punishment was only an early death. We should not read more into the accounts of their punishment than what the stories tell us. For a parallel passage to this verse and 12-16, below, see 2 Pet. 2:12-22.

**12. These folks are sharply-cleft portions of rocks (or: reefs; = menaces) in your love [relationship]s (or: love-feasts and table fellowships; movements toward acceptance), repeatedly feasting well together, by habit fearlessly shepherding themselves.**

**[They are] clouds without water, being swept along by winds; wasted autumnal trees – unfruitful, twice-died, uprooted;**

**13. wild waves of the sea, continuously foaming out (or: vomiting forth) their shames (or: disgraces). Wandering and deceived stars, for whom the gloom of darkness (shadowy dimness; obscurity void of Daylight) has been maintained (guarded; kept and watched-over) unto an indefinite time period (or: an age).**

The metaphor "**sharply-cleft portions of rocks**" would speak of an uncomfortable environment for having "table fellowship." But this word can also refer to "reefs" that are concealed beneath the

surface of the water, "a hidden danger" (Wheaton, *ibid.* p 1276) that is a menace. These folks joined in with their gatherings, but had a habit of "**fearlessly shepherding themselves.**" This would echo the story of Korah, just mentioned. These false teachers wanted to lead and feed themselves and thus were creating a clique within the community.

The next set of metaphors shows that these folks are unstable and are not producing the water of life or fruit of the Vine. "**Twice-died**" would mean that although they had at first received resurrection life from Christ, they have strayed from the path of Christ and are now "**wandering and deceived**" so that

they have "died on the vine." Either the weeds of life choke them, or their soil is too shallow. They are no longer **"folks having been rooted (or: having taken root) and now established and placed on a foundation within the midst of and in union with Love (or: having been grounded and rendered firm, centered in love)"** (Eph. 3:17). Like the folks who began following Jesus (the Light) but later returned to Judaism (the Darkness which they loved – John 3:19), these self-proclaimed "lights" were simply **"deceived stars"** that were wandering back into **"the gloom of darkness (the shadowy dimness and obscurity which is devoid of the Light of the Day)"** of their

various religions (whether Judaism, Gnosticism or paganism). Cf 1 John 1:6, Matt. 7:15-20, and Lu. 6:39 which speaks of "the blind leading the blind." That he terms them "**wild waves of the sea**" shows that they lack peace, and this metaphor is usually used to characterize the pagans that were outside of the covenant of Israel, those who have not yet been submitted to Yahweh (Isa. 57:20). And the next picture, "**continuously foaming out** (or: vomiting forth) **their shames** (or: disgraces)," speaks to their Gnostic teachings of licentiousness and antinomianism (being without custom or sense of propriety; opposition to law).

But note the good news: just as Yahweh maintained Israel during her wilderness wandering, and maintains humanity (vs. 6, above), watching over us until our class arrived (1 Cor. 15:23), this darkness will last only for an age – or, for "**an indefinite (i.e., undefined) time period.**" And please note that this is a "**time**" word: it does not refer to "eternity" or endlessness. Our Father always judges to bring about positive change. *Cf* Heb. 6:4-8, where the fire burns off the field of weeds and thorns (and once the unwanted material is burned up, the burning process ends), making it ready for another planting of good seed.

**14. But Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied to these folks, saying, "Behold, the Lord [=Yahweh] came (or: comes and goes) within His set-apart myriads (or: in union with innumerable holy multitudes, which are Him), 15. to form a separation (or: make a decision; construct a distinction; perform a sifting and a judging) which corresponds to and falls in line with all people (to the level of everyone), and to test (or: search thoroughly) the irreverent folks concerning all their irreverent works (activities; deeds) which they irreverently did, and concerning all the hard things which irreverent outcasts (folks in error;**

sinner; failures; folks who make mistakes and miss the target) **spoke against Him.**"

"This description occurs in the *Book of Enoch*, as does the quotation which follows. The book was well known in NT days" (Wheaton, *ibid.* p 1277). But as with the *Assumption of Moses*, discussed above, let us consider how Judah is using this non-Biblical reference. Notice that the first verb in the quote is aorist, a timeless, fact tense, so I have rendered it first as a simple past "**came**" and then with a simple present, giving both meanings of the verb *erchomai*, "comes and goes." So the author of *Enoch* may be referring to

Yahweh's normal activities in regard to the things that people do and say. I suggest that Judah is saying that God will in His own time and way make a decision about these false teachers, after having separated them from the community of faith (recall 1 John 2:19). He comes to test and thoroughly search the irreverent, in regard to their irreverent activities. But His "sifting and judging" is "to the level of everyone," and **"corresponds to and falls in line with all people"** – He is just.

We sometimes hear those outside of Christianity speak **"hard things... against Him,"** but what about all the **"hard things"** the Christians speak about

God because of the past assimilation of pagan ideas into church traditions? Even if we do not consider folks who are presently included within His covenant as being a part of His family (a tradition in Reformation theology), they are a part of His creation. Will a God who is described as Love endlessly torture and torment much of His creation when there is no hope in view from this action? I suggest that "**hard things**" such as this that are constantly spoken about God in Reformed, Evangelical and Charismatic strains of Christianity will also be sifted and judged, just as the first century false teachers were.

To be a catalyst for thought, I rendered

the genitive personal pronoun as apposition "which are Him" in the parenthetical expansion of the first clause of the quote (vs. 14). The activities of His agents are His activities: He is working in or through them. God came in judgment upon Jerusalem in AD 70 by using the Romans.

**16. These are, and continue to be, murmurers** (or: those who speak privately and in a low voice, making a grumbling buzz of under-toned mutterings of critical and discontented comments), **complainers** (or: those who find fault with their lot; discontented ones), **continuously passing from one**

**place to another according to their strong desires (or: lusts; full passions), and their mouth continually uttering (or: speaking) over-swollen (hyper-weighty; pompous; boastful) things, continually admiring (or: wondering at) faces (= personal presences; = individuals; = personalities) for the sake and benefit of advantage and furtherance.**

Just when you wonder if this group of people can get any worse, now we find Judah inserting them into Israel's story in another – although negative – way: they are "**murmurers [and] complainers.**" Wheaton (ibid. p 1277) also sees this connection, as he cites the incident from

Israel's history in Ex. 16:2, 9; 17:3, and then points to Paul's referencing those times when warning the folks at Corinth where he told them,

**"Neither continue habitually murmuring** (grumbling with a buzz of under-toned mutterings of critical and discontented comments; [Num. 16:41]) **exactly as some of them murmured – and loosed themselves away** (or: destroyed themselves) **by the Destroyer"** [note: same word used in Ex. 12:23, LXX] – 1 Cor. 10:10.

As an aside, from the note in my

translation in regard to "**the Destroyer**," in Ex. 12:12 (in the Passover account) Yahweh tells the people, "For **I** will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and **I** will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt..." So who is going to smite all the firstborn? Yahweh. Then in vs. 23 Moses is telling the people, "... and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, Yahweh will pass over the door and will not allow the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite [you folks]." The Destroyer was Yahweh Himself, or His agent.

So as with Paul in 1 Cor., here Judah is addressing more internal problems with

the community. They seem to be carousers, **"continuously passing from one place to another according to their strong desires (or: lusts; full passions)"** – which sounds like the licentious denominations of the Gnostics. It also could describe folks who were just looking for the right group that suited their personal desires, rather than becoming "rooted" within one group in order to give support.

These false teachers were proud and considered themselves to be members of the elite and the intellectuals, making a show by how they spoke. Outward appearance and personal presentation were also high on their list. Wheaton

(ibid. p 1277) points out that such was "a characteristic quite contrary to that of God (*cf* Acts 10:34; Jas. 2:1ff)." And all of this was to get an advantage over other folks. None of this aligns with the imparted goal from Christ: love one another.

**17. But you, dearly loved ones, remember the things spoken** (the gush-effects; the results of the flow of what was said; the flowing declarations) **by the sent-forth folks** (representatives; emissaries) **in regard to those things having been told beforehand** (or: foretold from and concerning) **our Lord, Jesus Christ,**  
Just as Peter, Paul and John had

reminded the called-out communities to remember what they had heard when the good news was first proclaimed to them, Judah also prods them to remember the message – "the gush-effects (a literal rendering which I think paints a vivid picture) and the results of the flow" from the Holy Spirit as the **sent-forth folks** flowed in their declarations. And mark well: what was told was not about some "super-spiritual" technique for gaining spiritual experiences or being in the "glory realm." They were told about **our Lord, Jesus Christ**, and about things pertaining to Him and the newly created people of God that He was gathering around Himself.

18. **that they said to you, "Upon** [other MSS: Within (or: During; In union with)] **[the] last of the time folks will repeatedly be** (or: there will constantly exist) **mockers** (those acting or playing in the manner of children; sporting, using childish gestures), **continuously passing from one place to another according to** (or: in correspondence with) **their irreverent strong passions** (or: their full desires and lusts of things not having the qualities of things approved by God)."

This appears to have been a quote that Judah remembered Jesus having said, or which the Spirit brought to mind. Judah was relating this saying to the people to

whom he was writing – not to some distant time in the future. He was talking about the folks that were at that time within their very community – as this whole letter has pointed out. This was to happen "**upon (or: within) the last [part] of the time.**" They were in "the last times," as Paul had pointed out in 1 Tim. 4:1,

**"Now the Spirit (or: Breath-effect) is explicitly saying that within subsequent seasons (in fitting situations and on appropriate occasions which will be afterwards) some of the faith (or: certain folks belonging to this trust) will**

**stand off and away [from the Path, or from the Community]** (or: some people will withdraw from this conviction and loyalty), **habitually holding toward** (having a propensity to) **wandering and deceptive spirits** (or: straying and seducing breath-effects and attitudes) **and to teachings of demons**

(to teachings about and pertaining to, or which are, demons [note: a Hellenistic concept and term: = animistic influences]; or: to

instructions and training  
which come from  
animistic influences [=  
pagan religions])."

1 John 2:18 says virtually the same  
thing,

**"O undeveloped ones or folks  
of the age to be educated (or:  
servants, little boys and little  
girls who might be hit in training  
and for discipline), it continues  
being (or: is progressively) a  
last hour (= an *eschaton* of the  
Day, or the closing moment [of  
the age])... we constantly know  
by experience that it continues  
being a last hour (= a closing**

moment [of the age])."

What Judah described in vs. 16 as then being the case, he is restating here in the last half of the verse as something that the folks who had previously been sent off to them had said. They were within that last time.

**19. These folks are those who are separating by setting boundaries, soulish ones** (folks dominated by, or living focused on, those things which characterize the soul [= emotions; will; intellect; "feelings"] or this present, transient life) **not having [the] Spirit** (or: not habitually holding a [proper] attitude; or: not continually in possession of spirit or Breath-effect).

These proud false teachers and elitist Gnostics that were causing division and separations within the group are here described not as "spiritual," but rather as **"soulish folks."** I have given multiple aspects of this term, any or all of which may have applied. As a contrast to "spiritual," Judah may be using "soulish" as a synonym for "flesh" and thus be referring to those who are still living with the mindset of the Law age and the Jewish religion. They have not yet been born from above (John 3:7, where Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the Jews, **"you folks"**), into the new creation of the Spirit.

The final clause can be taken in more

than one way – as my expanded translation indicates. By not having "[the] Spirit" which created the called-out community (as on the Day of Pentecost), they would be like the situation described in 1 Sam. 4:21, "Ichabod... the Glory is departed," which was due to the worthless activities of the priests who were the sons of Eli.

If we take the meaning of *pneuma* to be "attitude," rather than "the Spirit," the verse also makes sense. If these folks are no longer in possession of the effect of the Breath from God, which came with the proclamation of the Word (which is *pneuma* – John 6:63), then

"soulish" is all that they could be. This is just another way of saying that they have returned into the Darkness. The boundary markers could have been those that defined the Jews, or things which the Gnostics were claiming to identify those who had this special *gnosis* (knowledge). Whichever, this brought division, and division is always "soulish" – even if it is in the name of "orthodox doctrine."

**20. But you, dearly loved ones, while constantly and progressively building yourselves up by your most holy trust and with you people's most sacred convinced-loyalty (or: in y'all's most set-apart faith), [and] continuously**

**thinking, speaking and acting toward having well-being and things going well (or: praying) within the midst of a set-apart Breath-effect (or: in union with [the] Holy Spirit; centered in a separated and consecrated attitude and life-force),**

**21. maintain (guard; keep watch over; protect) yourselves in God's love (or: in union with [the] urge toward reunion and unambiguous acceptance, which is God), being folks in the habit of welcomingly receiving, embracing and entertaining the mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on into a life having the qualities and characteristics of the Age (or: a life pertaining to the ages;**

eonian life; life for the ages; life whose source is the Age [of Messiah]).

In vs. 20, keep in mind the continual and progressive aspect of the communal and interrelated work that he is admonishing. This echoes Paul's building illustrations in 1 Cor. 3:12ff and in Eph. 2:20. He says it well in 1 Cor. 8:1b,

**"The knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*) keeps on puffing [us] up, but The Love (*agape*: urge toward unambiguous, participating, accepting reunion) progressively edifies and builds up the house!"**

I have again followed Daniel Kirk's advice for using the colloquial southern

"y'all's," along with my "you people's," to designate the plural personal pronoun that Judah uses here. They are to be building one another (the plural "yourselves") up **by** their holy trust, **with** their most sacred convinced-loyalty, and **in** their most set-apart faith. These prepositions instruct us about the potential functions of a dative noun (in this case *pistei*) that has no expressed preposition in the Greek text. The **by** means that the "loyalty, trust, conviction and faith" are the instruments for doing the building; the **with** suggests that they are the material for the building (putting these aspects of *pistis* into other members of the community); the **in** points

us to these things being the realm of existence in which we are building. The next clause either adds a tool for building (suggested by my added [and]): "**thinking, speaking and acting toward having well-being and things going well** (or: praying)," or this clause defines the manner (thought, word, action – *proseuchomai*) by which "faith, etc." builds folks up.

The realm is "**within the midst of a set-apart Breath-effect**," or the condition is "in union with [the] Holy Spirit" while being "centered in a separated and consecrated attitude and life-force." Don't you just love these expanded perspectives with this translation! : )

All this is to "**maintain** (guard; keep watch over; protect) **yourselves in God's love** (or: in union with [the] urge toward reunion and unambiguous acceptance, which is God)" which results from them "**being folks in the habit of welcomingly receiving, embracing and entertaining the mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ.**" It all comes from Him, folks! He is the source for all that we are and all that we thus do, but in "**welcomingly receiving... entertaining the mercy,**" we are filled with His **mercy**, so that we can dispense His **mercy**, as the next verse calls us to do. There is definitely a "co-laboring with God" (1 Cor. 3:9) in all of this. And this

package of the corporate Christ, a body of many members interrelated and interacting with each other, that progressively builds the community "on into a life having the qualities and characteristics of the Age" of the Messiah. This is our personal and corporate goal, also known as the kingdom of God – His sovereign influence, activity and reign within and among us, here on the earth which He has given to us for care and maintenance. Yes, we will have personal life for the ages, but it will be because we are constantly joined to the Vine (John 15) which is a corporate Vine of many members.

**22. And so, on the one hand, you folks be repeatedly extending compassionate kindness on some folks in order to relieve their misery and affliction [other MSS read: put to the proof; expose; convict; reprove] while continuously discerning, sifting and thoroughly separating so as to accurately decide [about their situation]**

(or: be continually showing mercy on some who are constantly undecided and continue wavering and doubting because of making divided judgment in or for themselves);

I have given two separate renderings of

this verse, giving an expanded definition of "mercy" in the bold version, with the simple rendering in the parenthetical alternative translation. The amplified "**extending... affliction**" gives the real sense of helping those in need. The word rendered "alms" in the KJV is of this same word family, and I believe that this is the core idea in "mercy." We are "**in the habit of welcomingly receiving, embracing and entertaining**" the Lord's mercy (vs. 21) so we should repeatedly extend it.

The real difference in these two versions is in the translation of the present, middle participle of *dia-krino*. The final clause "**while... situation]**" gives the

main semantic range of the word and follows the root ideas of the elements of the Greek word. The parenthetical reading "constantly... themselves" gives the secondary meaning of "undecided, wavering and doubting." The first reading applies the participle to the folks to whom Judah is talking; the parenthetical reading applies the participle to those in need of mercy. Both make sense, but the first one speaks to our practical extension of love to those in need of practical help.

**23. yet on the other hand, be continuously delivering** (or: repeatedly rescuing and saving, restoring to health and wholeness) **others, snatching them**

**from out of the midst of the Fire; be repeatedly extending compassionate mercy in reverent fear, while hating even the garment having been stained (or: spotted) from the flesh (= the alienated human nature; = the self that was formed and controlled by the System).**

Here, in the first clause, we see the true meaning of "salvation." It is for here and now, and it is how Christ is presently saving people by working through His body – the covenant community within which He lives and presents His work of the cross and His life-giving Spirit to those whose time and class has come (1 Cor. 15:22, 23). These folks of whom

Judah speaks are presently in His Fire – after all, He is a Consuming Fire (Heb. 13:29) and we all exist within Him (Acts 17:28). Everyone is going through one kind of "fiery trial" or another (1 Pet. 4:12), and for many it is a "second death" – they are metaphorically dying in their circumstances and conditions (e.g., 1 Tim. 5:6), even while being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The good works for which we were created in Him (Eph. 2:10), is exactly this: **"snatching them from out of the midst of the Fire"** in which they are presently living. Judah once again references Israel's stories, this time Zech. 3:2 where the subject is Joshua the high

priest who is clothed in filthy garments. His filthy garments were taken away, which was a figure of causing his iniquity to pass away from him. It is an apocalyptic setting, but it was a figure for a situation in Joshua's life. Also see this figure for rescuing folks in Amos 4:11.

Thus does Judah tell us to **"be repeatedly extending compassionate mercy in reverent fear."** Why **"in reverent fear"**? Perhaps he had in mind the familiar aphorism from Prov. 9:10, "The starting point of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh" (CVOT). Our dealings with other people – even while extending mercy to them – should be done with

wisdom, and respectful fear (as focused attention and concern) for just how God is working in their lives and using their situations, as well as the delicate issue that we may be addressing.

In the last clause, I suggest that the "**garment**" represents their lifestyle or the "**stained**" condition of their situation which human estrangement and alienation has created.

**24. Now in and by (or: with; to) Him being powerful and able to keep and guard you folks from stumbling (or: tripping) and from harm, and then to stand you flawless and blameless (or: unblemished; without defect or stain) in the presence of His glory (or: down in**

sight of the manifestation of Him which calls forth praise and yields a good opinion and reputation; or: down in the center of a view of the glory which is Him) **in extreme joy** (in the center of a much-jumping exultation; in union with body-moving celebration).

**"Him"** is in the dative case, and is normally given just the preposition "to" when treating this as a doxology of praise, "to Him." But I am drawn to the **"in Him"** that the message of goodness so often emphasizes. He is the realm of our existence in this new creation, and it is through union with Him and His corporate body that we receive His power and ability. Also, focusing our

attention on Him as the instrument – the "**by Him**" – helps us not to look to our own strengths and abilities, but to keep in mind that He is the One that keeps and guards us from tripping and stumbling, and protects us "**from harm**" – which is the present-day reality of our "salvation (being kept safe)."

In Rom. 16:25, Paul makes a similar closing,

**"Now by the One** (in the One; to the One) **being continuously able and powerful to set you steadfast** (to make you stand firm and settled) **in accord with** (or: corresponding to; in the sphere of; in line with) **my**

**message of goodness and well-being..."**

In Eph. 3:20, he gives an even more glorious view,

**"But by (or: Now in) the One being continuously able and powerful to do (make; form; create; produce) above and beyond all things – surpassingly above, over and beyond things which we are repeatedly asking for ourselves or are normally grasping with the mind (apprehending; imagining; considering; conceiving) – in accord with (or: down from;**

corresponding to) **the power and ability [which is] continuously operating** (making itself effective; energizing itself; working and developing) **within us, and in union with us."**

Again, we see that this power and ability is resident within the covenant community – within us!

The "**and then**" does not necessarily mean "some time in the future." It is the next step of His present action upon us. He is the friend who "steadies us" along the path when uneven ground (= situation that is not fair, or surprises us) makes us lose our balance. After guarding us from stumbling off our path, He then "**stand[s]**

**[us] flawless and blameless in the presence of His glory"** which is the realm of His at-hand kingdom and present (*parousia*) sovereign influence and activity. And this brings us **"extreme joy."** Now the word *amomos* (**flawless/blameless**) "is characteristically a sacrificial word; and it is commonly and technically used of an animal which is without spot or blemish and is therefore fit to be offered to God" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 207). So why is it used in regard to the called-out folks? Just to make them look good? No, Judah is inserting the covenant communities into the narrative of the crucified Messiah indicating that they

are to continue His story – and do the works that He did by living what Daniel Kirk calls a "cruciform (cross-shaped)" life. "The phrase 'in Christ' means, among other things, that the story of Jesus becomes the story of God's people. This means that we participate both in the reconciling death of Jesus, and in the reconciled new creation" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 26).

Consider the other options parenthetically inserted after "**in the presence of His glory.**" The first one: "down in sight of the manifestation of Him which calls forth praise and yields a good opinion and reputation," can be repeatedly seen through the good works

of the covenant community. It is all about "right here," folks – not about in the next life or some "otherworldly" sphere that tradition usually calls "heaven." The new creation brought heaven into union with earth and so our entire existence here is now understood to be a realm of spirit. The Second Human, the Christ, is humanity anointed with His Spirit. The anointing always applied to people here on earth; the Christ is a human condition and relationship to God. This (His presence, and union with Him) is what brings "**extreme joy.**"

The last option emphasizes being centered down-in (*kata-en*), the meaning of "within a view of" (*-opion*), and

rendering the genitive form of "Him" as apposition: "down in the center of a view of the glory which is Him." He is the image and glory of God (1 Cor. 11:7).

Next we can observe the amplifications of "**in extreme joy**" which both show that the excitement brings bodily movement and celebration. What our Messiah has done is pure goodness.

**25. By the only God** (or: To God alone; In God alone), **our Deliverer** (Rescuer; Safe-keeper; Savior; Restorer) – **through Jesus Christ our Lord** (Master; Owner) – **[is] glory** (or: a manifestation of that which calls forth praise; a good reputation), **greatness,**

**strength, and authority** (right and privilege from out of Being) **both now and on into all the ages** (eons; indefinite periods of time)! **Amen** (It is so; Count on it).

Once again we find a dative noun (this time "**God**") without an expressed preposition, and you can see the possible understandings of this phrase. God is our Savior (a constant OT view), and His work of deliverance, rescue, keeping safe and restoration all came, and continue to come through Jesus the Messiah Whom God made to be our **Lord**, Master and Owner (recall that the term "lord" defined an owner/slave relationship). But here Judah is also

speaking in opposition to the Empire's idea of Caesar being lord.

There is no copula (joining verb), so I inserted "[is]." The following descriptive nouns remind us of God's ability to guard, keep, save and whatever else we need. This was the situation in Judah's day, and it has continued into our present, and will continue "**into all the ages**" which also pertain to Jesus Christ, as Heb. 1:2 instructs us, "... **through Whom He also made the ages** (or: formed and constructed the various designated periods of time)." Count on it.

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# BLASPHEMY

Mark Eaton recently brought this word to my attention, and our email discussions resulting from his research, together with some of the definitions that he pointed out, have prompted me to study some of its contexts to see the significance of this word for us.

The verse that Mark first presented, and which started our conversations, was Eph. 4:31. Here is how I previously had translated it:

**"Let every bitterness, swelling negative emotion (inherent fervor; or: natural propensity, disposition and impulse; or: wrath), enraged impulse,**

**clamorous outcry, and blasphemy** (slanderous, abusive or light-hindering speech; malignment; vilifying defamation; harm-averment) **be at once lifted up and removed from you folks, together with all worthlessness** (that which ought not to be; that which is of bad quality; malice; ugliness; badness; depravity)!"

Col. 3:8 presents a similar imperative from Paul, and the normal lexical definitions "slanderous or abusive speech" or "desecration" give a good understanding of the general character of the word, but Mark is digging deeper,

since this word is used not only about people, but about God and His Word. Thus I decided to seek out the root idea behind its various contextual applications. Blasphemy is a loan word from Greek, and is a transliteration of the Greek noun *blasphemia*.

*Blasphemia* is a derivative of Strong's #'s 984 and 5345.

984: *blapto*, properly means: to hinder; (by implication: to inure or hurt)

5345: *pheme*, "fame," comes from #5345, which is properly the same base as #'s 5457 and 5316:

5457: *phos*, "light"

5316: *phaino*, "to lighten; to shine."

Thus, *blasphemia*, at its base, is: a

hindering of light in a way that brings injury.

In contextual usage it can mean slander, defaming communication, injurious speech, vilification, misrepresentation, abusive speech that gives a false image of the subject, or, as the Concordant Concordance gives, "harm-averment." With all these English words in mind, how are we to understand the root idea of "hinder the light"? When a person's reputation is "smeared," what he represents or says (what we might call the "out-raying" of his particular light; his "glory," or reputation; his message) is hindered. We see this often happening in the political arena. When someone

attempts to be a light in the darkness, blasphemy can hinder the ability of his light to shine – and as being joined to Christ, we are the light of the world. The Pharisees accused Jesus of having a demon and being in league with a pagan deity (Mk. 3:22). In Lu. 11:53-53, the scribes and Pharisees tried to provoke Him to say something of which they could accuse Him. In both Mk. 3:29 and Lu. 12:9-10, Jesus associated their speech and behavior as "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," which in both passages He said would not be forgiven. So we are dealing with a topic that is of serious concern. In fact, many a person has lived with the fear that they had at

some point committed what in tradition has been called "the unpardonable sin." This is understandable since in the last part of Mk. 3:29, the KJV (Authorized Version) tells us that if a person does this he "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

Now a more accurate rendering of these phrases is:

**"continues not having a release** (not holding a deliverance or a divorce; not possessing a forgiveness) – **on into the Age. But rather, he continues existing being one caught** (or: held) **within an eonian effect of a mistake**

(or: within a result of having missed the target in the eonian

realm; in the midst of an age-lasting result of a sin or of error; in union with an effect of failure with respect to things which pertain to [the realm of] the Age; in the midst of the result of a deviation with regard to the [Messianic] eon; within the effects of an error that will last for an indefinite period of time)."

Note that such a one is "**caught and held within an eonian EFFECT of a mistake** (or: within a RESULT of having missed the target, etc.)." Jesus is saying that sowing such words will bring a harvest that has an effect, and brings a

result that can last a long time. The KJV word "never" is not in the Greek. It is simply the word "**not**." This "sin" or "error" or "failure" or "deviation" or "missing of the target" or "**mistake**" brings judgment: an evaluation and a decision by God (by implication, in the passage). So although it is not an "eternal" judgment, nor is it "damnation," it is still a very serious matter for us to consider. We should keep in mind that Peter tells us that judgment begins at God's house – i.e., with His people.

If we consider the above definitions of "**blasphemy**," it becomes apparent that the scribes and Pharisees were creating

a "false image" of Jesus. Such a false image of Him, or a misrepresentation of Him, would hinder the light that He was bringing to the people. It was one way in which they "shut up the kingdom" and hindered people from entering it (Matt. 23:13). If in what they said they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit – in their criticism of His work – they were in fact defaming and slandering God Himself. Another use of this word is seen in Lu. 23:39 where the criminal being crucified with Jesus "railed on" Him (KJV). He **"began speaking abuse and insults to Him."** What he said was, **"Are not you, yourself, the Christ? [Then] save yourself, as well as us!"** He, in speaking

blasphemy, was casting a shadow of doubt over the light of the cross of Christ and was doing the same thing that Peter had done by here saying, "**save yourself.**" Peter had objected to Jesus going to the cross (Mk. 8:33), and his words contradicted the will and purpose of God, thus hindering the light of the cross. Although Jesus did not say that Peter was blaspheming, he was acting the part of the adversary, by thinking from a human perspective. But here in Luke this speech is called *blasphemia*. In Acts 13:44-45 the Jews "**began contradicting the things being spoken by Paul, while repeatedly speaking abusively** (or: arguing with slander and

invectives; speaking light-hindering misrepresentations; defaming with accusations of villainy)." You see that I gave a broad spectrum of the semantic range of this word for your consideration. They were blaspheming the message given by Paul and Barnabas. Paul uses this word in Tit. 2:5 where he says, "**... to the end that God's thought and idea (God's Logos; God's Word; God's message) can not be constantly blasphemed (abusively defamed; misrepresented).**" Misrepresenting, defaming or giving a false image of God's Word, idea or message was Paul's concern in this context. He is speaking to the church about how their behavior

could potentially have an ill-effect upon Christ and His message – and thus "hinder the Light." Peter gives a similar word to Paul's, speaking of false teachers "**on account of whom** (or: because of which ones) **the Way** [other MSS: the glory] **of the Truth and Reality will be blasphemed** (vilified; defamed; misrepresented with abusive slander; or: have its light hindered)" – 2 Pet. 2:1-2.

In Rom. 2:24, Paul quotes Isaiah about God's Name (= honor; reputation; image) "**being blasphemed** (vilified; misrepresented; slandered; given a false image which hinders the Light) **among the ethnic multitudes**" by Israel's

behavior. It is the name and reputation of God that has been the heart of Mark Eaton's research into this word blasphemy. The question now comes to us, not only about our behavior, but also about what we say about God. Do our teachings vilify God? Do our traditions give a false image of the God that Scripture describes as Good, and as BEING Love? Does what we say about God, in our defining His justice hinder the Light of His Love? Have we let pagan notions misrepresent Him? Is His Name being blasphemed among the non-Christians because we have, like Peter, been instruments of the adversary and misunderstood God's purpose and the

all-inclusive work of the cross? Dare we, as some sects of Christianity do, say that God loves only "the elect," or only those who believe like we do? If we defame His brothers (who are our brothers), we defame Him (*cf* Matt. 25:40). If we cast out of our own group someone for whom Christ died, are we not casting Him out?

We noted that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Who is God) is a serious offense. May we examine ourselves to make sure that we are not "**loaded** (freighted) **with names of blasphemy** (which hinder light; of injurious, abusive slander; or: from a misrepresented image)" (Rev. 17:3).

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## BLESS, and CURSE NOT

The title of this article comes from the King James rendering of the last clause of Rom. 12:14. The contrast expressed in this simple translation should make us pause and consider. The religious mind can think, "Well of course... we should not curse!" And yes, we so commonly say, "Bless you," or sign an email, "Blessings," – and we mean it. Yet it can also be a thoughtless social response. A childhood memory verse for me was Ps. 19:14 where David said, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation

of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord (Yahweh), my Strength (Rock) and my Redeemer." Paul, in our Romans verse above, has given a definition to acceptable words and thoughts – while pointing out their opposites.

An expanded translation of Paul's words is instructive:

**14. You folks must constantly speak well of (or: bless) the people consistently pursuing (or: persecuting) you: be continuously blessing (speaking well of [them] or thinking goodness for [them]) and stop cursing (or: you must not continue praying thoughts down**

on, or wishing anything against,  
[things, situations or people])!

While we may not think that we participate in "cursing," we may be doing so without realizing it. The Greek word for curse here is *kataraomai*, which comes from *ara*, a prayer or a wish, and is prefixed by *kata*, down on, or against – as given in the expansion above. Do we ever pray thoughts or words down on situations or people? Do we ever wish anything against things, situations or people? Do we "curse" the weather – something that comes from God? Do we "curse" people through our criticism of them – are we entertaining wishes against their behavior? Are we

praying against practices or laws that we consider not right or immoral? Do we "curse" our leaders by praying against them?

I think that it was Socrates to whom the saying was attributed, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This article is a call to life examination. David, in Ps. 139:23-24 asks of God, "Search me out, O El, and know my heart; test me, and know my disquieting thoughts. See if a grievous way [is] in me, and guide me in [the] Way eonian" (CVOT). We can often tend to live "thoughtless" lives, and be in habits of speech or thought of which we are unaware. I have not thought that I curse people or things, yet I can see that

I have had wishes against situations and people – and have felt just in doing so. In the past I am sure that I have prayed against the devil and evil spirits. I have practiced *kataraoimai*, in my ignorance. But the simple imperative is, "Curse not." "O Father, lead me in the Way eonian!"

But let us look at the positive injunction: **"Be continuously speaking well of, blessing and thinking goodness for people, things and situations!"** What a different mindset. What a contrasting attitude and way of being! The word "bless" comes from *eu*, (which means goodness, ease, well-being), prefixed to *logeō*, to speak or think (from which

comes the noun, *logos*). The noun *eulogia* (from which we get the English "eulogy") can simply mean "good speaking," or "thinking goodness and well-being." So Paul's positive admonition is to think and speak goodness, well-being, and what today we would call "positive things" in regard to people, things and situations. "Bless, and curse not."

A parallel consideration is the examination of what many call our "prayer life." The Greek elements of the most common word for prayer are *pros*, which means directed toward, with a view to; *eu*, which is defined above; and *che*, which means having. The noun

prayer is "toward, or with a view to, having wellness, goodness, ease and well-being." The verb is *pros-euchomai*, to direct our thoughts or words toward having goodness, ease and well-being. There are other words for making requests to God, but we can see here that the most used word for "praying" in the NT is a word that is quite similar to "blessing."

Now it should be emphasized that *proseuchomai* is not a making of a request for God to do something. This is something that we do, just as blessing is something that we do. We do not need to bounce our "prayers" off of God, as though sending a radio beam to a

satellite in the sky to be then directed down to the subject of our prayer! The person that is joined to the Lord is one spirit (or: one Spirit). The Father lives in His temple – in us! Praying is actually joining our thoughts and words with the Spirit of God and sending them directly to our desired end. Praying is actually impartation of goodness, ease and well-being.

Furthermore, this "praying" is not just in words or thoughts. The Greek element *chomai* is what makes this word a verb. It can also refer to action. Steve Dohse pointed out that when Peter told the lame man "such as I have give I thee" (Acts 3:6) he was "proseuchomai-ing" him –

he was praying/imparting into him.

May our "prayers" be blessings and not curses.

# COMMENTS ON HEBREWS

(The Letter of the Better)

[Ch1](#) [Ch2](#) [Ch3](#) [Ch4](#) [Ch5](#) [Ch6](#)

[Ch7](#) [Ch8](#) [Ch9](#) [Ch10](#) [Ch11](#)

[Ch12](#) [Ch13](#)

[GOD STRIKES, AND THEN  
HEALS](#)

[Go Outside the Camp...](#)

[Bearing...](#)

This letter was written circa A.D. 67,  
according to the critical analysis of John

A.T. Robinson (ibid.). It is not known who wrote it. From around AD 400 to 1600 it was considered by the western church to be one of Paul's letters.

Traditions of Pauline authorship in the eastern church go back as far as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Warren A. Quanbeck, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, Ed. by Charles Laymon, Abingdon Press, 1971, p 897). Some scholars today think that the author may have been Apollos, others have thought it was Priscilla (and if so, then this was why it is anonymous), still others suggest it was possibly written by Priscilla and Aquila. Tertullian, in *De Pudicitia* 20 (circa AD 200), ascribed the book to

Barnabas (a close friend of Paul) and asserted this to be "the common belief of the time" (Dr. Ann Nyland, *The Source New Testament*, Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2004 p 435). But there are also those today who regard this work to have come from the mind and spirit of Paul.

It is widely presumed that this was written to a group of Christian Jews (and/or proselytes) whom the author knew well, and who would have been familiar with the OT and the cultus of Israel's ceremonies and rituals. Harvey suggests that the recipients would also have needed to be familiar "with current Jewish techniques of interpreting the

OT" (*The New English Bible Companion to the New Testament*, A.E. Harvey, Oxford University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p 686). However, Quanbeck notes that most scholars of his day saw "the arguments of the book as aimed at Gentile Christians, or at Christians in general, who are well acquainted with LXX, which was the Bible of the early church, but know little or nothing of contemporary Judaism" (ibid. p 898). Presenting us with an early, non-orthodox interpretation, Elaine Pagels informs us that "Valentinian theologians [second-century Gnostic Christians] give close attention to this treatise they know as Paul's letter

to the Hebrews.... [and] read its theme – the superiority [which] the covenant Christ gives over Israel's covenant – as a clear exposition of the contrast between the pneumatic [i.e., spiritual] and the psychic [i.e., soulish] relationship to God" (ibid. p 141; bracketed additions mine). This is interesting, considering Quanbeck's statement of his era's majority view that this work was "aimed at Gentile Christians." The Gnostic exegetes regarded Paul's use of the term "Gentile" to signify "the elect," or "the pneumatics," and "that the terms ('Jew/Gentile') are not to be taken literally" – citing Rom. 2:28f, that "He is

not a Jew, who is one outwardly... he is a Jew who is one inwardly" (Pagels, *ibid.* p 6, 7).

We will consider the central theme as being the supremacy of the new arrangement under the Priesthood of the Messiah. The idea of "better," or "superior," (expressed 15 times in the letter) ranges from the manner through which God's Word comes to humanity (1:1-4), to contrast with the agents used in the past and with the Aaronic priesthood (1:5-7:28), to the superior work of the new Chief Priest (under the better covenant – ch. 8, better sanctuary – 9:1-12, and better sacrifice – 9:13-10:18). The writer's arguments are

grounded on references to the OT throughout this work. A treatise on "faith" is given in 11-12. Exhortations and encouragements are sprinkled from 10, on, with 13 addressing practical issues, then ending with a benediction and personal remarks.

Barclay points out that "The community to whom it was written was not new to the Christian faith; they ought to have been mature (5:12)..." (The Daily Study Bible Series, The Letter to the Hebrews, Revised Ed., William Barclay, The Westminster Press, 1976, p 5). He further comments that "*Hebrews* demands such a knowledge of the OT that it must always have been a book written by a scholar

for scholars" (ibid. p 7). "His combination of literary skill and pastoral concern has produced some of the most eloquent and moving passages in the NT" (Quanbeck, ibid. p 897). "In form the epistle appears more like a sermon than a letter. The style is oratorical, the argumentation logical, the literary structure elaborate" (A.M. Stibbs, *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, Ed. by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer, A.M. Stibbs, D.J. Wiseman, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1970, p 1192).

With the historical context in mind, and an open mind in regard to the opinions, speculations and traditions of the

scholars, let us eagerly unpack this marvelous letter to a 1<sup>st</sup> century called-out community.

## Chapter 1

**1. Long ago** (or: In the old days), **in many parts** (or: fragments; divided portions; = bit by bit) **and in much-traveled ways consisting of many turns and directions, God, having spoken to** (or: by; in; with) **the fathers – in** (= through; in [the words of]) **the prophets –**

Our author begins by immediately accessing Israel's history and the writings which are commonly called the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible. We see that even in the first century folks did not consider this to be monolithic literature or tradition. It was recorded in

"fragments; divided portions," or, "**in many parts**," or as my paraphrase indicates: "bit by bit." By reading this corpus we find that it is attributed to many writers, as well. God spoke to, and in, a variety of people that came from a variety of backgrounds in Israel's society, and the messages were for a variety of periods in their history and spoke to a variety of situations.

The "**much-traveled ways**" refers to the long history which consisted of the many lives (figured by the term "**ways**") that were walked out. Those lives, and the life of Israel as a whole, had "**many turns and directions**" – it was not a straight path from point A to point B. As

the mountains and hills turn the direction of a river, so the surrounding nations often directed the flow of Israel's life. Still, "all rivers run to the (or: a) sea" and the path of Israel ended up in the sea of humanity.

God (Yahweh) spoke to, by, and with **the fathers** (Israel's ancestors) in, or through, **the prophets**, and the OT records their words. But with the coming of the Messiah, this all changed:

**2. upon [the] last of these days spoke to us in a Son whom He placed (or: sets) [as; to be] Heir of all (or: One who receives all humanity as an allotment; or: heir of all things; or: One who received everything as his allotted**

inheritance) **through Whom He also made the ages** (or: formed and constructed the various designated periods of time [which compose existence, as well as God's influence and activities]);

Notice the phrase "**[the] last of these days**" – it was the last days of the history of Israel, the last days of the old arrangement (or: covenant), the last days of the old "creation," the last days of that particular age. During these days, Jesus was born and in the last years of His life He became Israel's Messiah, in Greek called "the Christ (or, literally: Anointed One)." God, His Father, "**placed**" His Son as "**Heir of all** (One who receives

all humanity as an allotment; heir of all things)." The word "**all**" (*panton*) is both masculine and neuter, so the parenthetical expansion gives both renderings: "all humanity" and "all things." All means all. Sadly, traditional Christianity has missed this fact. It picked up the idea of exclusiveness which Israel had adopted for itself, and made this view its own.

And in those days of Jesus, and later through His anointed sent-forth representatives, God "**spoke**" into existence a new arrangement (or: covenant) "**in a Son.**" It is thus that Paul so frequently uses the phrase "**in Christ,**" for as the old creation came

about by the Word (Logos) of God so this new one came about through the Words of His Son. And with this, everything changed. The old passed away, and the new (the creation, **age** and economy in the Spirit – or, in Christ) came into existence (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:5).

It was through His Son that God "**made... the ages**; formed and constructed the various designated periods of time." We see a more inclusive view in John 1:3, where this Son is identified as God's Logos: His Thought, Reason, Idea, Word, Message, and "**All things** (or: All humanity; [The whole) **come to be** (or: was at some

time birthed; occur; or: came to be; were birthed; or: suddenly happened) **through and by means of It** (i.e., the Word; or: Him)." Note the verb "**come to be**" and the alternative rendering: this is the timeless fact tense, the indefinite aorist.

### **3. Who, continuously being an effect of the radiance from**

(or: a result from a dawning and breaking forth of the bright light of the Day which is; a result of the outshining which is; an effulgence from; an effect of an off-shining [light]- beam belonging to; or: a result of a reflection of) **the Glory and Splendor as well as an exact impress** (or: exact likeness as from a stamp or a die; or: a carving) **of His**

## **substructure**

(or: of His substance [that is] standing under as a foundation; which is the underlying support of His outward form and properties; from His sub-placing; or: from His assumed groundwork of the full expression [of His idea]) – **besides continuously bearing** (or: and while progressively carrying; and then repeatedly bringing) **the whole** (all things; everything and all existence) **by the gush-effect which is His power** (or: in the result of the flow from the power which is Him; or: with the saying pertaining to His ability; in the spoken declaration of, and which has the character of and its source in, His power

and ability) **through and by means of Himself – in producing a cleansing of** (or: after making a ritual purification in regard to) **the failures** (the misses of the target; the mistakes and errors; or: a clearing by pruning which pertains to the sins) **He at once seated Himself within [the] right part** (or: hand; = in union with the receiving aspect, honored position and place of power) **of the Greatness centered and resident within high places.**

This verse presents a very high view of the Son. Here He is not the peasant Jewish rabbi of Bruce Chilton's *Rabbi Jesus* (Image Books, 2000). The writer of Hebrews differentiates Him from the

prophets of Israel's history, but immediately shows Him to be an eschatological part of their story – its consummation. I will unpack the phrases and clauses of this verse and lay out the pieces so that we can drink long from them:

1) I rendered the predicate nominative *ap-augas-ma* in six different ways. The elements of this word (used but once in the NT) are *ap*: separation off, motion away from; *augas*: shining, radiance, beam of light, rays, a dawn or daybreak, light of the sun, or reflection; *ma*: effect or result. From this

collected semantic range we  
have:

a) an effect of  
the radiance  
from the Glory  
and Splendor

b) a result from  
a dawning and  
breaking forth  
of the bright  
light of the Day  
which is the  
Glory and  
Splendor

c) a result of the  
outshining  
which is the

Glory...

d) an effulgence  
from the

Glory...

e) an effect of  
an off-shining  
light-beam  
belonging to the  
Glory...

f) a result of a  
reflection of the  
Glory...

In a) we see that the Son is the Effect of the radiance from the Glory (rendering *tes doxes* as an ablative) of God. In b) we see the reference as to the creation: the sunrise of a new day; an

eschatological meaning can be taken as this being the dawning of the new creation and the Day of the Messiah – the new age. In c) we see the Son as the result of the outshining (movement; action; radiance) of God, and the Son IS the glory (rendering *tes doxes* in apposition). In d) the Son is an effulgence that comes from the Glory. In e) the Son is the Glory's effect of an off-shining – a light-beam of and from the Glory. In f) the Son is a result of a reflection of the Glory: the Glory reflects and produces the Son. There is much to ponder here.

2) The Glory and Splendor is a manifestation which calls forth

praise to God.

3) The exact impress takes us back to the creation of humanity in God's image. Here, we have an **exact impress** – a likeness as from a stamp or a die (this latter being made with a blow – symbolic of what Jesus went through for humanity, an echo of Isa. 53:5, 10). The Son is what a human should look like, and this is the likeness of God's "**substructure.**" This word is *hupo-staseos*, and literally means "a standing-under" or, "a sub-standing" or, "a sub-placing" **of Him.** In Nahum 2:7 (LXX) it is used of the foundation of either the temple of Nineveh or of that city, and so I have the

rendering, "of His substance [which is] standing under as a foundation." A related rendering, as apposition, is, "which is the underlying support of His outward form and properties," or we might paraphrase this, "His founding essence, the ground of Being." The last two options each present a different perspective of what our author is saying: Taking the noun as an ablative, it can read, "from His sub-placing." This can be understood from the action of the blow which created the **impress**, or it could refer to His humbling and taking the form of a Servant (Phil. 2:7). One of the meanings of *hypo-staseos* comes from its use in rhetoric (a well-

know communication skill in that time and area), and from this usage our phrase can be rendered, "from His assumed groundwork of the full expression [of His idea]," i.e., from what is taken for granted as the basis from what is being said. The *Concordant Version* renders this word "assumption."

Each of these renderings presents a different picture. Here our preconceptions may play a role in our interpretation of what this phrase is saying, or the Spirit may open up new vistas for us.

4) "**continuously bearing** (or: progressively carrying; repeatedly

bringing) **the whole** (all things; everything and all existence)" speaks to His mission and goal. He is progressively carrying mankind to its purposed destiny. He is repeatedly bringing everything and all existence into balance and into alignment with His design and intent (working all things according to the counsel of His will – Eph. 1:11). He is constantly bearing the burden of **the whole**, all things – the entire cosmos – supporting everything, and carrying the sparrow. This may shed light on the previous picture of "His sub-standing" or "sub-placing" as He "bore our illnesses and was burdened with our pains" (Isa. 53:4) and "carried the

failures and sins" (Heb. 9:28). Or, it could refer to His "remaining under to give support" (*hupo-meno*) to humanity. Taken as referring to "carrying all things," Quanbeck comments, "**Upholding the universe** expresses the OT idea of creation as that of continuous work of God. He has not only made the world; he supports and sustains it" (ibid. p 900; emphasis original).

5) The next compound phrase begins with a dative noun, and ends with a noun in the genitive modified by the personal pronoun (Him/His) in the genitive. This presents the options of the following combinations:

a) "**by the gush-effect**

**which is His power."**

The word "**gush-effect**" is the Greek *rhema*.

Again, the *-ma* ending means the results or effects of *rhe-* which speaks of a spring gushing forth from the ground, or something coming forth with force. I rendered "**power**" in apposition ("**which is**") and "**His**" as a possessive genitive of *autou*. I rendered the dative as an instrumental ("**by**")

indicating that it is the **effect** of the gushing forth (which is an expression of His power) which is constantly "**bearing the whole.**"

b) "in the result of the flow from the power which is Him." Here I rendered *rhe-* in another of its meanings: flow. I rendered "power" as an ablative ("from") and *autou* as in apposition ("which is Him"). I gave the dative a

locative meaning ("in") designating the location (or realm) in which the bearing was taking place – **in** the result of the flow, **from** the power which is Him.

c) "with the saying pertaining to His ability." These last two options express the secondary, derived meaning of *rhema* (saying) that you find in the common translations. *Dunamis* in its genitive form is

rendered "pertaining to... ability" with *autou* as a possessive "His."

d) "in the spoken declaration of, and which has the character of and its source in, His power and ability."

Here I expanded the dative noun again as a locative, showing the realm of the carrying (in the spoken declaration) and gave both meanings of *dunamis* (power and ability), expressing its genitive form to show

that the declaration has the character power as well as having its source in His power and ability.

6) "**through and by means of Himself**" is not found in all Greek MSS, but it is in *p46*, D2 and many other witnesses and is included in the Majority Text and Vulgate, so I have included it.

The bearing, carrying and bringing is all done through the cross of Jesus Christ and the work of the Son as He is joined to the new creation.

7) As I read the text, it seems appropriate to read the next participle

clause with the main verb: "**in producing a cleansing of** (or: after making a ritual purification in regard to) **the failures** (the misses of the target; the mistakes and errors; or: a clearing by pruning which pertains to the sins) **He at once seated Himself.**" It was **in His producing a cleansing** of the world from **the failures** (the mistakes, errors and sins) that **He at once seated Himself** as Lord of all. As Paul puts it in Phil. 2:

**9. For this reason, God also lifts Him up above** (or: highly exalted Him; elevates Him over) **and by grace gives to Him** (or: joyously favors on Him) **the Name – the one over and**

**above every name! –**

**10. to the end that within The Name: Jesus!** (or: in union with the name of Jesus; in the midst of the Name belonging to [Yahweh-the-Savior]), **every knee** (= person) – **of the folks upon the heaven** (of those belonging to the super-heaven, or [situated] upon the atmosphere) **and of the people existing upon the earth and of the folks dwelling down under the ground** (or: on the level of or pertaining to subterranean ones; [comment: note the ancient science of the day – a three-

tiered universe]) – **may bend**  
(or: would bow) **in worship,**  
**prayer or allegiance,**  
**11. and every tongue** (= person)  
**may speak out the same thing** (should and would openly agree, confess and acclaim) **that Jesus Christ [is] Lord** (Master; Owner) – **[leading] into [the] glory of Father God** (or: unto Father God's good reputation; [progressing] into a manifestation which calls forth praise unto God [the] Father)!

And so, Paul's description of this event in human history (and in the history of

God, for God entered into history with the Incarnation) gives a reference point to the following phrases, "**within [the] right part** (or: hand; = in union with the receiving aspect, honored position and place of power) **of the Greatness centered and resident within high places.**" The "**Greatness**" is a symbolic reference to the "realm of God" (often called "heaven," which is a figure for the realm of spirit) and the figurative "throne" of His kingdom.

The sacrificial act of "**producing a cleansing of sins**" is a reference to the Messiah performing as the Chief Priest on the Day of Atonement (*cf* ch. 9, below). Here, "The author seeks to show

how Jesus Christ fulfills the Levitical priesthood, thus bringing to light the reality which the priesthood symbolizes or foreshadows" (Quanbeck, *ibid.* p 900).

**4. Coming to be in a so much stronger and better** (or: Being born to a so much more excellent) [**station; position; calling; relationship**] **than agents** (or: messengers; or: folks who had a message), **He has come by inheritance to, and enjoys the allotment in, a so much different Name** (= designation) **which has been carried through the midst, beside them.**

The phrase "**in a so much**" is in the dative case, the preposition "**in**" seeming

to be the most appropriate for the participle "**Coming to be.**" Rendering *genomenos* "Being born" seemed to call for rendering the dative "to a so much." Either accurately carries the sense of the Greek phrase. In an earlier edition I had followed the lead of most other translators and simply ignored the force of the dative here, but now I see that it has an important place in understanding the text.

However, by expressing the dative here, from the text we are led to ask "in or to a so much stronger and better" what? Nyland solves this by bringing the word "Name" into an earlier place in the sentence, and gives a more idiomatic

rendering,

"He became so much superior to the Messengers as the Name he has inherited is more distinguished than theirs" (ibid. p 436).

This presents the core idea of the verse, but omits the sense of being "coming to be **in**" or "born **to**." To keep this sense, I have inserted some suggested objects for these prepositions – in answering the question, better "what?". The emphasis is not His "being" but on His "coming to be," as we see in the following verses and as we have seen elsewhere in His coming to be the Messiah, the King. The verb of this clause belongs to the word-

family that carries the connotation of "being born," but its use has often prompted translators to render it "happen; occur." The root idea is to come into a different existence than before. We see this in Jesus speaking of Israel needing to be "born back up again from above" (John 3:7, where Jesus uses the plural pronoun, "you folks"), and He was not speaking of their physical existence. We see this in the Holy Spirit coming upon Him at His baptism by John when Jesus was anointed for His ministry.

He **"came to be in a so much stronger and better"** ministry than the fathers and prophets through whom God spoke in the

past: He came to be Israel's Messiah and Lord of All. He came as the Branch from the root of David, birthed from Israel's olive tree (Rom. 11:17-18). This exalted place was a stronger and better place than that of the messengers that came before Him. He carried the Name Savior and Son. He "**enjoys the allotment**" of the Promise which He inherited from Abraham and for which Israel had looked for millennia. He was the promised Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). He came to be the Elder Brother that would ransom His younger brothers (humanity) from their slavery.

A word about my rendering "**agents/messengers**" seems appropriate.

These are the *translated* meanings of the Greek *angelos*, which unfortunately has been traditionally *transliterated* (i.e., a "letter-for-letter" bringing of the Greek word into English, without *translating* it) as "angel." From the context, beginning in vs. 1 and carrying on throughout this chapter, I submit that this word refers to God's agents, from Adam and Eve on through the prophets (who brought God's "messages" to Israel) and even David and Solomon who are referenced below. All of the OT came through His human messengers and agents.

John Gavazzoni comments, "And I would add that, following the writer's

line of thought: His much more excellent position compared to the messengers, is that of being the very Word within/of their message. They were spokesmen; He was what was spoken."

**5. For you see, to a certain one of the agents He once said** (or: as an interrogative: in which one of the messengers – the folks having the message – did He once say?),

**"You are my son: I have given birth to you today!"** [Ps. 110:1] **And again,**

**"I will continue being to him for a Father, and he will continue being to Me for a son."**

(or: "I will continually exist

being in him, [proceeding] into a Father, and he himself will exist being in Me, [proceeding] into a son!) [2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13]

The earliest manuscripts (MSS) had no punctuation or diacritical marks, such as accent marks. Later folks who copied the MSS put them in where they felt they should be. Whether the word *tini* (a dative) means "**to a certain**" or "in which...?" depends upon which syllable the scribe put the accent mark, when making a copy of the early MSS which did not have it. We know from these OT references that this was indeed said to one of His agents (not to some "angel").

As a question it would have been calling to mind the incident, asking, "in which [passage of Scripture] did He once say?" I have given both options, but I see the bold rendering as the correct one. Now note the word "**today**." This is speaking to an earthly experience, not to an "eternal" experience within the Godhead. The second quote speaks of a new relationship – one that originally had the context of Yahweh speaking to David about Solomon becoming king over Israel. And notice the durative future, "I will continue being..." This was not an ontological statement, for God was always Solomon's Father. It was an affirming statement that God

would be with Solomon in his upcoming position as the king of Israel, and of God's new relationship to him through his becoming the anointed king. So I suggest that the author of Hebrews is here bringing Christ into the story of Israel, showing that Jesus is the One of whom David and Solomon were types. He is the long-expected Messiah. The parenthetical, alternate rendering prophesies a growing relationship between Yahweh and Solomon as he matures into being a mature son (the significance of *huios* over *teknon* – a child).

Ps. 110 was referenced by Jesus in Matt. 22:42-45. Scholars normally see this

psalm as being entirely prophetic about the coming Messiah. However, as with most of the OT prophecies, and considering that this was written as a poem, the writer may have been speaking about David (as his lord) and about his time. The psalm is attributed to David, but this is an assumption. In interpreting the Matthew account, Jesus ends the discourse with a question. He was challenging their traditions. It may well be that He is now calling us to re-examine our own traditions.

**6. Now again, when He brought the Firstborn into the habitable world He is saying,**

**"And so, let all God's agents**

(or: people with the message)  
**give homage to Him** (or:  
worship and reverence Him;  
kiss toward and do obeisance to  
Him; = show respect and give  
honor to Him)." [Ps. 97:7b]

There can be a tendency to read over these quotes and just move on, without considering the context from which they were taken. The first five verses are apocalyptic (a type of Jewish writing: figurative; symbolic; [note: based upon Lawrence Garcia's review of the following, I would recommend Frederick J. Murphy's *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World, A comprehensive Introduction*, Baker

Academic, 2012]) in nature, describing the activities of Yahweh in the earth. In vs. 6 the psalmist says that in response to His presence (vs. 5), "The heavens tell of His righteousness, and all the peoples (plural) see His glory."

Then vs. 7 reads "May all the servants of a carving be ashamed, the ones boasting in useless idols (or: things). Bow down to Him, all [you] elohim" (CVOT). Note that the quote of this verse in our text is from the LXX (Greek version of the OT), which regularly translates *elohim* with the word *angelos*, and thus our rendering here in vs. 6, above. Jesus used *theoi* ("gods," the actual Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *elohim*) in

reference to people in John 10:34, where He quotes Ps. 82:6. The translators of the LXX apparently understood *angelos* to often refer to people, so they made this substitution when they understood the OT text as referring to humans.

So now look as Ps. 97:8, "Zion hears and is rejoicing..." and then in vs. 9, "For You, O Yahweh are supreme over all the earth [where He had just brought judgment: vs. 5], You are exceedingly ascendant over all elohim" (CVOT). In vs. 6 the context is "all the peoples" seeing Yahweh's work (in fact, vs. 1 says, "let the earth exult; let the many coastlands rejoice"); vs. 7a refers to

people worshiping idols, then advises all elohim/agents to bow down, instead, to Yahweh; vs. 8 has Zion as the context; vs. 9 refers to the setting of "the earth." In conclusion I suggest that when we find the Greek word "*angelos*" in this letter that we think "human agent or messenger."

Now back to our verse here: notice the context, "**brought the Firstborn into the habitable world.**" I suggest that the folks (the agents, the messengers) that are called to **give homage** are first of all His people Israel, whose story has been referenced by this quote from the OT. And now it is the followers of Jesus who recognize Him as "**the Firstborn.**"

This could also be a code word for His role as the Adam of the new creation (1 Cor. 15:45-47), or the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

**7. And then, on the one hand, to the agents** (messengers; folks with the message) **He is saying,**

**"He is the One making His agents** (messengers; folks with the message) **spirits** (or: Breath-effects), **and His public servants a flame of fire."** [Ps. 104:4]

[comment: this is an example of Hebrew parallelism – the second line being a restatement of the first, but in a different

figure; the figure is a reference both to the priests, as "public servants," and to the called-out community, figured as the lampstand in the Tabernacle in Rev. 1:20, and referencing Acts 2:3 – there being "tongues as if of fire" burning on the lamps in the one case, and upon the people in the second case; the agents speak a message of words that are "spirit," the effect of the Breath]

The comment that I inserted into my translation, above, will serve here as well to suggest insights into this verse. The psalm quoted is also set in

apocalyptic language to describe the majesty of His works in the earth, so should be interpreted via its figures. Its use here should be understood in the context of this letter. For further insights into who are included as "**His agents**," see vss. 12 & 14, below, with the comments on each verse.

8. **Yet, on the other hand, to the Son,  
"God [is] Your throne, on into  
the age of the Age, and the  
scepter of straightness [is] a  
scepter of His kingdom and  
sovereign activity.**

(variant rendering, with other  
MSS: "Your throne, O God, and  
the staff of uprightness, [is the]

staff of Your reign, unto the chief time period of the Age.)

This and the next verse are from Ps. 45.

These two verses are considered by most (and probably by the author of our letter, here) to be prophetic of the Messiah. However, most of the 17 verses can be read as applying first of all to Israel's king, as well as speaking of the "daughters of kings" and "honored women" (vs. 9), and of "the daughter of Tyre" (vs. 12), and then of "the king's daughter" (vs. 13-14).

With this in mind, let us ponder the two renderings on offer in my translation. Is the parenthetical rendering making the statement that the Son is God? It can be

read that way. Note that there is no joining verb, and that I supplied "[is]" to make this quote a sentence, in English. It is the same case with the Hebrew text of the psalm. What we have here are two nouns, both with definite articles, in the nominative case. One is the subject; the other is the predicate nominative. The problem is that the spelling of the Greek words can also be vocative (from which we get the "O" before "God" in the parenthetical rendering). The question becomes, "Where do we insert the connecting verb?" And behind this question, "What did our authors mean?" The second half of vs. 9 argues for the first reading: still addressing the same

one, it says **"God – Your God – anointed You."** Recall that Jesus said to His disciples in John 20:17,

**‘I am progressively stepping back up again (or: now ascending) toward My Father – even the Father of you folks – and My God: even [the] God of you people!’**

I think that what needs to be kept in mind is the context of this chapter: the Son becoming the Messiah, rather than it being an ontological statement about the Son – regardless of our personal understanding about the Son.

**9. "You love fairness and equity in rightwised [covenant] relationships**

**within the Way pointed out (or: justice; righteousness) and yet you hate lawlessness. Because of this, God – Your God – anointed You with olive oil of extreme joy, at the side of (or: = more than; = rather than) Your partners (or: associates; fellows). [Ps. 45:6-7]**

The first statement would of course apply to God, but also to His Son, the Anointed One, who is made in His Father's image, as vs. 3, above, well instructs us. This is a clear picture of the "horizontal" aspect of the message of goodness, ease and well-being (literal meaning of *euangelia* – also called "Gospel"). It is the message that Jesus preached, and that Paul took to the non-

Jewish ethnic multitudes. It refers to how folks treat one another.

And so here we see the reference to the human (in this case Jesus) being **anointed** by God's Spirit, as the Gospels tell us. His **partners** are people, and I suggest that this partnership and association is speaking of His followers, His called-out covenant communities. But He is our Lord; He is our King; He is our Chief Priest.

My first (the bold) rendering in the final phrase is the literal and the core meaning of *para*: at the side of; beside. But scholars suggest that it also has the semantic range of "more than" or "rather than."

10. **And further,**

**"O Lord [= Yahweh], down from beginnings** (or: in accord with ruling [principle]s), **You founded** (or: laid the foundations of) **the earth** (or: land), **and the works of Your hands are the heavens** (or: skies; atmospheres).

11. **"They shall progressively destroy themselves** (or: ruin, or lose, themselves) – **but You continue remaining throughout.**

12. **"And all people, as a garment, shall progressively be made** (or: grow) **old. Then like that which is thrown around [as a cloak], You will roll or**

**wrap them up as a garment, and so they (or: the same people) will progressively be made another (be altered; be changed; be transformed), yet You are the same, and Your years will not fail."** [Ps. 102:25-28]

These verses are quoted from the LXX (Greek OT). By citing this psalm, the author uses verse 10 to access the creation story, recalling for the readers that the story of the Messiah in this letter had its roots in the very creation itself, and in Yahweh (in the Heb. version), the Creator. In vs. 19 of this psalm, just before this quote, it is stated that Yahweh will look from the heavens, "To hear the groaning of the

prisoner, to unloose the sons of death, [so] that the Name of Yahweh [would be] recounted in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are convened together and the kingdoms come to serve Yahweh" (vs. 20-22, CVOT).

The recipients of this letter must have had a considerable length of time being Christians, for the author calls them to consider the former times,

**"days in which, being enlightened (illuminated), you at one point remained under (patiently endured while giving support in) a great conflict**

(contest or athletic combat) **of the effects of sense-experiences** (results of emotions, passions, sufferings and things that happened to you)" (10:32, below).

I bring this up again to point out that these folks would most likely have been quite familiar with the immediate context in Ps. 102 (vs. 19-22) which led up to vss. 25-28, quoted here. It was the context of the mission of the Messiah. Verses 23-24 can be viewed as a foreshadowing of the cross.

In vs. 11, above, can be seen first a contrast between the impermanence observed in creation, and the fact that He

**"continue[s] remaining throughout."**

He can be depended upon, and looks from the heavens with the intent to send a Deliverer.

Verse 12 is a restatement of vs. 11, except that the subject has changed from **"the earth"** (or: "land") – which throughout the OT was a symbol for the people of Israel (*cf* Walter Brueggemann, *The Land, Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Fortress Press, 2002) – to **"all people"** (*pantes*: masculine, plural, nominative). ALL people! **"He will roll (or: wrap) them up as a garment, and so they (or: the same people) will progressively be made**

**another** (be altered; be changed; be transformed)!" This was more than the psalmist could see. It is God's new thing. This is humanity's destiny, because He is "**the same**" – *cf* ch. 13:8, below.

Dan Kaplan (in a phone conversation) pointed me to some OT passages about Yahweh's dealings with Israel that shed light on verses 11 and 12, above:

Isa. ch. 24 speaks of His judgments upon the land (= people) of Israel –

1. Behold Yahweh making the land void and evacuating it...
3. That land shall be voided, yes voided...
4. The land is mournful, it

decays; the habitation is wasted away, it decays;

12. There remains for the city, desolation, and the gate shall be pounded to decimation.

18. ... And the foundations of the earth (land) shall quake,

19. The earth (land) will be smashed, yes smashed...

21. ... And for many days they shall be called to account.

23. ... For Yahweh of host will reign in Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem, and in front of His elders will He be glorified.

This is an example of apocalyptic descriptions of the use of the word "land

(earth)" as a figure for people, and in this case God's judgment upon His people. Dan points us to another example of symbolic language in Isa. 34 that echoes the language of vs. 12, above:

4. And the vales shall be putrefied; all the host of the heavens shall decay, and the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll. All their host shall decay as a leaf decays from the vine...

5. When My sword has been satiated in the heavens, behold, on Edom it shall descend...

This is all history and judgments of people surrounding Israel in OT times.

Jamieson Fausset and Brown refer to this as "Judgment on Idumea." Of vs. 4 they say, "Violent convulsions of nature are in Scripture made the *images* of great changes in the human world..." (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1961, p 550, emphasis original). Next Dan leads us to places where "garments" are used symbolically of people. Isa. 50:9b speaks of the rebellious (vs. 5) and that,

"... all of them shall wear out like a cloak; the moth shall devour them."

And then there is Job 13:28,

"A man, like a rotten thing, he is disintegrating like a cloak when

a moth has eaten it."

Garments are also used metaphorically in the following verses to which Dan leads us:

Isa. 59:17b "He shall put on garments of vengeance for clothing and shall muffle Himself with jealousy as a robe." (note: all OT quotes from the CVOT)

1 Pet. 2:16 "**continually holding** (or: having) **the freedom as a covering** (or: a veil) of **worthlessness** (bad quality; evil; poorness of situation)..."

1 Thes. 2:5 " **For neither did we at any time come to be**

**flattering in word, according as you saw and are aware, neither within pretense (a held-forward specious cloak) from greed: God is witness!"**  
John 15:22 **"But now (at this time) they continue holding nothing which like a specious and deceptive cloak appears in front around their sin**  
(or: they are not continuing to hold that which is put forward to hide the situation concerning their failure; they are not habitually having an excuse or pretense about their deviation, error and miss of the target)."

"Jesus was wrapped up in the Law (His grave clothes, the wrapping, were the preparation for burial which was according to their custom – or, law). It was the Law that killed Him. But when He was raised from the dead, those grave clothes (figure of the Law) remained in the tomb, buried. After His resurrection, the stone (figure of the tablets of the Law and the stony heart of the old covenant) was rolled away" – paraphrase of Dan Kaplan.

In considering the clause, above, "**shall be made** (or: grow) **old**," Heb. 8:13, comes to mind, in regard to the old covenant and the Law which bound folks up,

**"In thus to be saying "new,"  
He has made the first (or:  
former) "old," and that [which  
is] progressively growing old  
and obsolete (failing of age),  
[is] near its disappearing  
(vanishing away)."**

It was the old relationships, the old way of living and thinking, the old heart and the old "dead" existence under the Law that was wrapped about humanity in the body of Jesus, and was then buried with Him to rise no more. The grave clothes remained behind. It was a new humanity, a new creation that,

**"He jointly roused and raised  
(or: suddenly awakens and**

raises) **up, and caused [us] to sit** (or: seats [us]) **together within the things situated upon** [thus, above] **the heavens** (or: in union with the full, perfected heavenlies; or, although neuter: among those comprising the complete and perfected heavenlies; among the ones [residing] upon the atmospheres; in union with the celestials) **within and in union with Christ Jesus."**

(Eph. 2:6)

13. **Now to a certain one** (or, as in vs. 5: Now in which one ...?) **of the agents** (or: folks with a message) **He once said,**

**"Sit at** (or: out of [the authority of]) **My right [hand; side] until I may place your foes** (or: hostile ones) **a footstool of your feet** (or: = turn your enemies into your footstool [= a supportive role])." [Ps. 110:1]

This is the seventh quotation, which for a book filled with symbols may be significant. Seven was the Hebrew symbol for completion, and rest. So the Messiah now sits enthroned, His work finished and He has entered into His rest. But the Father keeps on working. There are many "hostile folks" that will each in his own class and order be brought to the place of support for the

Messiah's feet. It is a picture of victory for the work of the cross. Also, keep in mind that a footstool is positioned right before the throne: in His immediate presence and now made useful to Him. The whole of Ps. 110 is seen as Messianic, and gives a variety of pictures of the successful reign of the King, the willingness of His people, and declares Him a priest, of the order of Melchizedek – of whom we will read more in chapters to come.

**14. Are not all people public-serving Breath-effects (or: spirits; winds), being sent forth unto attending service because of those folks being about to progressively inherit deliverance (or:**

receive the allotment of salvation, health and wholeness)?

We again have our word *pantes* as the subject: **all people**. He makes even the wrath of humans to praise Him (Ps. 76:10). As Ray Prinzing so often said, "He uses the interplay of good and evil for His purposes" (my paraphrase). God raised up Pharaoh to show forth His glory. He used Nebuchadnezzar to discipline Israel, and later called Cyrus His "anointed" (Isa. 45:1).

John Gavazzoni has made these insightful comments (in a private email):

"In verse 12, 'they' (the 'all people') clearly refers to the whole of humanity growing old

as a garment to be rolled up and transformed. So rather than the 'all people' of verse 14 referring to that particularity of chosen agents back in verse 7, the writer expands the concept of divine agency, affirming that, though those of verse 7 are undeniably quite particularly chosen agents, in fact 'all people' are also.

If the whole context is read out loud, with when coming to 'all people' we emphasize (as I think the writer intends) 'ALL,' we get the expansiveness of his thought. What I think I'm hearing is that

while of course the few called-out agents and/or called-out community serve the whole of humanity, in turn, 'all people' inescapably, even though negatively, are instrumental in/toward the transformation of the called-out. This seems to fit that note that the Spirit has over and over sounded to me of the interdependent factor of our deliverance.

Not only are we interdependent within the body of Christ (the present, believing representation of the whole of humanity's like-destiny), but our

interdependence extends to all 'our brethren in the world' (If that's the right phrase to distinguish between the presently believing community, and the not-yet-believing, but destined-to-be community)."

With the coming of the Reformation and the teaching on "the priesthood of the believer," everyone was seen to have an important vocation ("calling") within the communities. The farmer, the carpenter, the baker, etc., all had important "callings" from God – all were necessary to support society and were a part of God's kingdom. But specifically in this verse, the whole body of Christ is

seen – the partners of Jesus – who are **"being sent forth unto attending service"** to the called-out folks, and to the world.

We read in 1 Pet. 1 what the prophets (vs. 10) – the messengers of the old covenant – realized in regard to their messages,

**"to which folks (or: in which ones) it was unveiled (revealed; disclosed) that not to or for themselves, but to and for you people, they had been progressively dispensing and serving them – which things are now announced (or: which tidings were brought back) to**

**you through those announcing** (proclaiming; bringing and communicating) **the message of well-being and goodness** (or: good news) **to you within** [or, with other MSS: by] **a set-apart Breath-effect** (or: [the] Holy Spirit; or: sacred spirit) **being sent forth from [the] atmosphere** (or: heaven) – **into which things agents** (or: messengers) **are habitually and earnestly desiring** (are constantly in full passion and craving) **to stoop down beside and look inside, so as to obtain a clearer and more accurate**

**view." (vs. 12)**

And the agents referred to here, by Peter, refers to those such as Matthew, who brought in so many references from the OT that showed how Jesus was fulfilling Scripture. And even like Jesus with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, showing them all the things from Moses and the prophets that spoke about Him. All the writers of the NT, such as our author here, had undoubtedly pondered and perhaps even reviewed many of the writings before writing these letters to the covenant communities. Likewise, before going out themselves to tell others, the recipients of these letters may well have been like the Bereans (Acts

17:10-11).

## Chapter 2

1. **Because of this, it is continuously necessary and binding for us to more earnestly (or: exceedingly) be continually holding to (attending to; applying one's self to) the things having been heard, lest we may flow (or: glide; drift) aside.**

"Because of this" refers to what he has just said in the previous 14 verses. Like the letters of John and Judah (Jude) 17, the admonition here is to constantly hold to the original message about Jesus being the Messiah – "**the things having been heard**" – lest they be drawn back into Judaism or be led astray into one of

the forms of Gnosticism that was invading the communities in that time period. If, as it is presumed, these were folks who had a firm grounding in the OT Scriptures, and were therefore probably in the Jewish religion before the coming of the message of the Messiah, this would not likely be written from thinking that they may "**flow or drift aside**" into things of society or the "natural life," but rather into the snares of the false teachers that had gone out into the world (*cf* 1 John). His emphasis is to hold to the message of the Christ and to the teachings of Jesus, while constantly attending to living out the message to where "... the lives of Jesus'

followers are continuations of the narrative of Israel – the story to which the one true and living God has bound Himself, and through which the true and living God is bringing about the reconciliation and rectification of the entire created order" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 193). We are instructed that **"it is continuously necessary and binding for us"** to do as the author has said. I have given the two meanings of this verb in the present tense, the first showing its importance and the second showing the force of the requirement.

**2. For you see, if the Word** (or: message) **spoken through agents** (or: messengers; folks with a message)

**became firm, and every deviation (or: side-stepping) and imperfect hearing (or: hearing amiss; or: disobedience) received a fair discharge of wages,**

The agents/writers of the message were Moses, the historians, the poet/wisdom/song writers, the prophets – all of which became "the Law" and "the Word of the Lord" which had to be obeyed, upon penalty of judgment. This was the old, or first, covenant which created Israel as a nation, and throughout their history was the context that brought Yahweh's Word to the people.

**3. how shall we proceed fleeing out (or: escape), in not caring for (or: neglecting) so great a deliverance**

(rescue; healing and restoration to health and wholeness), **which – after receiving a beginning** (or: a headship and place of ruling; a high estate; a principality [see Jude 6]) **to be repeatedly and progressively spoken [of] through the Lord** (or: by means of [Christ or Yahweh]) – **was made firm into us and was guaranteed as valid by those who heard,**

Verse 2 gives the background of Israel's history for a comparison, and now we see that God's judgments continue for us (1 Pet. 4:17) who have been grafted into their tree (Rom. 11:17). And since the original recipients of this letter were likely a continuation of that tree, they

applied to them as well. Paul makes it clear that if our attitude towards outsiders is not loving, God will take action upon us, "**For you see, since (or: if) God spares not (or: did not spare) the natural branches (the branches down from, or, in accord with, nature), neither will He spare you!**" (Rom. 11:21).

**Care** is the watchword, not presumptuous neglect of what the message tells us to do: to love and accept others, "... to continue the ministry of Jesus, to embody the identity of Jesus to every corner of the world that God claims as his own" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 51). Or, as he put it in another place,

"And the life to which Jesus calls us is defined by his own" (ibid. p 79).

They had received "**a beginning.**" The noun is *arche*, and this first meaning would suggest that there was more to follow – indeed a whole world to fill with good news. History is replete with evidence of the growth of the kingdom of the heavens within the earth. But this word can also mean that they had received "a headship and a place of ruling; a high estate; a principality." This metaphor recalls Paul's image: that God "**caused [us] to sit (or: seats [us]) together within the things situated upon [thus, above] the heavens within and in union with Christ Jesus**" (Eph.

2:6). And then there is the figure of the overcomer to whom it is promised **"to sit (or: be seated) with Me within My throne, as I also conquer (or: conquered; overcome; overcame and was victorious) and sit (or: sat down) with My Father within His throne"** (Rev. 3:21). They had been given the kingdom – the high estate and principality – through their union with the King and Lord of all.

Keep in mind the corporate sense from the plural **"we,"** with which the author shows solidarity and participation. This is seen again in the last clause: **"us."** All of this – however *arche* is rendered – was given to us through our having been

placed within Him.

The next clause, "**to be repeatedly and progressively spoken [of] through the Lord** (or: by means of [Christ or Yahweh])," was given first to the twelve disciples (a figure of the twelve tribes of the new Israel which Jesus was creating – now from a different mountain: no longer Sinai, but Zion; *cf* ch. 12:22, below), but this message of a new "**beginning**" (a new headship: Christ instead of Moses; a new creation – referencing Gen. 1:1, from the story of creation) was to be spoken again and again as it progressively unfolded through the unveilings given to His sent-forth folks and emissaries. After the

resurrection and ascension, the message still came by means of Christ, but His mouthpiece was now His body.

Another view can be taken here. The word *kurios* (Lord) was the word used to replace the Hebrew Yahweh in the Greek version of the OT. All of the author's original hearers would have been aware of this (and some scholars think that the reason that the author used the LXX in quoting the OT was because the recipients would have been most familiar with the Greek version). With this in mind, the "**beginning**" which they received could have referred back to the beginning of Israel, or even creation. If this is what the author meant, then what

was **"repeatedly and progressively spoken through the Lord"** may have referred to the OT Scriptures that came through Yahweh. Thus, this would be a continuation of the thought expressed in vs. 2. The message that the Messiah brought was a continuation of the story of Israel, but its consummation (its *telos*: the goal and end of the story). The beginning would have been the root of the olive tree, or the beginning of the story. The fulfillment of that story was **"made firm into us and was guaranteed as valid by those who heard"** – Christ's disciples, His witnesses.

Taken either way makes sense of what

the author is saying. The first reading of this text focuses on the beginning of the new; the second reading focuses on the consummation of the old which in turn brought into being the new.

**4. God joining with added corroborating witness, both by signs and wonders and a full spectrum of (or: various; multi-faceted) powers and abilities, and by (or: in) divisions (partings; distributions) of set-apart Breath-effect (or: of [the] Holy Spirit; from a sacred attitude), corresponding to His willing [it] and exercising His purpose?**

This happened throughout Israel's history, and we see God's story

continuing under the new covenant with the advent of Israel's Messiah and then with the giving of the Promise from the Father on the Day of Pentecost. The Gospels record the signs and wonders performed by Jesus and His disciples, and then the book of Acts continues the **"added corroborating witness."**

Paul speaks of the **"divisions** (partings; distributions) **of set-apart Breath-effect"** in 1 Cor. 12. Note that this is all **"corresponding to His willing [it] and exercising His purpose."** The noun in this phrase (*thelesis*) signifies an action, and so I expanded the rendering to show this sense of the word. God is very involved in bringing His will and

purpose into being within His creation.

**5. For, did He not align the impending habitable world – about which we continue speaking – under agents?**

(or: You see, not to messengers, or folks with a message, does He subject the habitually occupied house – the one [which is] about to be – concerning which we repeatedly speak.)

With the understanding that God's agents are humanity (Gen. 1:27-27), as we also observe from history, it seemed best to me that this verse be rendered as a rhetorical question. However, if taken as a declarative statement, then the folks with a message would have been those

agents that brought the Word to Israel, while He "subjected the habitually occupied house" under a Son. Still, it seems that the quote in vs. 6-8 argues for it being a rhetorical question.

**6. Now a certain person, somewhere, made a solemn testimony (or: gave proof through thorough evidence), saying,**

**"What is a human, that You remember him? Or a son of man (= the human being), that You continually visit, inspect (look observantly at), help and look after him?"**

**7. "You made him a brief time inferior, at the side of agents (or: alongside**

folks with a message); **You crowned him with glory and honor** (or: You put a celebration and victor's wreath on him in a manifestation which called forth praise with a good reputation, and for value), **and then You set him down** (or: made him to stand; or: = appointed him) **upon the works** (or: actions) **of Your hands.**

8. **"You subjected all things** (or: You humbly align and arrange all people) **under his feet, in order to support him."** [Ps. 8:5-7] **For you see, in the [situation] to subject the whole** (or: humbly align and arrange all), **nothing is sent away not subjected** (or: humbly aligned) **to Him. Yet now we are not yet seeing the whole** (or: all) **having**

**been subjected** (or: humbly aligned, placed or arranged under [Him]).

**9. But yet, we are continuously seeing Jesus – having been made inferior for a brief time beside agents – having been encompassed with glory** (or: crowned by a good reputation) **and with honor** (or: in value) **on account of** (or: through) **the effect of the experience of death**

(or: Now in this certain short bit of time, we keep on observing Jesus – having been made less because of the result of the suffering from, and which was, death – now having been encircled with the Victor's wreath in a manifestation which calls forth praise and with esteemed

respect, at the side of the folks with the message), **so that by the grace of and from God** (or: for God's grace; in the favor which is God; [note: MSS 0243 & 1739, plus a Vulgate MS and in the works of Origen, Ambrose and Jerome and quoted by various writers down to the 11th century, the reading is: apart from God]) **He might taste of death over [the situation and condition of] all mankind** (or: for and on behalf of everyone).

The quote from Ps. 8 and the explanation in vs. 8b-9 need to be considered together in order to come to a clear understanding of what our author is saying. The psalmist is accessing the

Genesis account as he speaks of humanity in vs. 6-8a. So the question arises, who are the "**agents**" beside whom humanity was made inferior (vs. 7)? Who were the "folks with a message" alongside (at the side of – the literal meaning of the preposition *para*) whom God set this human?

I suggest that our author (as well as the psalmist) is speaking specifically about Adam who in the story of Israel is a type of Christ, the Messiah (Rom. 5:14b; 1 Cor. 15:42-50), the figure of humanity that is anointed by God's Spirit to govern and be King, and Lord of all. Bear in mind that the theme of our author is the Son, the Christ, and the theme of this

letter is the Son's (Messiah's) superiority over the old order of the Jewish religion, and the old covenant that created Israel as a nation. And thus do we see verse 9 pointing us to Jesus. He was the One who was made to be "**a brief time inferior,**" as He took the role of a Servant of humanity (Phil. 2:7) and of Israel (Rom. 15:8). He was a brief time in an inferior position as He submitted to the judgment of the Jewish leadership, and then to the cross. So as vs. 8 states, we are not yet "**seeing the whole (all) having been subjected to Him,**" but the reality is the One that we do continuously see by the eye of faith's conviction. The eyes having been

opened by the Spirit and blessed (e.g., Matt. 13:16) see the kingdom, and the King **"having been encompassed** (encircled; crowned) **with glory** (or: a good reputation; a manifestation which calls forth praise) **and honor** (or: value)." This is a present reality. Our Father exalted Him to this position **"on account of** (or: through) **the effects and results of the experience of death"** – i.e., the cross. Or, it was "through" the effects of His death that resulted in the death of all humanity – for as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:

**14. for you see, Christ's love**  
(urge for accepting reunion)  
**continuously holds us together.**

**[We are] deciding** (discerning; judging) **this: that** [some MSS add: since] **One Person** (or: Man) **died over [the situation of] all mankind** (or: for the sake of all); **consequently all people died** (or: accordingly, then, all humanity died) –

that He was encircled with splendor and value.

Now let us consider the alternate parenthetical rendering of the first half of the verse. First of all, "in this certain short bit of time" represents *ton brachuti* with other meanings of their semantic ranges, puts them where they stand in the text and associates them with the main

verb, rather than with the participle. Secondly, following a footnote in the Ronald Knox translation of the Vulgate, and seeing that the Concordant Version also follows this syntax, I associated the following together: "having been made less because of the result of the suffering from, and which was, death." Finally, I placed the location of "at the side of the folks with the message" to follow and be associated with the wreathing of the Victor.

The result is that the author and his readers were still continuing to observe what had happened in that "certain short bit of time" since the cross. In hindsight they observed Christ having been made

less by His suffering and death. But now they were seeing Him crowned as the Victor over death (1 Cor. 15:54, 55) amidst glorious manifestations through His covenant community, beside which He has taken His stand. Recall Rom. 12:1b,

**"... stand your bodies alongside** (or: to set or place your bodies beside) **[the] Well-pleasing, Set-apart** (Holy; Different-from-the-usual), **Living Sacrifice by God** (or: in God; for God; to God; with God)..."

And He now stands beside, among and within His called-out communities (Rev. 1:12, 13, 20) – His agents within the

earth.

The purpose for all of this was "**so that by the grace of and from God** (or: for God's grace; in the favor which is God) **He might taste of death over [the situation and condition of] all mankind** (or: for and on behalf of everyone)." The noun of the last phrase is *pantos*, "all" in the singular, so it means specifically "every human," or "everyone, individually," or "all mankind" as a collective whole. His death was the death of every human being "**by the grace of God.**" This is what grace looks like: God's love and favor – which IS God – covering every person so that Christ's death for sin was humanity's

death for sin. Also, the realm that this happens is "in the favor/grace from God." Quanbeck says of this, "By his self-humiliation he identifies himself with mankind so that he becomes a representative man and what he undergoes becomes the experience of the human race" (ibid. p 901).

Because of the evidence from the early church fathers, as well as the manuscript evidence, I decided to include the alternate MS reading *choris* (which is by these witnesses given in place of *chariti*) – just for your information. This would read "apart from" instead of "by the grace of." The significance would picture Christ as having fully entered

into complete solidarity with humanity in its being relationally "apart from God."

**10. You see, it was fitting for Him – on account of Whom [is] the collective whole ([are] all things that exist) and through Whom [is] the collective whole ([are] all things that exist) – in, when and by leading many sons [note: a figure for all humanity] into glory (a good reputation), to finish and perfect the Leader who first walked the Path of their deliverance**

(to bring to a complete state the Originator and Chief Agent of their rescue; to script the final scene for the Chief Conveyor of their restoration; to bring the Pioneering Bringer of their

salvation to the destined goal) **through the effects of sufferings and results of experiences** [note, *pascho* means: to be affected by something - either good or bad; to feel, have sense experiences; thus, also: to suffer or undergo passion]. Why was it fitting for God to do this? Part of the answer lies in vs. 17, below, "**He was indebted (or: obliged) to be assimilated by (or: made like or similar to) the brothers in accord with all things** (or: concerning everything; = in every respect; or: in correlation to all people), **so that He might become a merciful and a faithful (or: loyal) Chief Priest...**" Another reason is found in ch. 7:19 where the same verb as here is

used, but in regard to the inadequacy of the Law:

**"the Law perfects nothing**  
(brought nothing to its goal or destiny; finishes nothing)."

Then we read in 10:14,

**"For you see, by one offering**  
**He has perfected** (brought to the goal; matured; completed; finished; brought to their purposed destiny) – **on into the whole length** (or: extended or stretched into the unbroken continuance) – **those folks being one after another set-apart**

(separated; made sacred

and holy; [p46 reads:  
restored back up again  
into the original state  
and condition; rescued  
back and delivered  
again; made healthy and  
whole again]).

And in 5:9 we see a similar statement to  
the purpose expressed in vs. 10, above:

**"And being perfected** (being  
brought to maturity and  
completion; being finished and  
brought to the goal of [His]  
destiny) **He became a cause of  
eonian deliverance**

(or: rescue, wholeness  
and good health and

restoration to the original state of being which pertains to and has the character of the Age; safety and healing of and for the ages) **for all** (or: in all) **those habitually giving the ear** (or: paying attention; or: humbly and submissively hearing with obedience) **to Him."**

Furthermore, Jesus led by example. He tells us in John 14:6,

**"I Myself am** (exist being) **the Way** (or: Path), **the Truth** (the

Reality) **and the Life** (or: = I am the way to really live). **No one is presently going to, or progressively coming toward, the Father, except through Me** (through means of Me, or, through the midst of Me)."

In Matt. 16:24 He told His followers,  
" **If anyone continues intending** (purposing; willing; wanting) **to come on behind Me, let him at once deny, reject and disown himself, and then in one move lift up his execution state** (cross), **and after that proceed to be by habit continuously following after Me!**"

This is why I have chosen as the first rendering "**the Leader who first walked the Path of their deliverance.**"

Our life is to be the Path that Jesus first walked. Now, having been placed into union with Him, we follow Him on this Path so that "We are to be living stories of the crucified Christ" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 87). John tells us (3:16) that " in this manner God loves the sum total of created beings as being the Son: He gives the Only-begotten One" (optional rendering). And Jesus fills in the picture with the words,

**"No one continues holding (or: having) greater love than this: that someone should place (set;**

lay; lay down) **his soul** (or: soul-life; inner being; self; person) **over [the situation or circumstances of]** (or: on behalf of) **his friends.**" (John 15:13)

So this is why it was "**fitting for**" the Father to bring humanity "**into [His] glory**" (which the author in the next phrase equates to "**deliverance**, rescue, salvation, etc.") "**through the effects of sufferings and results of experiences.**" This has, in fact, been the path of all humanity since Adam and Eve departed from the garden of Eden: suffering and all kinds of experiences that end in death. And Paul tells us in 1 Cor.

10:13a,

**"No trial** (or: ordeal; temptation; putting to the proof; effect of probing and testing) **has laid hold of or seized you folks except a human one** (something pertaining to the human nature and situation)."

But he leaves the Corinthians with a promise that comes to us through our Faithful Chief Priest,

**"Now God [is] faithful, loyal, trustworthy, and full of faith and trust – One who will not permit** (let, allow; or: let go; leave alone) **you folks to be tested, tried, tempted or made**

**to undergo an ordeal above**  
(or: over; = beyond) **that which**  
**you people continue having**  
**ability and power [to handle or**  
**endure], but to the contrary,**  
**together with the trial (or:**  
**ordeal), He will also**  
**continually make the way out**  
(the egress; or: He also will  
habitually **do the stepping forth**  
from out of the midst; or: He  
will even **progressively**  
**construct the out-come) to**  
**continually enable and**  
**repeatedly empower you folks**  
**to undergo [it] (to bear up**  
under [it]; to carry on under [it],

sustain [it], and lead on)."

I especially like the optional renderings of *poi<sub>u</sub>sei... ekbasin*: **do the stepping forth** from out of the midst [of it]; **progressively construct the out-come.**"

Keep in mind here the corporate "you folks" and the plural verb "you people continue having ability and power" (*dunasthe*). Paul expects them to be working together as a community as they face the trials and ordeals.

Notice that our author references the purposes of God as being in an environment of "**the collective Whole**," or as involving "all things that exist."

These many sons are the ones who are called to reflect His image to the

aggregate of humanity, while giving their lives TO the world.

The optional phrases regarding the Originator and Chief Agent (etc.) color in the painting of Who Jesus is, and the purpose for which we follow Him: deliverance, rescue, restoration, healing and wholeness, salvation for those among whom we live. We are called to be part of the group prophesied by Obadiah, "Saviors (or: Deliverers) will come up in Mount Zion..." (vs. 21), and that is where we are now (Heb. 12:22).

**11. For both the One separating and setting-apart and the ones being separated and set-apart [are] all out of One (= spring forth from one**

Source). **On account of which cause** (or: motive) **He is not ashamed to be calling them brothers,**

A double meaning can be taken from both the phrase "**all out of One**" and the term "**brothers.**" Verse 14a suggests the common humanity of the Messiah and His brothers, but the "**glory**" into which the Son brought the "**many sons**" (vs. 10) was in fact Himself when He created them to be His body, members of the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 14, 18), the covenant community. Paul further describes this oneness of Family in Rom. 8:29,

**"... He also marked out beforehand** (determined,

defined and designed in advance) **[as] copies** (joint-forms) **of the image** (material likeness; portrait; mirrored image) **of His Son** (or: He previously divided, separated and bounded conformed patterns from the image of His Son) **into the [situation for] Him to be** (or: to continually exist being) **the Firstborn among, within the center of, and in union with many brothers** (= a vast family of believers)!"

Paul uses another metaphor showing our oneness with Christ which also directly speaks to the experience of His death

referred to in vs. 9, above. In Rom. 6 which gives a vivid picture of what He accomplished in His cross, he says:

**3. Or are you continuing to be ignorant** (are you remaining without experiential knowledge; do you continue not knowing) **that as many of we who are immersed** (or: were at one point baptized) **into Christ Jesus are immersed** (or: were then baptized) **into His death?**

**4. We, then** (or: consequently), **are** (or: were) **buried together** (entombed together with funeral rites) **in Him** (or: by Him; with Him), **through the immersion**

(baptism) **into the death, to the end that just as** (or: in the same manner as) **Christ was roused and raised forth from out of the midst of dead folks**

**THROUGH** (through means of) **THE GLORY** (the glorious manifestation of splendor which calls forth praise; the notion; the renown; the reputation) **of The Father** (or: which is the Father), **thus also we can walk around** (or: we also should likewise conduct ourselves and order our behavior) **within newness of life** (in union with life characterized by being new in

kind and quality, and different from that which was former).

Not only do we see "**the glory**" as the means of Christ's resurrection (and thus also, ours, since He lead "**many sons**" into this same "**glory**" – i.e., into resurrected life with Christ), but further we see that this "**glory**" is "**out of the One**" – i.e., out of and from "**The Father**," and indeed (reading the genitive as apposition) "is the Father." (As an aside, note Paul's corporate expressions in these verses from Romans) A second witness to this appositional reading is seen in the prayer of Jesus to the Father in John 17:5,

**"So now You Yourself, O  
Father, glorify (bring a good  
reputation and a manifestation  
which calls forth praise to) Me  
alongside Yourself (or: with the  
presence of Yourself) in, by and  
with the glory (good reputation;  
manifestation which calls forth  
praise) which I was having (or:  
used to have) and continued  
holding (possessing) at Your  
side and in Your presence,  
before the universe (or: world  
and system of culture, religion  
and  
government) is continuing to  
have being (or: had existence)."**

So in both senses, **"both the One separating and setting-apart and the ones being separated and set-apart [are] all out of One** (= spring forth from one Source)." And in the reunion which Christ brought about, we see the picture that Paul gave us in Rom. 11:36,

**"Because, forth from out of the midst of Him, then through the midst of Him** (or: through means of Him), **and [finally] into the midst of Him, [is] the whole** (everything; [are] all things; or: = Because He is the source, means and goal/destiny of all things – everything leads into Him)!"

12. **saying,**

**"I will continue reporting Your Name to My brothers; in the midst (within the middle) of called-out communities and gathered assemblies I will sing praise songs." [Ps. 22:23]**

13. **And again,**

**"I will continue being one having been convinced on Him." [Isa. 8:17, LXX]**

**And again [it continues],**

**"Look and consider! [Here am] I, and the young children whom God [= Yahweh] gave (or: gives) to me!" [Isa. 8:18]**

So now our author reaches back into

Israel's writings again, bringing up two passages that emphasize family: first "**brothers**," and then a "Parent-**children**" relationship. The work of God, and the work of the Messiah were to create an expanded Family.

The following is from a phone conversation in which my friend Dan Kaplan presented this fine tapestry: We see the story of Yahweh choosing Abraham (figure of the Father and whom Israel called "our father") and then giving him a Promise which was to come through a promised **son**, Isaac (figure of the Son in the story of the Messiah), who then brought forth a **son**, Jacob, who created a large family of 12

sons that became the 12 tribes of Israel, a figure of God's corporate Son (recall that God said of Israel, "Israel [is] My son, My firstborn" – Ex. 4:22). Jacob, like his father Isaac, dug a well which Jesus used as a metaphor for the water of the Spirit of Life and the new creation in the Spirit of God (John 4:6-14). The corporate body (Israel) which Jacob became is a figure of the body of Christ (the resurrected Israel) that was created with the sending of God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and from there, due to the work of the Spirit of Christ within the covenant communities, the Messiah's "**children**" have become a vast multitude of sons, and through them His kingdom is

filling the earth (Dan. 2:35). The story is from one man, to a promise, to a large family, to a nation, and now to all humanity (with the inclusion of the Gentiles into the story).

Again, let us not miss the context of vs. 12, "**in the midst of called-out communities** [the new Exodus] **and gathered assemblies** [the new, all-inclusive Israel]." It all starts with "**the One**," but then moves into Family, the corporate body through which He reigns in the earth. In regard to the quote of Isa. 8:18 (where I inserted "[= Yahweh]" following the word "God") the reading is from the LXX, but in the Hebrew version the text reads "Yahweh," not

"God."

**14. Since, then, the young children have participated in and commonly shared existence of blood and flesh (= humanity), He also, nearly alongside [them], shared theirs in common (partook of the [ingredients] which comprise them), in order that through means of death He might render useless (or: deactivate; idle-down; discard) the one normally having the strength (or: the person presently holding the force) of death (or: which is death; or: whose source is death), that is, the adversary**

(or: that which throws folks into dualism with divided thinking

and perceptions; or: the one that throws something through the midst and casts division; the one who thrusts things through folks; the slanderer who accuses and deceives; or, commonly called: the "devil"),

**15. and would set them free** (or: could fully change and transform these; or: should move them away to another [situation; existence]): **as many as were through all of life held within slavery by fear of death** (or: in fear, from death: or: with fear, which is death)! In examining these two verses, let us keep in mind the context and continuation of the author's line of

reasoning. Vs. 14 picks up the subject matter of vs. 13, "**the young children.**" The Greek is *ta paidia*: little boys and/or girls. The connotation of this word was either: a) one of age, i.e., an infant, a small child, or one of undeveloped understanding; or, b) one of social position, i.e., a household servant or an attendant – e.g., a "slave-boy/girl." So we have another contrast between those that came before (the **young children**, or household slaves) and the new situation, a Son (*huios*). Paul made a similar comparison in Gal. 4:1-4 between a "babe" (*nepios*) – where he says "**also we ourselves [were], when we were progressing from infants to**

**minors"** (vs.3) – and **"the Son"** (vs. 4). As babes, humanity was under **"the elementary things"** – **"being folks having been enslaved"** (vs. 3), until **"the effect of the filling of the time came,"** and **"God sent-off His Son"** (vs. 4). Thus, we see here that by using different words Paul associates the youth with the position of a servant, just as we see in the dual connotations of *paidia* here in vs. 14.

Next, we see that since these **young children/servants** **"participated in and commonly shared existence of blood and flesh (= humanity),"** that the Son also **"nearly alongside [them], shared theirs in common** (partook of the

[ingredients] which comprise them)." In other words, the Son was also a human – became one of them (had common being and existence) in complete solidarity with their **blood and flesh**, or as Paul describes it in Phil. 2:7,

"... **receiving** (or: taking; accepting) **a slave's form** (external shape; outward mold), **coming to be** (or: birthing Himself) **within an effect of humanity's** (mankind's; people's) **likeness.**"

The reason and purpose for this is stated in the last half of vs. 14, and in vs. 15. The Son became human so that He could die. His death as, and in union with, the

first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) and His burial of the first Adam/humanity (Rom. 6:3-8) accomplished two things:

1) **"the one normally having the strength** (or: the person presently holding the force) **of death** (or: which is death; or: whose source is death), **that is, the adversary"** was **"rendered useless."** It was not destroyed, but it just went out of service because of having become useless. The parenthetical expansion indicates that this verb could also be rendered "deactivate; idle-down; discard." What was it that was deactivated, discarded and rendered useless through the coming of the Messiah? What was it that had **"the**

**strength"** of death? Again we get insight into this enigmatic statement from Paul, in 1 Cor. 15:

**56. Now the sharp point and stinger of (or: the sting, thus, the injection from) the Death [is] the Sin (the mistake; the error; the failure), and the power and ability of the Sin [is] the Law.**

So we see here that "the person presently holding the force whose source is death" is Moses, or the person that uses the Law. These who represented and used the Law were now "rendered useless, deactivated, idled-down and discarded." This meant that the old

covenant, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, the purity codes, etc., were all rendered useless. Again, recall Paul in Rom. 7:

**5. For when we [= Adam/Israel] were existing within the flesh (or: = in the old alienated Adamic existence, with the flesh sacrifices and markers of the Law), the effects, impressions, emotions and impulses from the experiences, passions and suffering of the failures (the sins; the deviations which caused misses of the target) – the things through means of**

**the Law [the Torah] – were continually operating** (working within; energizing and effecting) **within our members into the condition to produce fruit by Death** (in death; to death; for Death).

6. **But now** (at the present time), **we [= Israel] are** (or: were instantly) **rendered inactive** (brought down to living without labor, released from employment, made unproductive; discharged) **away from the Law** (= the Torah; [some MSS add: of Death]), **dying within that in which we**

**were constantly being held down** (held in possession and detained), **so that it is [for] us to be habitually performing as slaves within newness of spirit** (a newness pertaining to spirit and has its source in the Breath-effect; freshness and new quality of attitude) **and not in oldness** (obsoleteness; outdatedness) **of letter** (or: not in outwornness of what is written).

Notice what God was going to do to this "one" through the death of Christ: "**might render useless** (or: deactivate; idle-down; discard)." It had been of use, in its time, age and arrangement, but now

no longer. The Law has been rendered useless and is deactivated and discarded. It had brought "**fear of death**" (15) and "**held [them] within slavery**" (*cf* Galatians, on the topic of slavery) and thus was an **adversary** to folks who were powerless to keep it. Let us pause here to look at the parenthetical alternative renderings of this word (*diabolos*).

This substantive comes from the verb *ballo* which means "to throw, cast or thrust." The noun *bolis*, which is derived from this verb, is a "missile weapon, dart, javelin, arrow, or anything thrown." The verb, when prefixed with *dia-* thus means "to throw, cast or thrust

[something] through" an object – be it a person, or a group of people. What was thrown could be words, so that an associated meaning of this verb meant to slander or calumniate or defame – even inform against (Lu. 16:1). Our text uses a substantive of this compound verb: *diabolos*. Paul used this term in the second chapter of his letter to Titus:

**3. Old (or: Aged; Older) women, similarly (or: likewise), [are to be] women in a state and resultant condition proper and fitting for being engaged in the sacred (suitable in demeanor for serving the temple; or: = living a life**

appropriate [for] a person [being] a temple), **not folks who thrust-through or hurl [a weapon, or something hurtful] through [someone]** (or: not devils nor slanderous adversaries which bring division and hurt), **nor women having been enslaved by (or: to) much wine.**

So, as you can see, this word (although traditionally translated "devil") can refer to people or systems within this life. Paul also used this word about people in 2 Tim. 3:3 right in the middle of a laundry list of vices and negative human qualities,

**"without natural affection, unwilling to make a treaty** (implacable; not open to an agreement), **DEVILS** (adversarial slanderers; folks who throw or thrust something through people to hurt or cause divisions), **without strength** (without [self-] control), **uncultivated** (wild; untamed; ferocious; fierce), **without fondness for expressions of good or aspects of goodness** (or: without affection for good people; unfriendly; averse to virtue..."

In our present text, the term can mean the

following:

a) the one that throws something [e.g. an idea; a concept; a rule; a doctrine] through the midst and casts division;

b) that which throws folks into dualism (the root idea if *dia* is *di*, "two") with divided thinking and perceptions; the Law itself created such a division – us, and them; right and wrong; good and evil; sacred and profane; clean and unclean; Jew and Gentile; the Law was an adversary to unity among peoples;

c) the one who thrusts things through folks;

d) the slanderer who accuses and deceives.

The high priest used the Law to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. The Jewish leadership used "their Law" (John 19:7) to make use of the Romans to thrust nails and a javelin through the body of Jesus. The false witnesses used the Law to accuse Jesus at His trial. The teachings of the scribes and Pharisees used the Law to thrust "sinners" out of their "holy" society and make them outcasts. And so it has continued, in religion, until this day. Rules become the adversary to humanity and are often the things that thrust-through the heart of love, bringing prejudice. We see Paul addressing the

"rules of table fellowship" that brought division within the covenant community at Antioch (Gal. 2).

Jesus used the term *diabolos* to refer to Judas in John 6:70,

**Jesus considered and gave answer to them, "Do I Myself not select and pick you out – the twelve – for Myself (or: Did I not choose you twelve Myself)? And one from among you men is a person who thrusts things through [people] (or: a devil)!"**

Jesus also used the word *satan* when speaking to Peter in Mark 8:33. John, in Rev. 12:9, connects the words *satan* and

*diabolos* with the apocalyptic terms "the dragon" and "the serpent." Both John the immerser (baptist) and Jesus referred to the Sadducees and Pharisees as offspring of poisonous serpents (Matt. 3:7; 12:34). These words were metaphors of people who were adversarial and harmful – in various ways.

2) **"and would set them free** (or: could fully change and transform these; or: should move them away to another [situation; existence]): **as many as were through all of life held within slavery by fear of death** (or: in fear, from death: or: with fear, which is death)!"  
By means of His death we can now shout

with the prophet,

**"Where, O Death, [is] your victory (or: overcoming)?**

**Where, O Death, [is] your stinger (sharp point; sting; goad; spur)?"** [Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:55]

Or, as Paul said in Gal. 5:1, **"For this freedom, Christ immediately set us free (or: [The] Anointed One at once frees us in, to, for and with freedom)!"**

Or, as Paul exclaimed in 2 Cor. 5:17, **"... [there is] a new creation (or: [it is] a framing and founding of a different kind; [he or she is] an act of creation having a fresh character and a**

new quality): **the original things** (the beginning [situations]; the archaic and primitive [arrangements]) **passed by** (or: went to the side). **Consider! New things have come into existence** (have been birthed; or: It has become new things; or: He has been birthed and now exists being ones of a different kind, character and quality)!" [note: *cf* Rev. 21:5]

Let us unpack the optional renderings in vs. 15. The verb of the first clause is *ap-allasso*. The meaning of the main verb is often given as: to change or to transform. In the first parenthetical translation I

rendered *ap-* as an intensifier, thus, we have "fully change and transform." We find this concept presented to us by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:19 where he uses the same main verb with a different preposition prefixed to it, *kat-allasso*,

**"as that God was existing within Christ (God was and continued being in union with [the] Anointed One) progressively and completely transforming [the] aggregate of humanity (or: world) to be other [than it is]."**

This is the root of a person being "set free" from their fears. This is deliverance and salvation.

Looking at this compound verb from the core meaning of the preposition *apo*, we have the idea of movement "away from." The root idea of *allasso* is "other; another," so the resulting meaning would then be, "move away to another [situation; existence; etc]." We find this concept painted for us in Col. 1:13, "**He ... changes [our] position** (or: transported [us], thus, giving [us] a change of standing, and transferred [us]) **into the midst of the kingdom and reign of the Son of His love.**" This is rescue.

The last phrase of vs. 15 is made up of the word **fear** in the dative case, and **death** in the genitive/ablative. The bold

rendering renders **fear** as instrumental, and **death** as the object of the fear. The next option presents **fear** as the location (in) or sphere, and **death** as the source of the fear (*thanatou* as an ablative). The last option offers us **fear** as an associate of **slavery**, and then defines this **fear** as BEING **death** (*thanatou* as the genitive of apposition). Each picture makes sense, and each offers us another glimpse into the predicament of humanity before the advent of our Savior.

16. **For doubtless** (or: assuredly; I hardly need say) **it [i.e., fear of death] is not normally taking hold upon [the] messenger-agents** (or: folks with the message), **but even so it is repeatedly**

**and progressively taking hold upon**  
(seizing) **Abraham's seed** (= descendants).

The verb *epi-lambanetai* (taking hold upon; seizing), used twice here, does not have an expressed subject, so I (along with *The Concordant Literal NT*) have chosen "**it**" as the subject in both cases. It seems to me that the antecedent of "**it**" is "**fear of death, etc.**" in the previous verse, and thus I suggested this by inserting this in brackets in the translation. However, "**slavery**" is another possible candidate for the antecedent. Others have chosen to render the subject "He," seeing the verb as speaking of "assisting or helping"

Abraham's descendants.

From understanding the **messenger-agents** (or: the folks with the message) as referring to the prophets of God, or to His people who had embraced the message from God, I see our author saying that the fear of death did not normally seize or take a hold upon those who knew God and had faith in Him (David before Goliath is one example; the three young Hebrews before the fire – Dan. 3:17-18 – is another classic example). However, among the masses of Israel this fear had "**repeatedly and progressively tak[en] hold upon [them]**." This was, of course, also the case for all of the estranged and

alienated peoples of the ethnic multitudes, but the focus of this passage is on the Messiah and the people of Israel to whom He was sent.

**17. Wherefore, He was indebted (or: obliged) to be assimilated by (or: made like or similar to) the brothers in accord with all things (or: concerning everything; = in every respect; or: in correlation to all people), so that He might become a merciful and a faithful (or: loyal) Chief Priest (Leading, Ruling or Beginning Priest) [in regard to] the things toward God, into the [situation] to be repeatedly and continuously overshadowing the failures (mistakes; errors; misses of the**

target; sins) **of the People with a gentle, cleansing shelter and covering.** Because of the situation of humanity's "**slavery by fear of death** (or: in fear, from death: or: with fear, which is death)" the Son was obliged "**to be assimilated by** (or: made like or similar to) **the brothers**" in every respect – or, in correlation to all people (*panta* can refer to things, or to people). But the question arises, Why was He **indebted** or obliged to become a merciful and loyal Chief Priest? Does this imply that God owes something to humanity? He did "set up" Adam and Eve in the Garden story. He is the one that put the serpent in the Garden; what chance did

they have? If Jesus "knew what was within humans" (John 2:25) did not God also know their vulnerability?

Nonetheless, because of humanity's condition it was necessary for Him to be like us so that He can be merciful and loyal to us as our Chief Priest and **"to be repeatedly and continuously overshadowing the failures** (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins) **of the People with a gentle, propitiatory covering and shelter"** so that other people will not shame us. This is what Love does, and it brings to mind the statement by Paul in Rom. 13:8,

**"You folks are not to be continual debtors** (or: do not be

in the habit of owing even one thing) **to anyone, except to be constantly loving one another...**"

We, as image-bearers of God, are indebted to be like our Father – to love people. As the perfect Image of God, Jesus was indebted to be made like humanity in order to be merciful, like His Father, and to be **a faithful Beginning Priest** of the new priesthood that would dispense God's conciliation to the masses, and **"to be repeatedly and continuously overshadowing the failures** (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins)" of the One new Humanity (the joined People of Jew and Gentile) –

Eph. 2:15.

He removes our feelings of guilt, causes the effects of our mistakes to flow away from us, and gives us peace in our relationships with God and with others. He is our Counselor and our Helper. He reveals to us God's love for us, and through His agents (His body) He supplies our needs.

His solidarity with us was seen in vs. 11, above, where the author tells us that both He and we are all "from one Source." His work as our Chief Priest describes His ongoing service to us as He visits us – for the Chief Priest goes into the very heart of the temple, and we are His temple.

**18. For you see, in what He has experienced Himself, having been tried in ordeals, He is able to run to the aid of those who cry for help – those being tried (put through ordeals).** Again we see Christ's solidarity and empathy – and His willingness to run to our aid when we cry out to Him. His experiences and sufferings as a human made Him fit to enter into our plight and understand what we need – as humans. Through seeing His indebted obligation to us and why He needed to go through what He did in order to help us, we can now understand why we are also indebted to others and need to go through the ordeals and trials that He sends our

way.

In Rom. 1:14, Paul said,

**"I am (or: I continue being) a debtor to (or: for; or: with) both Greeks (Hellenists) and to (for; with) barbarians (non-Hellenists: those who do not possess Greek culture); to (or: for; with) both wise ones and to (for; with) those without understanding (unintelligent ones; foolish ones; folks who lack sense)."**

This word **debtor** comes from the verb **indebted** in vs. 17. The heart of the Christ was placed into Paul – and into us. We just need to have this

understanding revealed to us.

## Chapter 3

1. **Wherefore** (or: From which situation), **O set-apart and sacred brothers** (= consecrated fellow members) – **common-holders** (partners; sharing possessors; joint-participants; associates; partaking members) **of a super-heavenly calling**

(an invitation which comes from [the realm] upon the heavens; or, with *epi* as an intensifier: a calling of the complete and full heavens; or: a calling from the One [holding sway] upon the atmosphere) – **consider** (ponder; focus your thoughts down upon and think carefully about) **Jesus, the Sent-off**

**Emissary (or: Representative) and Chief and Ruling Priest of our agreed message (or: our like-reasoned idea; our saying of the same word; our unanimous consent and avowal; or: our binding association-agreement),**

**2. [and His] continuously being faithful by and loyal to and in the One forming (making; creating; constructing; establishing; producing; [in LXX the same word as Gen. 1:1]) Him, even as "Moses [was loyal] within His (or: his) whole house." [Num. 12:7]**

Keep in mind that vs. 1 is a continuation of the thoughts expressed in vs. 17-18 (there is no chapter break nor a verse break in the MSS; to see what 2:18

through 3:1 would look like, see *The Concordant Greek Text*, p. 621, which is a printed reproduction which looks very much like Codex Sinaiticus; photographs of some of the early MSS can be found on the internet). Thus, note the first word: "**Wherefore** (or: From which situation)." What follows in this verse is based upon what was said in vss. 17-18, above.

I have given three meanings of *hagios*: **set-apart** (the literal), **sacred** (this term expresses the opposite of "profane," or, common, and signifies the cause for which they are "**set-apart**"), and "consecrated" (which shows that they are "called" for God's use and

purposes). The alternative paraphrase "consecrated fellow members" explains that meaning of the term **brothers** and indicates that they are members of the community of Christ's body.

Next I expanded "**common-holders**" (from *meta*: with, and *echo*: to hold, have, possess; thus, it means "folks who hold something in common"). So we have the idea and picture of the believers being "partners, sharing possessors (like stock-holders or a group of co-owners), associates (of some enterprise), joint-participants (in some venture) and partaking (i.e., active or receiving) members." For this reason I included the business use of the last

word in this verse, *homologia* (**agreed message**, etc.): "binding association-agreement" – because it fits the metaphor that we see in the terms, "partners, sharing possessors, etc." We are all **common-holders** of this calling, which Paul called "**God's invitation to an above place** (or: an upward calling having the source from, with qualities and characteristics of, God)" – Phil. 3:14 – which he then located and associated "**within the midst of and in union with Christ Jesus.**"

So what about this word "**super-heavenly**"? The parenthetical expansion gives other options and explains that this adjective "heavenly" has the preposition

*epi* prefixed to it. The root idea of *epi* is "upon," so it carries the idea of something that is added, such as a superscription or a superstructure. The second rendering suggests that this calling is from the realm that is "upon the heavens," as a possible explanation for this odd compound adjective. Next I give the option of reading *epi* as an intensifier, as in the word *epi-gnosis* (complete or accurate knowledge), and we have "a calling of the complete and full heavens." Finally, I render this word as an ablative, insert a verb to complete the picture, and present a different meaning of "heaven" and so read, "a calling from the One [holding sway]

upon the atmosphere."

Paul spoke of "**the third heaven** (or: atmosphere)" in 2 Cor. 12:2, and seemed to equate this with "**paradise**" in vs. 4.

The context seems to have been a visionary or spiritual experience. But no further explanation is given by Paul. I suggest that this realm was set forth in type by the holy of holies within the tabernacle – the place where Moses spoke face-to-face with God (Ex. 33:11; Nu. 7:89; Ps. 80:1; Ps. 99:1). The ancient science of the Jews presented a cosmos of a three-tiered universe: the heavens above, the earth, and the place of the dead (*sheol*, the grave, equivalent to *hades*, the unseen) under the earth. In

their world view, from the Genesis story, there was a firm and solid "firmament" that was a vault – like an inverted bowl – into which the sun, the moon and the stars were set and fixed. It could be that this was the "third heaven" to which Paul referred – the place of the stars and the ancient zodiac which were sometimes seen as ruling over the lower heavens where the birds fly and the clouds form and drift by. But even if the term and concept of the "**super-heavenly**" are taken from their view of the universe, it is used metaphorically in the context of this verse.

The adjective "heavenly" (*ouranios*) – without the prefix *epi* – is a figure for

the qualities or aspects of the spiritual realm, or for the temple (the religious context) or the ruling government (the political context). So here, *ep-ouranios* indicates that which rules over the heavens, or atmospheres, or is placed upon or added to the heavenly realm. We find this adjective again in ch. 12:22, below, modifying the word "**Jerusalem**," where my first rendering is "**Jerusalem upon heaven**." This corresponds to Paul's phrase in Gal. 4:26, "**the Jerusalem above**." Paul used the plural of this term as a substantive (noun) in a similar context in Eph. 2:6, "**and He jointly roused and raised** (or: suddenly awakens

and raises) **[us] up, and caused  
[us] to sit** (or: seats [us])  
**together within the things  
situated upon [thus, above] the  
heavens**

(or: in union with the  
full, perfected  
heavenlies; or, although  
neuter: among those  
comprising the complete  
and perfected  
heavenlies; among the  
ones [residing] upon the  
atmospheres; in union  
with the celestials)  
**within and in union  
with**

## **Christ Jesus."**

Notice that like Phil. 3:14, this Eph. verse locates and associates this situation "in Christ Jesus." So let us note:

- 1) these atmospheres (heavens) are the place where we are seated with Him, and He with us
- 2) we are the tabernacle/temple (2 Cor. 6:16)
- 3) "The Lord reigns... continuously seated (= enthroned) upon the cherubim..." (Ps. 99:1, LXX)
- 4) the cherubim were a part of the mercy seat of the ark, within the tabernacle (Ex. 25:18, 19)
- 5) conclusion: this calling is to sit with

Him upon the mercy seat within the innermost "heaven," the holy of holies – both within the core of our being, and in the midst of the gathered community.

And don't miss the **"jointly... together with"** which corresponds to the **common-holders** (etc.) of vs. 1, above.

We can see another picture of this "calling" with our adjective used in connection with the kingdom and reign, in 2 Tim. 4:18,

**"into the midst of the reign and kingdom – the one [having dominion] upon the heavens**  
(or: into the realm of His activities and way of doing things: the one [exercising

authority] upon, and which can be compared to, the atmosphere) – **which is from Him and belongs to Him...**"

Here my basic rendering is "**the one upon the heavens**," and I inserted the participles to aid in bringing the Greek idea into the English translations. Most translations make no difference between the two adjectives, *ouranios* and *epouranios*. However, if these two figures of Jewish apocalyptic expression are to be understood, a distinction has to be made. Our calling is to a place of existing and ruling over the earthly heavens (figure of the ruling authorities of natural kingdoms and religions).

God's kingdom holds sway over natural kingdoms, and thus, "Jesus Christ is Lord." But we see that Christ rules as a Shepherd, taking care of His sheep, as is pictured in Rev. 2:27 (a classic apocalyptic picture),

**"And he will shepherd (i.e., feed, tend and guard) them with a staff made of iron, as he is being continuously broken [like] pottery vessels, [Ps. 2:8-9] as I also have received from My Father."**

In this picture we see the "overcomer" living the cruciform life of Christ, continuously being broken as she/he lays down her/his life for her/his friends. You

see, Christ's throne is the mercy seat within His temple – and we (corporately) are His temple, His body. And so it is that when a believer strays and "falls away,"

**"[they are] continuously crucifying again in themselves (or: to, for or by themselves) the Son of God, and [are] constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace" (Heb. 6:6).**

Notice that this happens to the Christ within the falling believer, himself. But this phrase can also read "to, for or by," so his actions also affect Christ within the rest of the body – 1 Cor. 12:26,

**"whether one member is**

**continuing to experience the effect of something, or constantly undergoes suffering, all the members continually experience the effect or the suffering together with [it]..."**

And here, I would say with the psalmist, Selah: pause and consider this.

However, our author's main point of vs. 1 is "**consider Jesus...**" He must always be our focus: the One upon whom we are to "ponder; focus [our] thoughts down upon and think carefully about." We are to keep in mind that He is "**the Sent-off Emissary (or: Representative) and Chief and Ruling Priest of our agreed**

**message** (or: our like-reasoned idea; our saying of the same word; our unanimous consent and avowal; or: our binding association-agreement)." He is the One who the Father gave to humanity (John 3:16), sending Him off to be the crucified Messiah so that He could sprinkle our hearts with His life (Heb. 10:14-22) and perform the closing act of all of Israel's sacrifices on the final Day of Atonement, which resulted in His blood being shed as the New Chief Priest of the new order (Melchisedec) by which His life is now given to all humanity.

**"Our agreed message** – like-reasoned idea, association-agreement, unanimous

consent and avowal, and our saying of the same word" describes our solidarity with the message and arrangement (covenant) of the Messiah, our Redeemer. Furthermore, we are to **consider "[His] continuously being faithful by and loyal to and in the One forming** (making; creating; constructing; establishing; producing; [in LXX the same word as Gen. 1:1]) **Him."** He is our Pattern, the One whom we are following. His loyalty and faithfulness to God's house (us) is compared to that of Moses – with whom this letter's hearers are obviously quite familiar. Christ is being set before them as the new – and as we are seeing, better and worthy of

greater glory – Moses.

Jesus, in His position and work as God's Emissary and our Chief Priest, is described as being "**faithful and loyal**" (two meanings which present two nuances of the same adjective) "**to, in and by the One forming Him.**" The "**One**" refers to God, but what are we to make of the participle phrase that describes God: "**forming Him**"? In what way did God "**form** (or: make, create, construct, establish or produce)" Jesus? This participle is most often rendered "appointed" in the common versions, but this is the only place in the NT where this common verb is translated this way. The more common Greek words that

would correspond to our English "appoint" are the synonyms *histemi* and *tithemi* – both meaning to put or place (examples of the latter being used in ch. 1:2 in this letter, and in 2 Tim. 1:11). The *Concordant Version* reads "makes," and the *New World Translation* reads "made him such" – the word "such" being an interpretive addition. I have presented the core meanings and concepts of this participle of the Greek verb *poieo*, so let us now discuss the implications.

First look again at the parenthetical expansion in vs. 2, above, and the note which states that this is the same verb that is used in the Greek version of the

OT (LXX) in Gen. 1:1, "In [the] beginning God **created** (formed; etc.)..." In Rev. 3:14 we find a synonym of this verb in its noun form (the verb meaning to create, frame, build, found, etc.) where the risen Christ describes Himself as,

**"the Faithful** (or: Trustworthy, Reliable) **and True Witness,**  
**the Beginning of God's**  
**Creation** (or: the Origin of God's creation; the First Place or Corner of God's Framing; the Beginning of God's act of building and founding; the Beginning of God's act of reducing from a state of

wildness and disorder)."

Now to understand what the Spirit is saying through both authors, we need to set aside any thoughts about either of these passages referring to the essence of, or to the ontological aspect of, the Son of God. In both of these verses what is in view is the central purpose of God's creation and the plan of the ages: the Christ. The term Christ means Anointed, and it signifies the union of God with humanity. In this description of Christ as "the Beginning of God's Creation" we have the same picture that Paul described in 1 Cor. 15:45 where he described Christ as the *eschatos* (or: last) Adam – and in using this term he

was making reference to the creation story in Genesis.

In the passage before us, we see that God formed the Messiah and created the Christ to be the Chief Priest over and among many priests. In Rev. 1:6 we see,

**"and made (formed; created) us [to be] a kingdom (or: sovereign reign; [other MSS: constructed of us a kingdom which brings sovereign influence]): priests in (or: by; for; with) His God and Father."**

We read in 2:10, above, that God's plan was,

**"to finish and perfect the Leader who first walked the**

## **Path of their deliverance**

(to bring to a complete state the Originator and Chief Agent of their rescue; to script the final scene for the Chief Conveyor of their restoration; to bring the Pioneering Bringer of their salvation to the destined goal) **through the effects of sufferings and results of experiences."**

Christ is the production and work of God – God's Masterpiece. Throughout His life God was forming Him to be the Messiah and our Chief Priest. We will read in ch. 5:8, below, that,

**"Even though continuously**

**being a Son, He learned the giving of the ear (to be paying attention; or: submissive obedience) from the things He experienced, [both the good and the bad]."**

And let us not forget to unpack the other functions of the dative form of this participle. God was forming, making and constructing Him **"in the One."** God Himself was the realm in which Christ was formed into God's image. And in like manner, so is He forming us in Christ, transforming us **"by the renewing** (or: in the renewal; for the making-back-up-new again) **of [our] mind"** (Rom. 12:2). And further, in vs. 2

above, we see that Jesus was faithful "by the One" that was producing Him. It was God who enabled Him to be loyal. And so it is with us, as Paul said in Phil. 2:13,

**"for you see, God is the One habitually being inwardly active, constantly working and progressively effecting [results] within you folks – both the willing (intending; purposing; resolving) and the [situation] to be continuously effecting the action and inward work – above the thing that pleases (or: over [the situation of] well-thinking and**

delight; for the sake of [His] good pleasure)."

In the quote from Numbers 12:7, "**His**" can refer to God, or to Moses (his).

Thus, "house" can be seen as a continuum of both covenants (old to new/renewed), or as a comparison between the houses of the old and new creations. Either perspective is correct, each in its own way.

**3. For this [reason] He (or: You see, this One) has been esteemed worthy of more glory and a greater reputation than Moses, proportionally to the degree that He who constructs (or: prepares; fully implements) it has more value (honor; worth) than the house**

**itself.**

The word "**this**" can be translated two different ways, as you can observe in the first clause. In the bold rendering it points back to all that has been said in vs. 1-2, giving the reason for Jesus having more glory and a greater reputation than Moses. The second option simply makes the statement, and says, "You see, this One (i.e., Jesus)..." Either reading makes sense. The point here is in line with the author's central thrust: Christ, the new covenant, the new creation are of more value, worth and honor than the previous arrangement that Moses represented. The new has arrived; the old has passed.

**4. For every house is constructed, prepared and fully implemented by someone, but the One constructing all humanity** (or: all [situations; circumstances]; = everything) **[is] God!** God is the builder of both houses – and the "houses" are a figure of people. In fact, rendering *panta* as masculine, God is **"the One constructing all humanity."** He is responsible for everything, and everything belongs to Him and exists out of Him:

**"Because, forth from out of the midst of Him, then through the midst of Him** (or: through means of Him), **and [finally] into the midst of Him, [is] the**

**whole** (everything; [are] all things; or: = Because He is the source, means and goal/destiny of all things – everything leads into Him)!" (Rom. 11:36)

**5. And so on the one hand, Moses [was] faithful and loyal in the midst of His (or: centered in his) whole house, as an attending therapeutic and medical care-provider (or: trainer; cultivator; or: valet; squire; companion in arms) – [which leads] unto a testimony (or: witness) of the things going to be spoken (or: into evidence from those [future] sayings being said) –** Here again, "**His/his**" can be taken to refer to either God or Moses. But the

point of comparison, which we see carried out in the next verse, is the role and position of the two men. Moses as a specialized attendant; Christ as a Son. The noun *therapon* is only used here in the NT. As you see, it had a wide range of uses – from giving medical attention and care, to training people or plants, to being a personal servant (valet), to military uses. The main idea is one whose job is to give assistance – and in this case tend the house.

The side comment about a testimony shows that his work gave evidence and pointed to things that were to come – he and his work were not an end in themselves. More words than the Law

were destined to come, and we are reading some of them here.

**6. Yet on the other hand, Christ [is faithful and loyal] as a Son upon His house – whose [p46, D\* read: which] house (or: household) we, ourselves, are (or: continuously exist being)! So if only [Aleph, A, C, D and others add: , unto {the condition or state of} maturity (or: when to the point of completeness; until the goal is reached),] we would fully hold in our possession, so as to retain firm and steadfast, the confident freedom of speaking and open boldness inherent in citizenship, as well as the result and effect of the boasting and exulting which [all] come**

**from the expectation** (or: belonging to the expectant hope)!

The first clause completes the comparison begun in vs. 5. Christ was not an attending aid, but a Son, an heir, and had a position "**upon**" God's **house** (or, His own house) as Head of the household – and the covenant communities are the house/household. The new "Israel" is composed of both Jew and Gentile and comprises the new humanity (Gal. 2:15) of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

The remainder of the verse is an admonition – almost a plea – that since we ARE His house we should hold firm **the confident freedom of speaking and**

**open boldness** that is ours as citizens of His house/city/kingdom. And along with that **the result and the effect of the boasting and exulting** which come from the **expectation** which we have been given in Christ, as Paul articulates it in Rom. 8:24,

**"For in the expectation and with hope we are suddenly made whole and healthy**

(or: You see, by the expectation we are delivered and saved; For we were at one point rescued to expectation; To be sure, we were kept safe for

the expectation)!"

**7. Therefore** (or: For this reason), **just as the set-apart Breath-effect continues saying** (or: On account of which, as in the same vein, the Holy Spirit is presently laying out the idea),  
**"Today, if you could** (or: can)  
**hear His voice,**

The author was aware that the OT Scriptures (in this case Ps. 95) still speak on into future generations, and was in his day continuing to speak to them – here about Israel's history during their "wandering" in the wilderness for that forty year period. So he is telling these folks that "the Holy Spirit (i.e., God in His active mode: the Breath-

effect) is presently 'laying out' (the root meaning of *lego*) the idea" for them, using the words of the psalmist.

"The Hebrew of Ps. 95:7-11 reads 'as at Meribah' and 'the day of Massah,' and the passage refers to the 20<sup>th</sup> of Nu. The quotation substitutes their meanings. Meribah is 'contention,' or 'bitterness,' Massah is 'trial.'" Thus he brings before us the two great occasions which exhibited the unbelief of the people. They followed the report of the ten spies, and refused to go into the land (Nu. 13, 14).... At Meribah

or Massah the people had no water and they murmured against Moses and Jehovah (Ex. 17:1-7; Nu. 20:1- 13).... This quotation is the keynote of the warnings of this epistle." (A.E. Knoch, *The Concordant Commentary of the NT*, Concordant Publishing Concern, 1968, p 339)

I expressed the subjunctive mood of the verb **hear** by the words "**could** (or: can)" since Jesus told His disciples that some were given ears to hear (e.g., Matt. 11:15), implying that others were not thus gifted. If the Spirit was enabling them to hear and obey this message, then

what the author quotes in vs. 8ff would happen. Yet recall Moses words to Israel in Deut. 29:4,

"But to this day Yahweh has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear."

8. **"you would not be hardening your hearts, as in the incitement to bitter feelings (or: the being exasperated and provoked; or: = the rebellion) down from the day of putting to the proof by ordeals in the desert,**

But if they are unable to hear His voice, then a hardening of their hearts would likely happen, just as it did with Israel

of old. Folks are still being "[put] to the **proof by ordeals**," and our hearts can become hardened if we do not listen to the Voice of the Spirit.

9. **"where your fathers made an attempt (tested it), within the putting to the proof, and yet saw my works (actions; deeds) [for] forty years,"**

As it did in the days of the psalmist, so again in our author's day, the audience is being drawn into their own history by the quoting of this psalm. Those folks in the desert "**saw [His] works, deeds, and actions [for] forty years**" – for the whole time that they lived, until they died. But they, along with Moses, were a

type (planned by God, I submit to you) to show us that a hard heart, bitter feelings, rebellion, making attempts on our own and "testing God" will not bring us into His promises or escort us into His rest. Moses (a figure of the Law) was not destined to enter into God's rest (vs. 11, below, and 4:1 – which we will investigate in its context). Our author is bringing up this historical scenario to make the point that the old covenant does not enter into the new creation where our relationship with God is "**within spirit and within truth/reality**" (John 4:23-24). This psalm presents the weakness of the Law, because of the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

10. **"on account of which I was burdened by (or: weighed down with grief for; heavy at heart with) that generation, and said, 'They are always led astray (caused to wander) by (or: in) the heart; they do not personally or intimately know My ways.'**

The verb of the first clause (*prosochthizo*) is used only here and in vs. 17, below, in the NT. While most translators have rendered this "to be vexed, angry or disgusted," I have followed Bullinger's lexicon and the research provided by Dr. Ann Nyland (ibid. p 438 n 11) and give "**burdened**

by (or: weighed down with grief for; heavy at heart with)," along with the various prepositions from the dative form of "**that generation.**" Considering that God used this as a type for us (1 Cor. 10:11), and being aware that He was caring for them the entire forty years (Deut. 29:5), it is hard to picture God being "vexed, angry or disgusted" for all that time. But that He was burdened by them and weighed down with grief for them – and heavy at heart with them, is clearly seen from their lack of faith and trust in Him. Yet He "bore them on vulture's wings" (Ex. 19:4).

11. "**So I swore in** (in union with) **My inherent fervor** (native

character; or: swelling passion and teeming desire; or: inward agitation and anger; or: disposition and impulse),

**'Now since (or: if) they shall proceed entering into My rest** (or: the stopping down and rest which is Me, and which comes from Me) ...!'" [Ps. 95:7-11]

God's emotion, as expressed by the psalmist in the first clause, is seen in a noun that has a wide semantic range – all the way from teeming sexual desire and sexual passion, to inward agitation and anger. The word is *orge* and its root meaning is "native character, disposition and then the impulse which can arise

from these." The question we should ask ourselves is, How do we view God's native character and disposition? John tells us that God is love, not anger. Can a loving person get angry? Of course. But with the broad semantic range of *orge*, should "wrath or anger" be our first choice in rendering this word? I chose for my first rendering the term "**inherent fervor**," borrowed from a fellow translator, Eddie Browne. But my translation gives you some choices – and you can decide for yourself.

The next clause seems to represent an unfinished thought by God – and thus the "...!" in my rendering. The majority of translators render this idiomatically as a

negation, such as "They shall not..." (e.g., KJV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, NWT). But the word "not" is absent from the Greek text, and the exclamation begins with the conditional particle *ei*, which I rendered "**Now since** (or: if)..." The CLNT reads "If..." We know from Israel's history that the old generation did not enter into the Promised Land, but the younger generation did, with Joshua and Caleb. I see here a type of the old covenant and the new. And the new required Yahweh's salvation (Heb.: Joshua; Gr.: Jesus). And if WE are going to enter into His rest, we need Jesus – the Author and Finisher of our faith. God never pronounces a judgment without a

hope included within it.

12. **Exercise sight** (Be continuously observing), **brothers, [so] there shall not once be** (or: exist) **in any of you folks a bad, useless or misery-gushed heart** (a heart causing labor, sorrow or pain) **of unfaithfulness** (or: from disloyalty, disbelief or distrust; or: the source and character of which is an absence of faith and trust), **in withdrawing** (or: standing away and aloof; separating or revolting) **from the living God.**

The opening imperative of this verse is often rendered by an idiomatic expression such as "Beware," or "Take care." Although these carry the essence

of the admonition, I think that it is important to keep the literal meaning of using one's spiritual eyes to observe one's own behavior, attitudes, moods, responses, inclinations, etc., so as to be aware of how we are living our lives and of the health of our relationships and of our focus. We should be observing whether we are having our mind and concentration on the flesh or on the spirit – in other words, Are we alive or are we living in death? (Rom. 8:6) This advice is quite in line with the imperatives in Paul's letters. The Israelites were probably all excited to be leaving the bondage of Egypt, but soon their focus was on their

circumstances and the desert environment. What was meant to be life to them (their deliverance) soon became the death of setting their attention on their flesh. Even Socrates (via Plato) is reported to have said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This does not mean becoming self-focused, but rather being aware through noticing.

The word "**unfaithfulness** (etc.)" is usually translated as a genitive (as with my bold rendering) so that we understand that "**a bad, useless or misery-gushed heart**" is one that is "unfaithful" – and this is obviously true. However, if we ask the question, How did a heart that had been sprinkled by the

blood of the Messiah (ch. 10:22) and repeatedly cleansed by His life/blood (1 John 1:7) come into this sorrow-causing condition? – what are we to say? On pondering this question in light of our author's admonition, I am wondering if the parenthetical renderings as an ablative (same spelling as the genitive) are more on target. Should we rather be watching out for any disloyalty, disbelief, distrust or unfaithfulness that is the source of making our heart **miser**y-gushed?

If we **exercise sight** we may see our adversary with a fiery dart in her/his hand and be alert to raise up the shield (which is faith and trust) to quench the

arrow from that **"worthless person"** (Eph. 6:16).

Now the disloyalty and absence of faith and trust may themselves arise from a condition or situation in which we withdraw from folks (who, by the way, carry the presence of God to at least some degree) or stand away and aloof from God's sovereign activities within the community. So withdrawing may lead to unfaithfulness (etc.) which in turn can poison our hearts.

Now we should not "lose sight" of the fact that he is speaking to the entire group, so the careful observing may be to benefit the group as a whole so that there are not portions of the community

(as well as an individual) that revolt against God (within the community) in distrust of one another and thus bring a bad situation to the heart of the group. And so, we see the corporate admonition in the next verse:

**13. But rather, be habitually calling yourselves alongside – entreating, admonishing, encouraging, bringing relief and helping each other – daily, concerning (or: in accord with) each day, until (or: as long as; during) that which continues being called "Today"** [with A, C and other MSS: while you folks continue inviting this present Day,] **so that not any one from the midst of you folks may be hardened by a**

**deception of failure** (or: in treachery from a miss of the target; with seduction of sin; by cunning in regard to error; by deceit relating to a mistake).

The admonition in vs. 13 was corporate, addressing the **brothers** (fellow believers), and now we see that the heart medicine is also corporate: **calling yourselves alongside** (etc.) **DAILY**.

And what this is to avoid is becoming **hardened** (this is equivalent to the misery-gushed heart of vs. 12, above), just as those of the past who came out of Egypt (were saved) with Moses.

Failure can bring deception; making a mistake can give rise to deceit (to try to cover up the mistake); and the error of

self-promoting, elitist teaching can often be mixed with cunning and seduction (picture Eve in the garden, listening to that inner voice telling her how she/we can be like God).

What are we to make of the dependent clause "during **that which continues being called 'Today'**"? I suspect that the reading from A, C and those other MSS may have been an attempt by the scribes to clarify this clause as it reads in the critical Greek texts, which I rendered in bold. I think that Paul gives us the answer in Rom. 13 in admonition that sounds very similar to our present text,

**12. The night advances, and the day has approached and is**

**presently near. We should put, then, the acts of the Darkness** (works from the realm of the shadows; actions that belong to dimness and obscurity) **away from ourselves** (or: take off and put away the deeds pertaining to darkness; = ignorance; that which was before the light arrived), **and clothe ourselves with the instruments** (tools; weapons; implements; [some MSS: works; deeds]) **of Light** (or: The Light).

13. **As within [the] Day, we should** (may; can) **walk about** (= live our lives) **respectably**

(reputably; decently; with good form; mannerly; pleasing to look upon; presentably) – **not in festive processions** (or: orgies; revelries; excessive feasting; carousing) **and collective drunkenness** (intoxications); **nor in beds** (i.e., sexual interludes) **and outrageous behaviors** (vice; loose conduct; indecencies); **not in strife** (or: contentious disposition) **and in jealousy** (or: envy) –

14. **but rather, you folks must clothe yourselves with** (or: enter within and put on) **the Lord, Jesus Christ, and stop**

(or: do not continue) **making forethought** (constructing provision; planning ahead; performing provident care) **into excessive desires of the flesh** (= into rushing upon emotions which pertain to the inner self or the estranged humanity; = into the setting of feelings and longings upon something of the human nature that is oriented to the System).

See below, in 4:8, where the author again refers to "**another 'Day'.**"

**14. For we have been born partners of the Christ** (or: we have come to be associates and participants who partake

of the Anointed One and commonly hold the Anointing) **with the result that we are now in a binding partnership with Him, since surely we can fully hold in our possession – so as to retain firm and steadfast – the Origin of the substructure to the point of completion of the intended goal**

(or: if indeed, unto [the condition or state of] maturity, we would fully hold in our possession, so as to retain firm and steadfast, the beginning [position] with regard to the substance, essential nature and basis [of the new reality] – as well as the rule of that [which

was] put under, as a standing for support),

Here we have a restatement of the business or club/association metaphor of corporate partnership/membership that was presented in vs. 1, above, combined with a restatement of the admonition of vs. 6b. Such literary devices (common to the persuasive rhetoric of this period) were used to emphasize the author's point and draw the listeners (these letters were most likely read publicly at the gathered assemblies) back to his main line of reasoning.

In the bold rendering I emphasized the "birth" idea that is central to the *ginomai* word family and gave the more common

translation "come to be" in the parenthetical expansion. The force of this verb stresses a "coming into existence," and birth was an analogy that could be observed almost every day. The reference is to the new corporate entity that had recently come into existence with the new creation. This new association (the called-out community) was based upon a new arrangement (covenant) that God had established with the coming of the Messiah. Observe the perfect tense of the verb which I have amplified in the expansion, **"with the result that we are now in binding partnership with Him."** So the verb has added to the thoughts

expressed in the simple use of the noun in vs. 1. This new Day was birthed in the past (via the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah) and now we enjoy participation and membership in its continued existence.

The last half of the verse presents a different aspect from the admonition in vs. 6b and the extensive parenthetical expansion gives an additional view of the literal "**the Origin of the substructure.**" The versions vary on how *hupostasis* is rendered. We will find this word again in 11:1 where it is used in a description of "faith/trust." The NASB renders this word "our assurance," the NRSV has "confidence,"

the CLNT gives "assumption," to cite some examples. I believe that my amplified renderings will clarify what the author is saying to us.

**15. in connection with it being repeatedly said,**

**"Today, if you would hear [active voice = hear and obey] His voice (or: in the thing being constantly said today, since you can listen to and obey His voice), you would not be hardening your hearts, as in the incitement to bitter feelings (= the rebellion)."**

[Ps. 95:7-8]

Quoting again this short excerpt from Ps.

95 (here a part representing the whole) alerts them to keep in mind the historical basis and urgency for his admonition in vs. 14.

**16. For you see, certain folks, upon hearing, caused an incitement to bitter feelings (= a rebellion). However, in contrast, [it was] not all the folks that came forth from out of Egypt through Moses.**

He calls to mind certain details of the story to prepare them for his climax in vs. 19. Here and in the following two verses he points out that just because they are "members" of this new community they should not think that they need not pay attention to how they live

and how they treat others. This is a common theme of all the NT writers. For example, recall Paul in Rom. 11:18-22 where he used the olive tree metaphor. He is speaking there about the current situation of some of Israel being as branches "broken off" their tree, and cautions them in vs. 20,

**"In lack of faith or trust (or: By unbelief) they are broken off (or: were broken out of the midst), yet you yourself stand in faith (or: by trust; with confidence). Stop being haughty (Don't constantly have high opinions; Do not continually think lofty things),**

**but to the contrary, [be constantly having] an attitude and mindset of respectful awe (or: [Godly] fear; healthy respect)!"**

**17. So now by (or: with) which ones was He burdened (or: weighed down with grief; heavy at heart) [for] forty years? [Was it] not by those sinning (failing to hit the target; making mistakes and errors; [A reads: being without conviction, and thus, being disobedient])? Of whom those members [of the body] (the limbs; or: = carcasses) fell in the desert (or: wilderness)!**

**18. Now to which folks did He swear**

to [that they were] not to enter into His rest, if not to the incompassionate ones (the ones refusing to be convinced so as to obey; [p46 reads: the folks being disloyal and without faith and trust])? He references what he had just quoted in vs. 10, and now points to the cause of God having been "**burdened**" with Israel who failed to hit the target by lack of conviction and incompassiance. It was these folks who were not allowed to enter into "**His rest.**"

Now we should not miss the analogy that the author has set up. Keep in mind that his main theme is the contrast between the old and the new. Here the analogy is between working and resting. We find

the same contrast used by Paul in Gal. 2:16ff where "works of Law" are set against Jesus Christ's faithfulness. The entire cultus of the old covenant religion was created and walked-out during Israel's wandering within the desert. Our author here is setting this context and the failure of the "old" generation as a dark backdrop to highlight the new scene on the stage: **His rest** (typified by entrance into the Promised Land – which itself was a figure of the new humanity, the Second [corporate] Human that Paul referenced in 1 Cor. 15:47). Now our author has prepared his audience to further explore this subject of **rest** (a symbol for trust and reliance upon God)

in the following chapter.

**19. And so, we observe (or: see) that they did not have power or ability to enter because of a lack of faith and trust (or: unfaithfulness; disloyalty; distrust).**

By this simple statement, he has thrust his point home. Note his use again of the same verb from the opening admonition in vs. 12, above: we not only observe our present communal condition, but we look back and see with the eyes of the Spirit the lessons from our history.

"Entry" is a figure for covenant inclusion, and the key that opens the door is faith, trust and loyalty – and Paul instructs us that it is Christ's faith and

faithfulness that gives us the "**power and ability**" for covenant inclusion, as he presents his arguments in his letter to the Galatians. Once again, the underlying theme of our author is that the old covenant (figured by the old generation of the first exodus) gives no power or ability. A religious cultus (e.g., the whole body of rules and procedures embodied in the Law) cannot engender faith, trust or loyalty. It took the power and ability of the new, the better, to provide this to us.

## Chapter 4

**1. With [the] announced promise to enter into His rest (or; the ceasing which is Him) continuing in being remaining left behind down on this level [for us] and fully left [open], we should, then, be at once caused to fear (= take respectful care and be attentive), lest at some point anyone from among you folks may be appearing (or: seeming; or: being of the opinion) to have been behind (to have come to be in the rear; or: to be deficient; or: = to have missed it)!**

Having just made the key point in the previous verse, he now captures their

emotions (and not just their minds) and calls them to take care and be attentive – they, too, could be **behind** in their perceptions about the dynamics of this new life in Christ. As Paul pointed out in Rom. 11, cited above, they could become "deficient" like the Jews of their time, who mirrored Israel in the story in which the author is now inserting them. This reign of the Messiah has vitality and from time to time moves forward, like the cloud that guided Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 78:14), and if they are not **observing** what "the Father is doing" (John 5:19) they might come to have missed it and "be in the rear" of His sovereign activities. Paul instructs us

that God's sons are those who are "**led by God's Spirit**" (Rom. 8:14). Christ and His body are compared to a living organism (1 Cor. 12:14-20), a body with feet and hands (vs. 14, in Paul's metaphor) that are made for action!

**2. For you see, we are people having been addressed with goodness** (or: being brought a message of ease and well-being), **even as those folks, also. But the Word** (or: message; thought; idea; Logos) **which they heard did not profit** (or: benefit) **those folks – [it] not having been mixed and blended together with faith, trust or loyalty in** (or: by; for; with) **those at that time hearing [it].**

[with other MSS: – {they} not being folks that had been co-mingled by conviction and loyalty with those paying attention and listening.]

He continues the comparison, showing that the prime ingredient is "**faith, trust and loyalty.**" Both the old and the new came with good news, but the old did not contain this vital ingredient when it was presented to them. The **Word** (message) that they heard in the Law was deficient. It was not "**mixed and blended together with faith...**" – and here I would choose the prepositions "**in, for or with**" rather than the option "**by.**" "**By**" puts the onus on the people

(and this is what religion does), but we saw in Deut. 29:4, cited above, that in this area they were handicapped by Yahweh. Also, notice the passive voice used in the bold rendering, and especially in the way that the "other MSS" read: "not being folks that **had been** co-mingled by conviction and loyalty."

**3. For we, those at this point believing and trusting, are progressively entering into the rest (or: the stopping). Just as He has said,**

**"As I swore in My inherent fervor** (impulse; inner agitation; anger; native disposition; or: passionate desire), **'Since** (or:

If) **they shall proceed entering into My rest ...!'," [Ps. 95:11] although (or: and yet) – with regard to the works (actions; deeds) – being born (or: brought into existence; caused to happen or occur) from [the] casting down (laying of a foundation) of an ordered system (or: of [the] world; or: namely, of the works born from cosmic conception [from the usage of *katabolen* with *spermatos* in ch. 11:11]; thus: of works generated from conception of a world).**

We see from the present progressive tense of the verb "enter" that this is a process as we abandon the mindset of the old covenant – and by experience we

observe that this does take time. But the ability to enter comes from the impartation of His faith and trust into us – and this is, in fact, the new covenant. Now it is interesting that the author once again cites Ps. 95:11, and here I think that the best rendering of *ei* is "**Since**," because he has just said that **we** are, in fact, **entering**. But what about the rest of this verse? We need to unpack this phrase by phrase, and read it in view of vss. 4-11 that follow.

Verse 4 tell us that in his referring to "**the works**," he is referencing the creation story, as we see in the quote of Gen. 2:2. So using this story as an analogy, our author is telling us that the

"rest" to which he is referring (and into which he has just said that the believing and trusting folks were presently entering) was the culmination, the goal, the destiny of the whole plan of the ages (Eph. 3:11) – God's story of His creating the universe and humanity, all of which are headed up in the Christ (Eph. 1:22). A mini-version of this story was Israel's journey from the death of bondage, through the ordeals in the wilderness, culminating in Joshua (figure of Jesus) – a part of the old – leading the new into the Promised Land.

Furthermore, this plan was birthed **"from [the] casting down of an ordered system."** In this phrase we can

see a reference to the chapter – set in the Garden – that ended with that system of relating to God and that arrangement of simply partaking of the fruit of the Garden being "**cast down**" into death, pain and hard labor: the curse. But through a different level of understanding the use of *katabole* we can observe that it was also the "foundation" of the story – and of what God was beginning to build.

Once again drawing on the "birth" nuance of *ginomai*, "**being born** (etc.)," I picked up the author's use of *katabole* in ch. 11:11 and drew the picture, "namely, of the works born from cosmic conception," or "... generated from

conception of a world." This "world" was really specific: it is the Seed and then Root of the story of Israel, of which the final act is the birth-death-resurrection of the Messiah – Who was then to create a new story that was birthed out of the old. A new world for the new Adam to inhabit.

**4. For He said in a certain place concerning the seventh, thus,**

**"And God rested in the seventh day from all His works." [Gen. 2:2]**

**5. And yet in this, again,**

**"Since (or: If) they shall proceed entering into My rest ...!"**

**6. Since, then, there continues being left remaining [for] some folks to enter into it, and those being formerly addressed with goodness (or: being brought a message of ease and well-being) did not enter because of a lack of being convinced (or: incompliance; disobedience),**

The two clauses of vs. 6 are two parts of the one purpose – introduced by "**Since**" – that is articulated in vss. 7-11, below. These two clauses are joined by "**and.**" What this tells us is that there is care and concern for "**those being formerly addressed... [but who] did not enter...**" Furthermore, the present tense of the main verb of the first clause indicates

that the situation "**continues**" remaining for people to enter – as Paul put it, "**each person within his or her own class or division** (place of appointed position and order of succession)" – 1 Cor. 15:23.

7. **again, He is determining** (or: He is again defining and setting bounds around) **a certain day, "Today!"** In **David He is saying**, after so long a time, just as it has been said before, "**Today, if you would hear His voice, you would not be hardening your hearts.**"

8. **For you see, if Joshua caused them to rest, He would not after these things have continued speaking**

## concerning another "Day."

Here he is citing two central characters in Israel's story to make his point – adding the technique of redundancy in again repeating the quote of Ps. 95. In vs. 8 he is pointing out that even in the psalmist's day (who himself was referencing the days of ancient Israel when Joshua led them across the Jordan and into the Land) the reference was to a future Day – another Day within which folks could enter into God's rest. This "Day" is the Day of the Messiah who would bring the Light of the new Day for Israel. Tying the idea of "rest" with the final day of the week of creation (Gen. 2:2), he now points to a new

understanding of another of Israel's identity markers, the sabbath:

**9. Consequently, a keeping of a sabbath (a state of rest) is being left remaining for (or: to; in; with) God's people,**

**10. for the person entering into His rest also caused himself to rest from his own works (actions; deeds), just as God [did] from His own.**

So here we see the "rest" (which was represented in Israel's keeping the sabbath to mimic God who rested after completing His works of creation) is the eschatological "**sabbath Day.**" And if this "**Day**" is in fact the true "**sabbath,**" then the works of Israel have come to an

end: the creation is finished, because the Messiah (who was the true purpose of making a creation – His arrival signaling that the work was finished) has come and there is no more work of the Levitical cultus left to be performed. The new creation has come into being, the old arrangements have passed away. God has moved humanity into the fulfillment of the figure of "the Promised Land." We need no longer work "[either] in this mountain, nor within Jerusalem" (John 4:21). The end of religion has come at last.

**11. We should at once with diligence hasten, then, to enter into this rest (or: that ceasing down [from work];**

completely stopping), so that one would not fall in the same example (or: result of a pattern) of **incompliance** (or: stubbornness; disobedience; lack of conviction; [p46 reads: lack of faith and trust]).

"Completely stopping and ceasing down [from work]" – i.e., "**enter[ing] into THIS rest.**" This "**rest**" is the Christ within Whom the believer now dwells and remains (like abiding in the Vine – John 15 – and letting the sap from the Vine produce the fruit of His vineyard). Now take note of the last half of this verse: **incompliance**, stubbornness, disobedience, lack of conviction are all equated to NOT entering into "**this rest**"

(i.e., Christ). Continuing to work in order to fulfill the Law is the antithesis of "**enter[ing] into this Rest.**" As Paul has said (citing the story in Gen. 21:10), "**Cast out the slave-girl and her son...**" (Gal. 4:30). The old has gone, the new has come. In other words, not entering into the new through His grace will result in "falling in the wilderness" and not enjoying the Promise in this life.

**12. For the Word of God** (or: God's thought, idea and message; or: the expressed Logos from God; or: the Word which is God) **[is] living** (or: alive), **and active** (working; operative; energetic; at work; productive) **and more cutting above every two-mouthed sword, even**

**passing through** (penetrating) **as far as**  
**a dividing** (or: parting; partitioning) **of**  
**soul and spirit** (or: of inner self-life and  
breath-effect), **both of joints and**  
**marrows, even able to discern**  
(separate; judge; decide) **concerning**  
**thoughts** (ponderings; reflections; in-  
rushings; passions) **and intentions**  
(notions; purposes) **of a heart** (= core of  
the being).

13. **And no creature** (thing formed,  
framed or created) **is** (or: exists being)  
**out of sight** (not manifest; concealed) **in**  
**His** (or: in Its – i.e., the Word's)  
**presence, but all things [are] naked**  
**and have been gripped and bent back**  
**at the neck** [thus, exposing the face and

throat] **to** (or: in; by) **His** (or: Its) **eyes,**  
**face to face with Whom** (or: Which) **in**  
**us** (or: to us; for us; with us) **[is] this**  
**Word** (or: with a view to Whom by us  
[is] the message and the account; or:  
toward whom, for us and among us,  
[comes] the Idea and the Reason).

How is our author using what seems to  
be a collection of statements (or, a  
poem) inserted into the line of his  
presentation? The preceding discussion  
began with the statement in vs. 2, above,  
**"But the Word** (or: message; thought;  
idea; Logos) **which they heard did not**  
**profit** (or: benefit) **those folks."** Down  
through his arguments he has been  
referencing OT Scriptures concerning

Israel's wilderness journey, and he has quoted "**the Word of God**" that was spoken to or about them from 3:7 to 4:7. From this context we can see that God's Word to Israel was living (i.e., it continued speaking to their situations) from Moses speaking God's Word to Pharaoh on through their approach to the Promised Land. His message was active and effective when He told the older generation that they would not enter into the Land – and they did not. His thoughts penetrated the cores of their very beings and discerned their thoughts and passions, along with the intentions of their hearts. He heard their complaining – which entered into His thoughts. They

were like Adam and Eve after their disobedience: **naked in His presence**. But in vs. 14 the author transitions to the living Logos that he cites here in vs. 12 (*cf* John 1:1-17): **Jesus, the Son of God** and His role as Chief Priest, through Whom we can "**enter in**" to the "**throne of Grace**." So Christ, who is the Word made flesh and who fulfilled the Word of the old covenant, was indeed the transition from the old into the new. And our author has skillfully structured his rhetoric to lead his listeners from the old (vs. 2-8) to the theme of our present entering into the new (begun in vs. 1 and then picked up again in vs. 9ff) which is made possible by the Word becoming the

Chief Priest who becomes our entry into the place of which the Promised Land was the type: the presence of God who dwells in the holy of holies, above the throne of Grace. Now if we can put ourselves into the listening audience, and if the public reader suddenly elevates his voice, reading vss. 12-13 as a proclamation of praise to God, we may be able to imagine the impact upon those who heard these transitional verses as they respond, "Amen, amen," in agreement.

Before moving on, let us consider some of the specifics of these two verses. First of all, the Logos (**Word**) brings us God's thoughts and ideas, and His

expressions lay them out for us to ponder and absorb. They reveal who He is and instruct us concerning His will and purposes for humanity. They impart into us the end that He has in mind – the destiny – that He intends for us both individually and corporately.

Next, we see that God's Word is **living** – alive. Recall that Jesus, using the word *rhēma* said, "**The declarations** (gush-effects; spoken words; sayings; results of the Flow) **which I Myself have spoken to you folks are** (or: continue to be) **Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect; attitude) **and they are** (or: continue being) **Life**" (John 6:63). The Word is the creative power of God (Gen. 1), and IS God

(John 1:1) and it became flesh and lived among humans (John 1:14). In Acts 6:7 we observe that,

**"And so the Word of God (or: God's thought, idea, message and Logos) kept on progressively growing and increasing (also: = God's Reason was spreading out like a growing Vine)."**

It is alive, the very Life of God in existential reality. No wonder it is **"active** (working; operative; energetic; at work; productive)." It is through His Word, Thought and Reason that He imparts into our spirits that,

**"God is the One habitually**

**being inwardly active,  
constantly working and  
progressively effecting  
[results] within you folks –  
both the willing (intending;  
purposing; resolving) and the  
[situation] to be continuously  
effecting the action and  
inward work – above the thing  
that pleases (or: over [the  
situation of] well-thinking and  
delight; for the sake of [His]  
good pleasure)" – Phil. 2:13.**

The very Logos that created the universe is operative and productive within us. He is progressively making us a "new creation" for His glory.

His messages to us are compared to a sword that can cut deep into our inner being. A vivid picture employing this same metaphor is staged in the vision of the triumphant Christ in Rev. 19:15.

Today we might describe His word as a laser beam in a surgeon's hand. But we have its main purpose articulated here: **"to discern** (separate; judge; decide) **concerning thoughts** (ponderings; reflections; in-rushings; passions) **and intentions** (notions; purposes) **of a heart** (= core of the being)," as well as to divide out or separate inner situations of our lives that need to be untangled. Verse 13 calls to mind David's thoughts in Ps. 139,

7. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? or where shall I flee from Your presence?

8. If I ascend up into heaven (or: the sky), You [are] there; if I make my bed in hell (sheol, the grave; realm of the dead), behold, You [are there].

9. [If] I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10. even there shall Your hand lead me and Your right hand shall hold me.

And, you might say, He can "get in our face." That "**all things [are] naked... to (or: in; by) His (or: Its) eyes**" calls to

mind the scene of Adam and Eve trying to hide from Him among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8).

The last phrase has had different renderings and different interpretations. It is a difficult construction, having no expressed verb. I have given three possible renderings. The first (bold) one gives *pros* as "**face to face with,**" extending the picture of our face being exposed to His eyes, and "**Whom**" as a reference to God. The parenthetical "Which" would make the phrase a reference to "**the Word,**" which is the subject under discussion.

The next one reads the phrase as "the message and the account" being "in

reference to " God, and coming "by us" as being the messengers. The final offer reads *pros* literally as "toward" and "whom" as a referent to "us" and not God, so that the message (or: the Idea and the Reason – two other meanings of *logos*) comes "for us and among us" (two other functions of the personal pronoun in the dative).

**14. Continuously having, then, a great Chief Priest having passed through the atmospheres (or: heavens) [note: a figure of the holy place, and the holy of holies, in the Tabernacle] – Jesus, the Son of God – we can continuously be strong and lay hold of the same Word (or: with regard to the agreement of**

thought, the like-reason, the same message).

As with the note that I inserted into the translation for clarification, this first clause is a reference to Christ's work, as our Chief Priest, bringing the blood of His cross through the holy place of the temple to sprinkle it on the mercy seat in the holy of holies. See ch. 9, below, for the author's discussion of this, which is set in the picture of the Day of Atonement. Each part of the temple had its own atmosphere and purpose. The tabernacle/temple was a figure for "the heavens." This act by Jesus was the pivotal act of human history. He was **the Word** that brought forth the new

creation, and we can "**continuously be strong and lay hold of**" Him. Notice the comparison of the new Chief Priest as compared to those of the old covenant: Christ is "**a great Chief Priest,**" whom we now continue having (note the plural present participle).

In the bold rendering is *homologia* (**same Word**) in the literal meaning of its elements, stressing **Word** as a referent to the author's discussion in vss. 12-13. In the parenthetical expansion I also included the idea of "agreement" since this is the same word as was used in 3:1, above. We see a similar expression of this clause in 10:23, below.

**15. For you see, we do not have a chief priest who is unable or has no power to sympathize** (to have a sense-experience with; to feel a stab of sympathy or suffer together; *cf* ch. 2:10) **with our lack of strength, but One having been put to the proof – in accord with all things** (or: down with all men; corresponding to all people) **[and] in corresponding likeness – apart from failure** (mistake; error; sin; failing to hit the target).

One might wonder why this first clause is even mentioned. Why is it important that a priest would "**sympathize**" with the person coming to him for ritual cleansing or removal of guilt by some

cultic service that the priest would perform? Was it not a mechanical prescription which was clearly outlined in the Law that was to be followed?

Something must have changed.

Our understanding of psychology can help us to understand the need of someone relating to us in our problems.

So many of our problems are psychological and relational in nature.

We need to have people understand us and feel with us. That is part of the healing process. Otherwise, we can "repent and ask for forgiveness" but still walk away with guilt or remorse or loneliness.

If we realize that God has walked

through our challenge with us, that He was with us throughout the entire ordeal, we can to a greater degree draw on His strength and comfort in the awareness that God is "**not accounting to [us]** (not putting to [our] account; not logically considering for [us]; not reasoning in [us]) **the results and effects of [our] falls to the side** ([our] trespasses and offences)" – 2 Cor. 5:19. God was within Jesus walking through situations and temptations that are common to the human predicament. Furthermore, we are going through the same process of life that He did – for the same reason: to be a "priest," an agent of God, to others. The last phrase, "**apart from failure**

(etc.)," is not just patting Him on the back. I suggest that it is referring back to the narrative in ch. 3 where in vs. 17 he mentions "**those sinning** (failing to hit the target; making mistakes and errors)." These included Moses, Aaron and the priests – none of whom entered into God's rest. Pertinent to this context is Paul's aphorism in Rom. 14:23,

**"And everything which [is] not forth from out of faith (or: [does] not arise from trust) is a failure to hit the target (exists being an error; is a deviation from the goal; continues being sin, and a mistake)."**

Along with this is the aphorism in 1 John

5:17a,

**"All injustice** (contrariness to the Way pointed out; inequity; unfairness) **is a failure to hit the target** (deviation; error; sin; a failure toward the Purpose)."

Christ did not fail the test, as those had during their wilderness wandering, and so,

**"if anyone should at some point fail** (or: suddenly commit sin, make a mistake or deviate), **we constantly have One called alongside to help, give relief and guide us toward the Father** (or: we continuously possess a Paraclete, face to face

with the Father): **Jesus Christ, [the] One in accord with the Way pointed out** (or: a Just One; [the] Righteous One; [the] Fair One who is in right relationship with all; a Rightwised One; [the] right one; a Person that is turned in the right direction). **And He Himself exists continually being a sheltering cover around our mistakes and errors, sheltering us from their effects so that we can be in peaceful and rightwised relationships** (or: being the act by which our sins and failures

are made ineffective, effecting conciliation [to us]), **yet not only around those pertaining to us** (or: having their source in us), **but further, even around the whole ordered System** (secular realm and dominating world of culture, economy, religion and government; or: universe; or: aggregate of mankind)!"

(1 John 2:1-2; *cf* 1 John 3:6-8)

Another point is what the author points out in 9:7, that,

**"into the second one [i.e., compartment], the chief priest alone** (or: only), **once a year,**

**not apart from blood – which he is offering over (or: on behalf of) the ignorances (things resulting from a lack of knowledge, experience or insight) of himself and of the people."**

Then vs. 12 informs us that Christ **"entered in at once and once for all – yet not through blood from he-goats and calves, but through His own blood – into the set-apart ones (or: the holy places)."** We will look more fully into this when we reach ch. 9. But the central point here is that in His "once for all" sacrifice of Himself unto us, Jesus (in Lu. 22:17, when referring to the cup that

represented His blood) told His followers, "**Take and receive this...**" Then in vs. 19, referring to the bread, "**This [bread] is (or: represents) My body (or: the body which is Me) – it is presently and continuously being given over you folks...**"

In Matt. 26: 28, Jesus says it this way, "**for you see, this is My blood (or: the blood which is Me), which pertains to the covenant [with other MSS: this is My blood – which is the new arrangement] – the [blood] around (encompassing and pertaining to) many [people; peoples], [the blood]**

**continuously being poured out and progressively diffused into a divorce from failures, a forgiveness for mistakes, a dismissal of errors, a release from deviations, and a flowing away of sins!"**

His blood was given to us to do its work in our hearts (*cf* ch. 10:22).

I owe this insight to John Gavazzoni. In his article, "The Great Misrepresentation," he writes:

"But you see, the New Testament never speaks of God being reconciled to man. Without exception it always teaches the reconciliation of man to God, by

the death of Christ, to be sure, but there is no teaching in the Bible that would lead us to infer that the reconciling work of Christ was necessary to solve a problem within God, a problem within Himself that would keep God from being conciliatory toward us until He was presented with atoning blood. Such a god was the god Baal (I Kings 16:31-32; 18:26-29; Ps. 106:28; Jer. 11:17; 19:5; 32:35; Zeph. 1:4-5), the god Molech (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Jer. 32:35) and the gods of the Mayans and Aztecs from whose altars ran a

literal river of blood to insure that the demon posing as a god would hear their petitions.

"True divine justice does not take an obstinate stance of condemnation until it gets its pound of flesh. True divine justice justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Why? Because at the heart of the message of the cross of Christ is the truth that God takes responsibility for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6). '*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*' (2 Cor. 5:19). God in human form permitted us to murder Him to convince us that

He is resolute and steadfast in His love for us. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate friend of sinners. In the old covenant, we begin to see the meaning of the blood when Jehovah says to the Israelites, '***I have given you the blood upon the altar***' (Lev. 17:11). We need the blood, not God! The Lord spoke these words to me as He unfolded the meaning of reconciliation. he said, '**I am not the god who demands blood. I am the God who gives blood**' Oh, precious words!

"What is it about the death of Christ that reconciles us to God? According to 2 Cor. 5:14- 15, when Christ died, the whole world died with Him. '*We thus judge that if one died for all then all died*' (Vs. 14, best translation). So we were present in Christ when He died - we were included in Him, but God was also in Christ. '*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.*' (Vs. 19). God and man were present there in Christ on the cross. God was communicating to man His conciliating love and man, in

Christ, got the message. The blood got to him and man was reconciled. On the cross, Jesus said, '*It is finished*' (Jn. 19:30)." [end quote: see the whole article at [www.greater-emmanuel.org/jg](http://www.greater-emmanuel.org/jg), John Gavazzoni, in the section of his 2001 writings; emphasis original]

Along this same vein of thought, in a recent phone conversation, John pointed us to what Paul recited in 1 Cor. 11:24, of Jesus having said, "**This is My body, being now broken over [the situation and condition of] you folks** (or: for you people; on your behalf)." His body was

not broken "for" God.

**16. We should, then, be repeatedly and habitually coming to the throne of Grace** ([= mercy seat and place of Grace's authority]; or: the throne which is grace; the throne that is marked by grace and whose source is joyous favor) **with freedom in speaking and outspoken boldness as a citizen who has no fear of reprisal, so that we can at once receive and take mercy as well as grace and favor into a timely (seasonable; well-suited) response to a cry for help** [reading with B; or, with other MSS: receive mercy and then at once find grace and favor, unto opportune help (or: leading into help

marked by a season of well-being; with a view to aid whose character is a good situation and a fertile moment of wellness)].

So where are we supposed to go – just where is "**the throne of Grace**"? In the OT type, it was in the holy of holies – the innermost section of the Temple, where God met with a human. We have the example in Nu. 7:89,

"Then Moses went into the Hall of Assembly (or: tent of meeting) to speak to Him, and heard the Voice speaking to him from the Mercy-seat, which is upon the Ark of the Witness, from between the two Cherubim,

there He spoke to him" (Ferrar  
Fenton version)

But now we are the temple – both corporately and individually (1 Cor. 6:19) – so it follows that the holy of holies is within our corporate midst (Matt. 18:20 – where two or three are gathered in His Name), and, I suggest, within the core of our being – for Paul informs us that,

**"Now the person continually joining himself (or: being habitually glued in intimate union; in himself being continuously welded) to (or: in; with) the Lord exists being one spirit (or: one Breath-effect)" –**

1 Cor. 6:17.

The context of this verse was the "**members**" of the body (vs. 15, and the metaphor was that of a man and woman in sexual union). So the "**throne** (seat) **of Grace**" is both within the individual and within the covenant community as they meet together. As citizens of this community we have the "**freedom in speaking and outspoken boldness**" to speak with our Father and to "**at once receive and take mercy as well as grace and favor.**" There need be no fear to "**cry [to Him] for help.**"

Also notice that **mercy** and **grace** are tied together in this verse. We just saw the connection in the old covenant type

of the "mercy seat" being called here "the throne of grace." But considering the idea of "**receiving and taking mercy**," let us look at how Paul saw the purpose for this: that we would be "**containers of mercy** (instruments of mercy)" (Rom. 9:23), and then in Rom 11:

**30. For just as you folks were once** (or: at one time) **incompliant to God** (or: unconvinced, disobedient, unwilling to be persuaded and stubborn by God), **yet now** (at the present time) **you folks are** (or: were) **mercied** (made the recipients of mercy) **by** (or: in;

with) **the incomppliance**  
(disobedience; stubbornness;  
lack of being convinced) **of**  
**these folks.**

**31. Thus, also, these now** (at  
the present time) **are**  
**incompliant** (stubborn;  
disobedient; unconvinced) **by**  
(or: for; to) **your mercy, to the**  
**end that they also may now be**  
**mercied** (would be the  
recipients of mercy).

What happens to us is for the benefit of  
others: this is following Jesus and doing  
what He did – and now does through us.  
The word "**timely** (seasonable; well-  
suited)" is *kairos* with *eu-* prefixed to it.

This phrase can also be rendered  
"leading into help marked by a season of  
well-being; with a view to aid whose  
character is a good situation and a fertile  
moment of wellness."

## Chapter 5

**1. Now you see, every chief priest being taken forth from men, on behalf of men, is being placed down (set and established) in the things directed toward (or: with a view to, pertaining to and facing) God, so that he may be bringing both gifts and sacrifices over [situations of] and in behalf of failures (mistakes; sins; errors; times of missing the target),**

This is a description of the arrangement under the old covenant that is laid out in detail in the Torah (the five books accredited to Moses). The author is setting up another contrast between the

way it was before the Messiah came, and the way it is now. He will continue building his argument as this letter proceeds.

**2. constantly being able to measure feelings** (to deal gently; or: being moderate) **to habitually ignorant folks** (or: with people not normally having intimate, experiential knowledge [*gnosis*]) **and to people being constantly deceived, repeatedly led astray or habitually caused to wander, since he himself habitually environs** (has around himself) **lack of strength** (or: weakness),

Here he brings in the disadvantaged condition of both humanity in general,

and specifically Israel as they were under the Law. He is continuing to set the stage for the next scene, showing here the dark background that recalls Matthew citing Isaiah's prophecy of those who were awaiting the coming of the Messiah:

**"The people continuously sitting within the midst of darkness** (the gloomy dimness of the shadow that lacked the light of the Day) **saw a great Light. And on** (or: to; for; in) **those constantly sitting within [the] province** (or: region) **and shadow of death, Light arises on** (or: rose to and among;

dawned for or in) **them.**" (Isa. 8:23-9:1; quoted in Matt. 4:16)

John spoke of this Light in John 1:4-5, but how the leadership of the Jews preferred the darkness of the old covenant (John 3:19). Luke spoke to this situation in ch. 1:79 as Zechariah prophesied

about the ministry of his son John, **"to at once 'shine upon the people continuously sitting within the midst of darkness the realm of the shadow and obscurity; dimness and gloom' [Isa. 9:1] – even within death's shadow; to cause our feet to be fully straight and to [walk]**

**in correspondence to  
straightness, into the path  
(way; road) of peace [=  
shalom]."**

Note that our author places the Levitical  
priesthood in this same weak  
position that the Gospel  
writers describe as being near dead.

**3. and so, on account of this, he is  
indebted** (obliged; or: he owes it) –  
**according as concerning the people, so  
also concerning himself – to offer**  
(bear something with a view to and  
directed) **concerning failures** (mistakes;  
sins; errors; times of shooting off-target).  
The priest is in the same predicament as  
the rest of the people. He was "**obliged...**

**to offer concerning failures"** since these were his cultic duties, under the Law. But in ch. 10, below, our author points out that,

**"And so, indeed on the one hand, every priest has stood daily, publicly serving and offering the same sacrifices many times (or: often) – which things not even once (never) are able or have power to take away sins (failures; errors) which surround (which envelop) [us]" (vs. 11).**

The Law was a part of the futility to which humanity was subjected, yet it too was **"based upon an expectation"**

(Rom. 8:20). And that expectation was the new covenant/arrangement with a different Chief Priest in union with a new creation.

**4. And no one takes the honor (value; worth) to himself, but rather [is] one being called (summoned; invited) by God, just as Aaron, also, [was].**

**5. Thus also, Christ did not glorify Himself (give Himself a reputation; have an opinion of Himself) to be born (or: to come to be) a Chief Priest, but to the contrary, [it was] the One at one point speaking to Him,**

**"You are My Son; today I have given birth to (or: conceived) You (= become Your**

Father)." [Ps. 2:7]

**6. Just as also in a different place He is saying,**

**"You [are] a Priest on into the Age, down from (or: in accord and in line with) Melchizedek's station (order; lineup; alignment; placement; appointment; succession)," [Ps. 110:4]**

God set up the first arrangement and chose Aaron (and his descendants; *cf* Nu. 17) to be the chief priest for the age of the Law. In the same way, Christ was chosen to be a Chief Priest, but this time not with the budding and blossoming of a rod (staff), as it was with Aaron, but

rather with a Voiced pronouncement by God when John baptized Jesus (Matt. 3:17, which also quotes Ps. 2:7).

However, the budding, blossoming and fruiting of Aaron's rod was a picture which foreshadowed Christ Himself in His resurrection from the dead; He was the Branch that immediately produced the body of Christ. Our author is saying that the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus (Matt. 3:16) which began His ministry as the Messiah was also the way of, and point at which, God was choosing Him to be the Chief Priest – but of a different "**station** (order; lineup; alignment; placement; appointment; succession)." Everything was changing: the old was

passing away; **"New things have come into existence"** (2 Cor. 5:17). And here, the Messiah was both a Son and a Priest. He chooses a prophetic psalm in vs. 6 as a "proof text" of the argument that he will develop later. In persuasive rhetoric, he repeats this quote in vs. 10, below. In line with the Hebrew tradition, he gives these two psalms as his "mouth of two or three witnesses." (Matt. 18:16; also see Deut. 17:6 for this tradition)

**7. Who, during the days of His flesh** (= existence as a human), **with a strong** (or: robust) **outcry and tears, offered both earnest requests** (supplications from need) **and petitions** (or: supplications; literally: olive branches

carried by suppliant, which symbolized a request for help and protection) **toward the One being continually able and powerful to deliver** (rescue; save) **Him forth from out of the midst of death. And so He was being heard** (or: was being listened to), **from this discretion and precaution** (or: the disposition of taking hold well with prudent understanding; or: the receiving of goodness and well-being; or: [His] undertaking with care).

Lu. 22:39-46 describes the only situation given in the Gospels that seems to correlate to this verse. That setting was the garden in Gethsemane. Here was our Chief Priest, sweating out His own

blood before the greatest ordeal of His life, petitioning His Father to take the cup away if it was at all possible. The final conclusion of His discourse with His Father was, "**not My will or desire, but to the contrary, let Yours continue of itself progressing into being**" (vs. 42). He had entered into the death state of humanity – which, like for us, would ultimately end in physical death. But all Israel knew, as did Jesus, that Yahweh had many times "**delivered [Israel] forth from out of the midst of death.**" Their history was replete with God's deliverances.

So our author is saying that Jesus had the same faith in the power and ability of

God that Abraham had been given, **"reckoning that God has power and is able to repeatedly arouse even out from among dead folks"** (ch. 11:19, below). Jesus Himself had raised the dead. The last sentence of this verse, where it states that **"He was being heard** (listened to)," may refer to Lu. 22:43,

**"Now an agent from the atmosphere** (or: a messenger from heaven) **was seen by Him, continuously strengthening Him."**

The noun of the last prepositional phrase is *eulabeia*. This word (in this form) is used only here and in Heb. 12:28.

Nyland (ibid., p 440 n 11) argues strongly for the meaning of **precaution**. From my research "**discretion and precaution**" seems to be the central idea of the word from a somewhat broad use in Greek literature. Together with this meaning, the parenthetical expansions cover the semantic range of this core idea. Its cognate *eulabēs* has been used in contexts that seem to indicate a sense of "reverence." "The word for 'submission' does not appear here in the Greek, nor does 'godly fear' or 'fear'." (ibid.)

From all of this, the phrase seems to be indicating that He was listened to from the discretion and precaution – or the

"undertaking with care" – that He exhibited in His conversation with the Father. From the elements of the Greek word, it could also be saying that in this time with His Father He was "receiving of the goodness and well-being" (perhaps being imparted via the messenger) of the Father. Considering how Jesus handled the situation in the garden which followed, and equally appropriate rendering would be, "the disposition of taking hold well with prudent understanding."

In a phone call, Dan Kaplan shared the following insights of a more inclusive view of the application of this verse to Christ's entire life:

Would He not have shed tears and perhaps given an outcry at the time of the death of Joseph, his father? Christ identified with people throughout His entire life, but we get only glimpses in the Gospels. In John 11:33-35, during the incident following the death of Lazarus, we see that He **"inwardly snorted** (as with violent displeasure) **and groaned, being deeply moved in spirit"** and then **"shed tears."** He expressed His emotions, crying out over Jerusalem, **"how often** (how many times) **I wanted and intended to at**

**once completely gather together and assemble your children, in the manner in which a hen [gathers] her own brood (or: chicks) under [her] wings" (Lu. 13:34).**

Furthermore, in Lu. 6:21 He spoke to others what was also true of Himself, "**Happy and blessed [are] the folks presently crying! – because you will be laughing.**"

Concerning the return of the captives to Zion, we read "Those who sow in tears will reap in joyful shouting" (Ps. 126:5).

Jesus was sowing Himself into humanity through His death:

**"unless the grain of wheat (or: kernel of corn; = seed of an agricultural crop), upon falling into the earth (the ground; the field), should die, it by itself continues remaining alone. Yet if it should die, it proceeds to bear much fruit (= it produces a harvest of many grains, or, seeds)"** (John 12:24),

and Jesus was that Grain of wheat.

"He was despised and forsaken of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."

(Isa. 53:3). Paul also experienced grief as he expressed in Phil. 3:18,

**"For many – I was often telling you about them, yet now I am also presently weeping (lamenting) in saying it – continue walking about (i.e., are living their lives) as enemies of the cross of the**

**Christ** (the Anointed One's execution - stake)."

In regard to my referencing Lu. 22:43, above, Dan suggested a metaphorical understanding of the agent/messenger, which may be added to the literal: Jesus was filled with the messages from the agents of Israel's history, such as Isaiah which I quoted above. Moses and all the prophets would have been in His mind and heart as He "connected the dots" of those prophecies about the Messiah, realizing that He was now that

suffering Servant of Isa., etc. Recall how Jesus opened the OT Scriptures to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, following His resurrection (Lu. 24:27). All of these messengers would have been speaking to Him as He sweat tears in Gethsemane – just as Ps. 22 was in His heart and on His lips while dying on the cross. – (an expanded paraphrase of what Dan shared with me).

**8. Even though continuously being a Son, He learned to listen, pay attention and act on it (or: the giving of the ear in hearing from below, and then**

to obey) **from the things which He experienced** (or: what happened to Him [both the good and the bad]).

The expanded definition of *hupakoe* "**listen, pay attention and act on it**" presents a complete picture that this word embodies. Also, this ties the thoughts of vs. 7 with what the author says in vs. 8. He had just experienced a response from "**being heard**" by His Father – during their conversation in Gethsemane – and paid attention to that response, acting with "**discretion and precaution**" upon the arrival of the folks led by Judas. Even though "**being a Son**" He was still in preparation for having  
**"power to sympathize** (to have

a sense-experience with; to feel a stab of sympathy or suffer together; *cf* ch. 2:10) **with our lack of strength, but One having been put to the proof – in accord with all things** (or: down with all men; corresponding to all people) **[and] in corresponding likeness...**" (4:15, above).

But more than this climactic experience of being led off to the chief priest just prior to His death, He would have learned as we all do (for this was the reason that He became human): from the good and the bad that happened to Him throughout all of His life; from all the

feelings which He experienced.

**9. And being brought to the goal of [His] destiny** (being brought to maturity and completion; being finished and perfected) **He became a cause of eonian deliverance**

(or: rescue, wholeness and good health and restoration to the original state of being which pertains to and has the character of the Age; safety and healing of and for the ages) **for all** (or: in all) **those habitually listening, paying attention and acting in response** (or: the giving of the ear in hearing from below, with obedience) **to Him,**

The participle "**being brought to the goal of [His] destiny**" is passive. In this

He continues being our Pattern, for just as He did not do this of Himself but it was God working in the midst of Him and centered in Him (*cf* Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 5:19), so it is with us. He brings us to our goal and destiny. Being brought to the cross, He became the **cause** of deliverance "which belongs to, is proper to and is connected with **the ages**" (a definition of *aionios*, or, **eonian**, by Andrew Jukes). It is here, in this existence within the ages, that humanity needs God's deliverance in its manifold aspects.

Jesus said, "**If anyone continues possessing** (or: proceeds in having) **ears to continue hearing, let him**

**continue listening so as to progressively hear!"** (Mk. 4:23). He said this on more than one occasion. The metaphor implies an attitude of openness to the message and then to allow the words to sink in and take root (like the seeds sown in ideal soil – Matt. 13:8). Here the author uses the same root word that Jesus used, but with the preposition *hupo* prefixed to the verb, and thus you see the enhanced idea in my amplified rendering "**habitually listening, paying attention and acting in response** (or: the giving of the ear in hearing from below, with obedience)." This is the response of a follower of Jesus – one that involves more than just physically

hearing a message, then going our way like the seed that fell on the pathway or among the weeds. "**Habitually**" means a way of life – and this is what brings the deliverance. The creative Word of God enters into the person like the sperm entering the womb. If the sperm joins to the egg and conception happens, then a progressive growth begins. Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine with its branches (John 15). The branches must remain attached to the vine in order to produce fruit. The fruit of the vine corresponds to the "rescue, wholeness and good health and restoration to the original state of being which pertains to and has the character of the Age [of the Messiah]"

here in this verse. Just as with the story of Israel, being "kept safe" from their enemies required loyalty to Yahweh. The deliverance that they had experienced with the exodus from Egypt was later lost for seventy years when God sent them into Babylon.

Salvation, deliverance, rescue, health and wholeness – all these aspects of the word *soterias* that the author uses here – are for this life, here and now. It speaks first of all about the gift of life to a person who is metaphorically dead, and then to a release from the slavery to sin and being placed on the Path of life which is Christ (a way of truth and reality) through being included within a

covenant community (the *ekklesia*) and bearing the image of God. Salvation is not a ticket to heaven, but entrance into the new creation where heaven is joined to earth and God is joined to a human. The clause that ends this verse can be mistaken as a contingency which presents a "works-based salvation."

Rather it is describing the new way of living that our Savior has brought to us.

**10. being at one time addressed and greeted in the public market place (or: spoken toward; proclaimed) by God (or: under God), "Chief Priest down from and corresponding to (in accord with; in line with; in the succession of) the station (order; placement;**

appointment; arranging; alignment) of **Melchizedek**" – [Ps. 110:4]

**11. concerning Whom the Word [has] much to say to us – and [it is] difficult to be explained** (or: about whom the message [is] great and [is] hard to be understood [or] for us to say; or: concerning Whom, for us [there is] much to say – and [it is] hard to be understood), **since you have become sluggish (dull) for hearing.**

These verses continue the sentence that was begun in vs. 8. Using the rhetoric of redundant repetition, the author again cites Ps. 110:4 to emphasize His point. There is now a new Chief Priest that is a Descendant of another lineage – no

longer from the tribe of Levi. He is in the succession of and corresponds to "**the station**" and appointment of the priest with which Abraham was involved. So our author is reaching back to the time before the creation of Israel becoming a nation with the Levitical priesthood, to the era of the Promise. Paul did the same thing in Gal. 3-4 and in Rom 4, especially in vs. 10. In the same way Paul reaches all the way back to Adam in 1 Cor. 15:45-47. The old priesthood is being superseded by one that has earlier roots and which is not associated with the Law. This is the same story of God and humanity, but we are now to a different chapter – the

previous chapter was in a different age, part of the old creation.

Here we also see emphasized again that it is God who made this appointment of a new Chief Priest (a subtle correspondence to the choosing of Aaron as the chief priest when Israel was founded). The author does not develop the story of Melchizedek because his function in the argument has reached its goal: Melchizedek had priority to Aaron and was not associated with the period of the Law. We see the same picture given by John the baptist who was a figure of the time of the prophets that preceded the coming of the Messiah, but was of an inferior age (Matt. 11:11).

John said of Jesus, "The One progressively coming behind me has taken precedence of me because He was existing first before me" (John 1:15). Yet John was actually older than Jesus and started his ministry before Jesus did. John was using the same logic about Jesus that our author here uses about Melchizedek.

From all that is presented in this letter that derives from the history and religion of Israel, we can assume that the intended audience has a good knowledge of the subject material. Yet we find him saying here that they "**have become sluggish (dull) for hearing.**" We are reminded of how Jesus cited Isa. 6:9-10

and Ezk. 12:2 in His reference to the Pharisees (Matt. 13:13-17). Note also the author's reference to "**hearing**" following what he has just said in vs. 9, above.

**12. For also, being indebted (or: obligated) to be teachers, because of the time [gone by], you again have a need of someone to be teaching you folks the elementary things (or: fundamental principles; rudiments and rules) of the beginning of the brief spoken words (or: principle short thoughts and messages) of God, and you have become folks having need of milk, and not solid food.**

**13. For everyone partaking (sharing**

in) **milk [is] untried** (inexperienced) **pertaining to [the] Word of the Way pointed out** (from the message of fair and equitable dealing or an idea about rightwised relationships; also: = in regard to the idea of and reason from covenant membership), **for he is a babe** (a non-speaking infant, or one who is still childish and unfit to bear weapons).  
**14. But solid food belongs to perfected ones** (complete and mature ones; ones who are fully developed and have reached the goal of their destiny) – **those, because of habit, having organs of perception trained as in gymnastic exercise and thus being skilled, because of practice, and disciplined**

**with a view to a discerning** (or: when facing the act of separating, making a distinction and then a decision about) **both good and evil** (both that which is excellent, ideal, of good quality, profitable and beautiful, as well as that which is of bad quality, worthless, ugly or of bad form; or: = between right and wrong),

In these verses he expands upon the indictment which he just made about their being "**sluggish (dull) for hearing.**" When by now they should be able to expound Christ from the OT Scriptures, instead he has to cover the basics with them again. He compares them to children that are still nursing.

Here we also see a further picture of **"those habitually listening, paying attention and acting in response** (or: the giving of the ear in hearing from below, with obedience) **to Him."** Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, they should be seeing Christ in all the types from Israel's story. They should be **"those, because of habit, having organs of perception trained as in gymnastic exercise and thus being skilled, because of practice, and disciplined with a view to a discerning."** This is a vital part of maturing in Christ and listening to the Voice of the Spirit of God – both within the texts, and within their individual or

corporate temple. From the unpublished writings of Harper Brown Mitchell we have the following insights:

*"If one should attempt to explain this [phrase] 'have their senses exercised' [KJV] as referring to natural senses, consider the evidence: 'dull of hearing' does not refer to deafness; 'need of milk and not of strong meat' [KJV] could not refer to natural milk and natural meat. All the way through this passage, the Lord is speaking of things 'hard to be uttered' [vs. 11; KJV] because of men who are spiritual babes. We could eat*

lamb and beef all the days of our lives and not *discern* by the Spirit what is good or evil. Here, also, the Lord is speaking of exercising our *spiritual senses*.... 'O taste and see that the Lord is good...' – Ps. 34:8" (emphasis original; brackets mine)

My friend Dan Kaplan mentioned that these verses call to mind Paul's words in 1 Cor. 13:11,

**"When I was an infant (a baby; a non-speaking one), I used to babble and make vocal utterances as a non-speaking infant. I used to habitually be**

**in the frame of mind, take thought with the intellect and understand as a non-speaking infant (baby). I continued taking account, reasoning and logically considering things as a non- speaking infant. Yet when I had come to be an adult male, I had permanently made inactive (idled-down so as to be no longer used and discarded) the things which pertain to a non-speaking infant (infantile things)."**

To paraphrase what Dan continued to share: The "**elementary things** (or: fundamental principles; rudiments and

rules) of the beginning of the brief spoken words (or: principle short thoughts and messages) of God" refers to the Law, which embodied the Seed and pointed to the coming of the Messiah. The message that Christ brought had its roots in the OT. But those who continue to use the Law after the coming of Christ are considered to be babies that still need milk. This would have been a natural thing for "Hebrews" to do, since the Law was ingrained in their culture and in their understanding of God. But like what Paul wrote to those in Galatia, the time appointed by the Father already came, and God sent forth His Son,

**"to the end that He could (or: would) buy out (ransom; redeem; reclaim [from slavery]) those under [the] Law – so that we could and would receive and take away into possession the placement as a son (an adult child placed with rights and responsibility within the household; the conferred sonship)" – Gal. 4:5.**

Our author uses the same word *nepios* (**babe**) that Paul used in Gal. 4 when describing the situation of being under the Law:

**1. Now I continue saying, for (or: upon [the length of]) as**

**much time as the heir (the apparent possessor of the distributed allotment) is progressing from being an infant to a minor (one having either no ability, or no right, to speak; = continues being under legal age) he continues essentially differing nothing from a slave, [though] continuously being owner (lord and master) of everything (of all),**

**2. but further, he exists being under those to whom the trust is committed (guardians; ones entrusted with control and right**

to turn upon their charges) **and house managers** (stewards; administrators) **until the father's previously set** [time or situation].

In Gal. 4:3, Paul used the same word *stoicheia* (**elementary things**) that our author uses here in vs. 12. We read there,

**"Thus also we ourselves, when we were progressing from infants to minors, we continued being folks having been enslaved under (or: by) the System's elementary principles."**

That "**System**" comprised the elements

of the Law that was the beginning of the society of Israel, in the wilderness. The elementary things were the foundation of the Jewish religion, and it is these foundational things that he was urging these Hebrew Christians to leave behind (vs. 6:1, below).

In vs. 13 he points them to the setting of the **gymnastic exercise** (mentioned in the next verse): the "**Word of the Way pointed out** (from the message of fair and equitable dealing or an idea about rightwised relationships; also: = in regard to the idea of and reason from covenant membership)." It is the context of life within the covenant community – how they treat people. Put otherwise, as

in the letters from John: it's about loving folks.

I gave the bold rendering "**good and evil**" (vs. 14) to focus the reader's attention on a subject that has been foremost in the thoughts of those who participate in moralistic religion – i.e., of legalistic folks. This calls to mind the Law and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden story. But Christ has called us to something greater – as can easily be seen in His teachings. It is now not just about "**good and evil**," but about the broader semantic range of these two words which I have presented in the parenthetical expansion: "both that which is excellent, ideal, of good

quality, profitable and beautiful, as well as that which is of bad quality, worthless, ugly or of bad form." Here, I think, is the main message. Right and wrong do speak to correct discernment of the "**Way pointed out**" (the Christ life), but the mature are those who let this grow and then bloom into excellence, good quality, beauty and what is ideal.

## Chapter 6

**1. through which [practice and exercise] (or: On account of which), in at some point leaving behind (or: letting flow away) the word from the beginning, in regard to the Christ (or: the message pertaining to the origin and beginning of the Christ; or: the primary thought about the Anointed One), we can be continuously and progressively brought upon (or: carried on [to]) the realization of the end in view (or: the accomplished goal of maturity; completion of the destined, finished product), not again repeatedly conceiving (or: laying; casting down) a**

**foundation which involves a change of mind with a turning away from dead works, and of faith and trust upon God;**

First of all, keep in mind the corporate "we" in this verse, and then the plural subject of vs. 4ff.

My bold rendering of the opening phrase (which I think is preferred) makes this verse a continuation of 5:14, above.

Many translators consider this a break in thought and so begin a new sentence. I have allowed for this interpretation by parenthetically inserting an optional beginning, "On account of which..."

The "**which**" refers back to the "**practice and exercise**" which will train the

**"organs of perception"** and will thus lead to **"at some point leaving behind (or: letting flow away) the word from the beginning, in regard to the Christ (etc.)."** Doing this, as we live our lives, **"we can be continuously and progressively brought upon [by the work of the Spirit/Christ within us], or carried on [to], the realization of the end in view (or: the accomplished goal of maturity; etc.)."** This last thought calls to mind Paul's descriptive picture in Eph. 4:13-14a,

**"[to go on] until we – the whole of mankind (all people) – can (or: would) come down to the goal (or: attain; arrive at;**

meet accordingly; meet down  
face-to-face): **into the state of  
oneness of** (or: the unity  
belonging to; = lack of division  
in) **the Faith** (or: which  
characterizes that which is faith;  
or: which has its source in trust,  
confidence and reliability, and  
has the character of being loyal),  
**and of the full, experiential  
and intimate knowledge** (or:  
recognition; discovery; insight)  
**of and from the Son of God,**  
**[growing] into [the] purposed  
and destined** (or: complete;  
finished; mature; full-grown;  
perfect; goal-attained) **adult**

**man – into (or: unto) [the] measure of [the] stature (full age; prime of life) of the entire content which comprises the Anointed One (or: which is the result of the full number which is the Christ; of the effect of the fullness from the [Messiah]; of the effect of that which fills and completes that which pertains to the Christ; of the result of the filling from, and which is, the Christ) – to the end that no longer (or: no more) would or should we exist being infants (immature folks)..."**

This was the point to which our author's

reasoning has led us: "completion of the destined, finished product."

The phrase, "**the word from the beginning, in regard to the Christ**" probably means the same thing as that to which John referred when he said,

**"And so now I am asking you, Lady, not as writing a new implanted goal (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of destiny) to you, but one which we have had from [the] beginning (or: one which we originally had), to the intent that we may continuously be loving each other"** (2 John 5); or,

**"because this is the message**  
[other MSS: promise; or:  
complete announcement] **which**  
**you heard** (or: hear) **from [the]**  
**beginning, so that we are**  
**habitually** (or: to the end that  
we would or could  
progressively be) **loving**  
(accepting and participating in)  
**one another"** (1 John 3:11).

The message that Jesus taught and embodied was the greater love, the laying down of one's life or soul (interior being; self-life) for his friend (John 15:13). Also, **"the word from the beginning"** could refer to 1 John 1:5,  
**"And this is the message** (or:

And it is this message) **which we have heard – and still hear – from Him, and we are continually bringing back tidings (or: announcing again) to and among you people that God continuously exists being (or: is) Light...**"

The next option, "the message pertaining to the origin and beginning of the Christ," renders the genitive phrases differently and suggests that the author is speaking either about Christ's origin (e.g., the Gospel narrative of the birth of Jesus), or, about the beginning of the corporate Christ – and that again would refer to Jesus, the Head and Source.

However, this could also be a reference to the story of Israel and the OT Scriptures which foretold the Messiah by type and symbol, and the elements described in vs. 2, below, could refer to practices that were a part of the cultus of Israel's religion (I owe this insight to Dan Kaplan).

The last option, "the primary thought about the Anointed One," fits well with the author's message of moving on beyond the basics (which he proceeds to list in the last part of this verse on into the first half of vs. 2).

So our author encourages his hearers to leave the beginning things behind and move on to maturity in Christ. But it is

here that his rhetoric changes as he tells them not to go on laying down the foundational basics, which he lists for them as examples. It almost seems incredible that this list seems to be the constant focus in much of the Christian religion. He begins with:

**"a change of mind with a turning away from dead works, and of faith and trust upon God."**

He has just returned to what he said in 5:12, above. They had stayed with the basic teachings and had remained "babes" needing milk instead of the solid food appropriate to the mature so that they could be teachers and lead the new members of the community on to the goal

of maturity.

## **2. of teachings of immersions**

(baptisms), **besides a placing-on of hands; and then of resurrection of dead ones – as well as of the results of an eonian decision** (or: the effects of a separation and a judgment which pertains to and has the quality of the Age)!

An example of these things that were important for new believers is seen where Paul met some new disciples in Ephesus who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit and had only experienced John's baptism which Paul tells them was "**an immersion (a baptism) of a change of thinking for the people,**

**repeatedly saying that they could and should at once put their trust in, believe and place loyalty into the One progressively coming after him – that is, into Jesus."** After being immersed **"into the Name of the Lord Jesus,"** Paul **"plac[ed] [his] hands upon them, the Set-apart Breath-effect (or: the Holy Spirit) came [p38 and D read: immediately fell] upon them and they began speaking in languages (or: with tongues), and then began (or: and continued) prophesying (speaking light ahead of time and in front of people)"** – Acts 19:2-6. These are good things, but our author wants his hearers to move beyond this.

Again Dan Kaplan reminds us that the Jewish religion involved washings and baptisms. Also, that the "**placing-on of hands**" could refer to such as the priests placing their hands upon the head of the goat as part of the sin offering (Lev. 4:24) and on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:21).

John 3:25-26 records a dispute between the Jews and the disciples of John over the teaching of Jewish purifications, which led to these disciples being concerned that Jesus was now apparently baptizing folks. From this, some scholars believe that the "immersions" here in this verse refer to Jewish ceremonial cleansing. In fact the

NASB renders the first phrase of vs. 2 "instruction about ceremonial washings." Nyland renders it "teachings about cleansing rites" (ibid. p 441). However, the **immersions** and **placing-on of hands** could be a reference to ceremonialism, just as Paul used the rite of circumcision to refer to the keeping of the whole Law. The next topic, "**resurrection of dead ones**," may refer to miracles within this life, or of what Paul referred to as a resurrection of "the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). Here Dan points out that the resurrection referred to here as a part of the foundation of the new life in Christ may be referring to what Paul spoke of in Rom. 6:3-4, that of being

**"immersed into His death,"** and then just as He was raised from the dead, **"we can walk around** (or: we also should likewise conduct ourselves and order our behavior) **within newness of life** (in union with life characterized by being new in kind and quality, and different from that which was former)." This is part of the basics, where, as Dan says, "Christ enters into a person and raises him up." But again, amazingly, this is a teaching that our author advises **"leaving behind,"** or just "letting [it] flow away."

Now a critical issue for most Christians is the subject: **"the results of an eonian decision** (or: the effects of a separation

and a judgment which pertains to and has the quality of the Age." Here, I will simply suggest that such "judgments" or "decisions" which are made by God have their existence within this life – the realm of the ages in which we live. We see this as we review the story of Israel and all the judgments and separations that Yahweh made concerning them. The central "**eonian decision**" was the one that God made through the cross of Jesus and the coming of the Age of the Messiah. His decision was to end the age of the Law and bring in a better Age; to cause humanity's sin to flow away; and to release humanity from its slavery to sin and failure while drawing all

mankind to Himself (John 12:32). Yet even these teachings should also be left behind as we progress toward maturity in bearing the image of God – which was His original goal for us (Gen. 1:26). His argument is clear: "**not again repeatedly conceiving** (or: laying; casting down) **a foundation.**" Go on and build the house.

**3. And this we shall progressively do! – if it be that God may be permitting [it].**

He was writing to those who had the knowledge of the message of the Messiah, and he wanted those hearing this letter to "be carried [to] the completion of the destined, finished

product." Note that he recognizes that it is God that must make this happen and enable us to move forward.

**4. For you see, those once being enlightened, besides tasting (= experiencing) the heavenly gift (or: the granted bounty from the One [holding sway] upon the atmosphere) and after being born (or: coming to be) common-holders (partners; sharing possessors; joint-participants; associates; partaking members) of set-apart spirit (or: of a holy Breath-effect; or: of [the] Holy Spirit),**

**5. and then tasting (= experiencing) a beautiful gush-effect of God (or: an ideal result of the flow from God; or:**

God's fine speech; an excellent declaration pertaining to God; a profitable thing spoken, which is God) – **besides abilities and powers of an impending age,**

**6. and yet then falling by the side (or: falling aside along the way), [are] powerless and unable to be repeatedly renewing again into a change of mind: [they are] continuously crucifying again in themselves (or: to, for or by themselves) the Son of God, and [are] constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace.**

These three verses should be discussed together (as should the metaphorical restatement of this situation in vss. 7-8,

as well). Our author moves from the topic of those who have "**become sluggish (dull) for hearing**" (4:11) to folks who actually fall by the side along the path. This "falling aside" is not simply making mistakes or committing some moral offense. They are apparently turning back to their former way of life, or deviating into some false teaching in which they are "**continuously crucifying again in themselves – or to, for or by themselves – the Son of God.**" Their actions or their way of life are "**constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace.**"

From the description of these folks in vss. 4-5, it is clear that they had been

members of the covenant community, even being "**common-holders** and partners (etc.)" of the very "**set-apart spirit** (or: [the] Holy Spirit)" which had "**enlightened**" them, allowing them to experience "**the heavenly gift**," along with "an ideal flow from God (etc.)." Ch. 3:1 used the same word, "**common-holders**" to speak of the **super-heavenly calling**, and 3:14 speaks of being partners and common-holders "**of the Christ**." To use Paul's metaphor, they were a part of Christ's body. The agricultural metaphor that follows in the next two verses gives us the picture that their lives were no longer producing the fruit of the Spirit, but rather the fruit of

some seed that "an enemy" had sown into their lives (e.g., Matt. 13:25) while they were "sleeping." It is interesting that the word rendered "**sluggish** (dull)" was "used of one in heavy sleep" (Nyland, *ibid.* p 441 n 4).

These folks are "**powerless and unable to be repeatedly renewing again into a change of mind.**" They have once again become overpowered and are unable to do anything about it. In the parable of the "tares" to which I just alluded, the tares had to be allowed to remain "until the harvest" and then were to be "gathered first," then bound and thrown into the fire (Matt. 13:30). God's reign and sovereign activity had to come upon that

field, and then the "tares" were removed. The seeds of the "**thorns and thistles**" may have been the false teachings of the Gnostics, against which John wrote in his letters, or they may have been the persuasions of the Judaizers, such as those against which Paul stood.

Dan and I were discussing the "falling aside along the way" of vs. 6, and Dan gave a familiar analogy which describes the change from the old covenant/creation to the new: the life-cycle of the butterfly. Isa. 41:14 came to mind where Yahweh calls Jacob a worm. The worm phase of the butterfly signifies old covenant Israel. But this phase ends with the worm producing its

cocoon – a figure of the grave: the death of Israel on the cross – and the old life becomes deactivated. But through the resurrection of Christ as God's new creation, Israel emerges into its heavenly calling. So with Dan's analogy, those who fall back and cease to produce the fruit of the Spirit and participate in the life of the community he compares to a butterfly that through its own mistaken reasoning would seek to "regress back to the comfort of the cocoon." By returning to the Law such folks are "constantly killing the finished work of the cross, in themselves, making the cross of no effect" (Dan Kaplan). The veil once again comes over them (2 Cor. 3:15) as

they fall back to the cocoon – all that is left of the former covenant – and the "letter" kills them (2 Cor. 3:6). "The works of the Law obscure Christ and are in fact 'anti-Christ' [in place of Christ]" (ibid; bracket mine). So now let us move to our author's "field metaphor" to understand what he is saying about these folks.

**7. For you see, a piece of land (or: ground; soil; = a field; or: a territory) which is drinking (= soaking in) the rain often coming upon it, and producing vegetation (pasture; produce) fit for and useful to them through whom it is habitually being cultivated, [is] also continuously**

**sharing in and partaking of a blessing from God;**

**8. but when repeatedly and progressively bearing forth thorns and thistles [it is] disqualified (worthless; unable to stand the test [for planting a new crop]) and [is] close to (or: near) [the] curse (or: a down-prayer and a corresponding wish against [the situation] is at hand), the end (the resultant situation) of which [the thorn, briars, thistles and the field is] into [a time of] burning (or: = the field ends up being burned off).**

The first thing to keep in mind is that the subject of this metaphor is "**a piece of land,**" or, a field, Greek: *gē*. The present

crop of thorns and thistles – which will be burned off – is not the subject. It is the ground, the land, which correlates to the people of vss. 4-6. This field (= these people) had drunk in "**a blessing from God.**" It (= this group) was good soil and had produced crops "**fit and useful**" to the Farmer (a figure of God; *cf* John 15:1; Jacob [James] 5:7). However, it is now bringing forth useless crops. What is to be done? To sow seeds in among all those thorns and thistles would be to waste the seeds, the effort, and the time (a whole season of potential growth). The time-honored agricultural practice is to burn off an area of land to clear it of weeds,

grasses, etc. that would be competition to the crop that folks wanted to grow. The ash from the burned plants adds both nutrients and mulch to the soil, and an ideal situation is the result.

The word **curse** is *kat-ara*. *Ara* is a prayer, or a wish. *Kata* has the basic meaning of "down," and the extended meanings of "corresponding," or "against," (among others). My parenthetical expansion presents optional renderings that help to give insight to this word that is ordinarily rendered just "curse." Our author may be referencing the situation described in Gen. 3:17-19. There, in the LXX, the same word *gē* (soil; ground; land;

territory) is used to describe Adam, and a strengthened form of the same word is used for "curse." Furthermore, we have the identical phrase "**thorns and thistles**" given as the resulting produce of the soil/land in that judgment. So the folks who are "falling aside along the way" (vs. 6) have returned to the situation and condition from which they had been rescued. They were living as though the Messiah had not yet come – even as those who were of the ethnic multitudes (the Gentiles) and did not know Yahweh. Their condition was the same situation as the plight of humanity: ugly and worthless "fruit."

During the ministry of Jesus to Israel,

many folks came to Him and partook of His teachings, healings and miracles, and then later fell away and returned to their former way of life. John the baptizer spoke of the Holy Spirit baptizing folks with fire, garnering the grain but burning up the worthless part of the dead plant (Lu. 3:16-17). The dead plant (chaff) was a figure of the old covenant religion and existence which brought forth the Seed (the Messiah). But this metaphor by John was also a prophecy that would be fulfilled with the Romans burning Jerusalem in AD 70. Our author here (writing before AD 70) may have had this prophecy in mind, or the prophecy given in the figure of the

destruction of Jerusalem as the burning of Babylon (Rev. 17:16).

But during that first century generation, many were allured by the Judaizers and the Gnostics. These folks would also fit the descriptions given here in our text.

With all of these possible applications, we need to keep in mind that this "judgment" has a positive end in view for the subject of the metaphor: the piece of land (a time-honored figure for Israel in the OT), the field, the territory. These folks would receive a new planting of the Word, and would again produce good fruit by the Spirit of God. Isa. 26:9b makes a profound statement:

"For when Your judgments are

in the earth, the inhabitants of  
the world learn righteousness"  
(NRSV)

"For Thy judgments bring men  
light, till very pagans learn the  
right" (Moffatt)

"For as a light will Your  
judgments be to the earth; the  
dwellers of the habitation will  
learn righteousness" (CVOT)

"When your judgment dawns  
upon the earth, the world's  
inhabitants learn justice"  
(The New American Bible).

The Hebrew word for "earth" used in  
this Isaiah verse is *erets*, which also  
means "land." So this verse can be either

specific as referring to Israel as the land, or general, as a matter of principle. In the first clause, both Moffatt and the CVOT draw upon the LXX.

**9. Yet we have been persuaded of more excellent things [than this] concerning you folks, beloved ones (= dear, accepted friends) – as well as things (or: aspects; qualities) normally clinging closely to (or: holding in themselves from) the sphere of wholeness, health, rescue, safety, deliverance and restoration – even though we keep on speaking in this way!**

Those who would hear this letter read are not like the people of whom he was

just speaking in vss. 4-8. The writer and his or her companions had been convinced – either from what they knew of the recipients, or had heard about them – that they were in a more excellent condition and mode of existence than those who fell to the side of the Path. They knew that these folks held "qualities or aspects" that came "from **the sphere of wholeness, etc.**" which "**normally [were] clinging closely to [that same] sphere of health, deliverance, safety and restoration.**" In other words, the saved and delivered state of being – within which these folks lived – was a source of the essences, characteristics, qualities and aspects

which normally held in themselves that very wholeness, health, safety, deliverance and restoration. Put in a different picture, "Life itself holds the very quality of life and the source of life." This action of "clinging closely to and holding in itself" is what is expressed by the middle voice of the present participle.

These "**things**" come from Christ's deliverance, and at the same time hold in themselves the very aspects and qualities from that deliverance while simultaneously clinging to the sphere of deliverance. Our author's words almost create the same picture of the "forth from the midst, and through the midst and then

[back] into the midst" of Rom. 11:36. It is the imparted Christ Life that holds Itself to the state of being delivered.

Verse 10 describes what this Christ life looked like in these folks who kept on abiding in Him (John 15) and so they

**"by a mirror are continuously observing, as [them]selves, the Lord's [= Yahweh's or Christ's] glory"** (2 Cor. 3:18).

This rhetorical affirmation of the listeners would certainly encourage and uplift.

**10. For the case is, God [is] not unjust** (contrary to fairness and equity shown in the Way pointed out) **to be at any point forgetful** (or: to fully escape the

knowledge or be unaware; in any case to be completely neglectful, disregarding or unnoticing) **of your work and of the love which you pointed out and display into [showing forth] His Name: waiting upon and giving attending service and support of life's necessities to the set-apart (or: sacred; holy) folks – even continuously dispensing [goods] and habitually providing the means of living!**

It would not be right for God to forget their work or their love. This clause is anthropomorphism – a speaking of God as if He/She were a human. It is inconceivable for a person who believes in God to think that God could forget –

although in our trials and ordeals we are always tempted to think that He has indeed forgotten us, which simply displays our humanness. Having read what I just said here, Dan added that since He dwells within us (we are His temple, His home – 2 Cor. 6:16) He is aware of all that we do and participates with us in our works of love (Phil. 2:13). He further points us to 1 John 4:15-16,

**"Whoever may speak in accord (confess; avow; say like words; say the same thing; agree) that Jesus exists being God's Son (or: is continuously the Son which is God), God**

**continuously dwells (abides),  
remaining in him, and he  
himself within God....**

**and the person continuously  
remaining (dwelling; abiding)  
within, and in union with, the  
Love, is continuously  
remaining (dwelling; abiding)  
within, and in union with, God  
– and God constantly dwells  
(remains; abides) within him  
and in union with him."**

Furthermore, in Rev. 2:1 Christ is "**the  
One continuously walking about  
within the midst of the seven golden  
lampstands** (the called-out communities  
– 1:20)" – how could He "be unaware"?

Looking to a witness from the prophets, Yahweh says in Isa. 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.... (and in vs. 5) Fear not, for I am with you..." (J.M. Powis Smith, *et al*). But the point is that He DOES remember and take note of how we live, what we do and how we treat others – for that is right and just. The **"things"** that **"normally cling closely to the sphere of deliverance"** are the **"work and love"** exhibited in **"waiting upon and giving attending service and support of life's necessities to the set-apart (or: sacred; holy) folks – even continuously dispensing [goods] and habitually providing the means of**

**living."** They "**point out**" a life lived in partnership with Christ and with the covenant community.

We should take note that participles of the verb *diakoneo* are used twice in the last part of this verse: first as an aorist, second with the emphasis of continued action of the present tense. In the amplified renderings of these two forms of the verb, I have given the range of meanings which cover the areas from providing table service, to personal attending to someone's personal needs, to dispensing goods or services, to giving financial support. They were doing this as a way of life, and the repetition in the author's noting this

shows us the importance that he or she placed upon this sort of communal behavior. This is a true picture of what Paul called *koinonia* (common existence; partnership). From this verb came later the ecclesiastical term and church office of the "deacon." Things have really changed. We find this verb used of the followers of Jesus in Matt. 27:55,

**"But in addition, many women were there, continuing in viewing and watching from a distance – those who followed Jesus from the Galilee [district], constantly giving attending service to, and**

**materially providing for, Him."**

"**His Name**" means He Himself and His reputation. What we do for His brothers, we do for Him (Matt. 25:40). I rendered the preposition *eis* literally (**into**) and inserted the idea of what the work and love had in view: His Name. Other translators usually render this preposition with a secondary meaning "for," but I feel that this hides both the process, the direction of our work and love, and the goal to which it aims: His Name and reputation.

**11. Now we are constantly setting our hearts and our full desires upon each of you to habitually display the same diligence (or: earnestness; eagerness)**

**with a view to the bearing of the full measure of the expectation** (or: face to face with the full carrying of the expectant hope) – **until the closing act** (the goal; the end; the finished product; the completion),

We see here the characteristic solidarity between the author's group and the recipients. The clause "**we are constantly setting our hearts and our full desires upon**" expresses both the literal meaning (**upon**) and the intensifying aspect (**full**) of the preposition *epi* which is the prefix of the verb *epithumeo*. This gives us a vibrant picture of the intense involvement of their whole being with these "Hebrews."

We see this same personal commitment and focus in the letters of Paul as he expresses himself to the called-out communities to whom he wrote, and what this author has written provides a pertinent example for us to follow.

Their prayer and desire is for these folks to "**display**" – i.e., act out in their lives – "**the same diligence** (earnestness; eagerness)." This gives us another view of how these folks had been living, for the word **display** refers back to the supportive activities described in vs. 10. Here we see from the term "**the same**" that this was done with **diligence, earnestness and eagerness**. The admonition is to do this "**habitually**."

Next we see that this behavior is "**with a view to**" something, and that it is also "face to face with" it (here expressing two meanings of the preposition *pros*). What is in view, and what they are now face to face with, is the *plerophoria* of the expectation. I have chosen to render this word in its literal meanings, "**bearing of the full measure**" or "full carrying." The root of this noun is the verb *phoreo* which means "to bear or to carry." To this stem is prefixed the adjective *pleres* (**full**). These folks (and we, as well) are bearers of the expectation. They are admonished to bear this expectation (Christ within and among them) to its full measure, and to

fully carry it "**until the closing act**" (here *telos* speaks in terms of a play that is being performed), which speaks to the end of their lives. Or, it could speak to the completion of a particular act of support or giving of provision to which vs. 10 was referring. They were to live their lives in carrying an expectation from "**having seen and now knowing that [their] fatiguing labor (or: toil) does not exist without contents (is not empty) within and in union with [the] Lord**" (1 Cor. 15:58b).

12. **so that you may not be birthed (or: come to be) dull or lazy folks, but instead [be] imitators of those [who] through faith and long-breathing (or:**

trust and long-enduring; loyalty and perseverance) **are normally and presently inheriting the promises** (or: one after another acquiring by lot and enjoying the added messages and announcements).

Our author again uses the word "**dull, lazy, sluggish**" which he used of their hearing in 5:11, above. These are the only two places that this word is used in the NT. Here she/he is applying it to behavior and attitude. I first chose the process-oriented rendering of *ginomai* whose root word-family meaning is "**birth.**" This was the metaphor that Jesus used to Nicodemus in John 3:3ff, and expresses entering into a new realm

of existence. "Come to be" is accurate, but flat and colorless. Birth stresses the action of the parents, not self-transformation. Becoming an "imitator" happens "**through**" the **faith, trust and loyalty** that are imparted by the Spirit of Christ entering the individual. We are instructed by Paul that,

**"the faith** (or: the trust; confidence; loyalty) [**comes or arises**] **from out of the midst of, or from within, hearing, yet the hearing [comes] through a gush-effect of Christ, even through the result of a flow which is Christ** (or: through Christ's utterance; through

something spoken concerning Christ; or: by means of a declaration which is anointed, or from Christ; through a word uttered which is Christ; [other MSS: God's speech]" – Rom. 10:17.

With the context of conception in mind (which leads to a birth), the rendering "**gush-effect**" gives us a graphic picture of the Incorruptible Seed (1 Pet. 1:23) entering the womb of the mind-spirit-soul. The "**long-breathing**" (the literal meaning of the word) can apply to how a person deals with any sort of pain (e.g., child-birth, or a serious wounding or breaking). "Long-enduring" is an

extended meaning that refers to less traumatic ordeals or just simple irritations. "Perseverance" would apply to a fruit of the character of Christ that has been birthed within us. It is the mirrored reflection of the loyalty that is the demonstrated quality of Yahweh which we observe in the story of God's relationship with Israel. This can speak to us today in regard to persevering (and sometimes "long-breathing") on our jobs, with our spouses or children, and in tragic loss or chronic pain.

**"Inheriting the promises"** is equivalent to covenant inclusion, salvation/deliverance, being ransomed and freed from slavery, or, as Paul put it

in Rom. 5:1, being

**"rightwised** (placed in the right relationship of [covenantal] solidarity in the Way pointed out and made fair, equitable, just, free from guilt and turned in the right direction) **from the midst of faith, out of trust and with conviction as the source...**"

We should not miss the connotation inherent in the word "inherit." It speaks of Family lineage. We are included in the family of Israel and Abraham (to whom the promises were first given) – and in the Family of God. Recall that Paul instructs us that,

**"since you folks belong to**

**Christ** (or: have [the] Anointing as your source and origin; or: So since you people have the qualities and character of Christ, and [are] that which is Christ), **you are straightway and consequently Abraham's Seed: heirs** (possessors and enjoyers of the distributed allotment), **down from, corresponding to and in the sphere of Promise!"** (Gal. 3:29).

**13. For you see God – after at one point promising to Abraham – since He had, and continues to have, no greater in line with** (or: down into the sphere of; to the level of; according to;

by; against) **which to swear, swore in line with** (down into; by; etc.) **Himself,**  
14. **proceeding in saying,**

**"Assuredly, continuously speaking good (or: blessing) I will continuously speak good to (or: bless) you, then progressively multiplying I will progressively multiply and fill you."** [Gen. 22:17]

15. **And so, in this way enduring long** (breathing and blowing long) **he hit upon the target of** (= obtained) **the promises.**

In vs. 13, the **"no greater"** is literally "not even one greater." God is in a category all by Himself. So He swore

**"in line with** (or: down into the sphere of; to the level of; according to; by; against – *kata*) **Himself** in making the promise to Abraham. From the semantic range of the preposition *kata*, we have an expanded view into this action by God. His promise/oath was **"in line with"** who He is. He spoke it down into Himself. The promise reaches the level of Himself, and He places Himself "against" His words so that they come back to Him as the Guarantor of the promise coming to be. The promise accorded to Him and His character – it revealed Him to us: a God of blessing and multiplying and filling.

Note that no extra words were added to

the promise to make it an oath. The promise itself was based upon who He is and on what He would do for Abraham. The statement made by God was the embodiment of the oath.

In vs. 14 we see the characteristic Hebrew emphatic in the redundancy of the verbs. But here we also have the continual and progressive action expressed in the present tense of the Greek verbs. His words to them would get better and better, as they progressively increased. I added the root sense of the verb *pimplemi* (to **fill**) to which family *plethuno* belongs (*plethos* means "fullness"). There was a goal in mind for His continual blessing and

progressive multiplying. It was the fullness of all the families of the Land/earth (Gen. 12:3; 28:14).

In calculating the years from the time that Abram first received God's promise (Gen. 12:3) until Isaac (the child of the promise) was born was about twenty-five years, and Abraham was one hundred years old. He indeed **endured long** (vs. 15). But, that enduring was the outgrowth of having received the promise in the first place. It was the promise that gave Him the faith to endure. And so it is with us. We are placed into the covenant and are counted as a part of Abraham's Seed (Christ – Gal. 3:29). But we are already enjoying

the allotment of the inheritance (vs. 12). Still, Christ (our inheritance) comes to us and gives us an expectation for our future in Him (Rom. 8:24-25).

**16. For you see, men are swearing by (or: down on; according to) the greater, and to (or: for; with; among) them the oath [is] an end (limit; boundary; termination) of all contradiction and dispute (or: from talking-back in face-to-face opposition), unto an established confirmation.**

Here the author takes an analogy from business transactions and contracts in everyday life to show what God has done in His kingdom and in His covenant relationship with humanity.

Once the arrangement is completed and an oath of commitment and integrity is made, the matter is settled.

17. In [line with] which God – **intending** (or: willing; purposing) **more abundantly to fully demonstrate to the heirs** (or: possessors) **of the promise the unchangeableness** (immutable position) **of His intent** (will; purpose) – **interposed** (mediated between two parties) **with an oath,**

Reaching back to vs. 13, with the example of God swearing to Abraham, we are now instructed that it was God's purpose and intention to "**demonstrate**" that His "**intent and purpose**" was indeed "**unchangeable and immutable.**"

So He mediated (**interposed**; intervened; stepped in between the two parties) "**with an oath.**" Nothing, not even humans, can change His intent and purpose. Now the question that immediately arises is, Who are the two parties between whom He intervened and mediated?

The context is still Abraham, and yet it stretches to the Tabernacle and the "**entering into the interior with reference to the veil**" on the Day of Atonement (vs. 19-20), and then returns to Abraham's day and the Melchizedek priesthood (vs. 20-ch. 7). The subject of the discussion and the pre-text is, in fact, the Messiah as the better Chief Priest of

the new covenant. We see here that this is the same thing to which Paul referred in 2 Cor. 5:19 when he said that God was within the Christ reconciling the world (the aggregate of mankind) to Himself. Paul refers to this in 1 Tim. 2:5, "**One [is the] Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus.**"

We further see in this letter that, "**He continues being a Medium** (an agency; an intervening substance; a middle state; one in a middle position; a go-between; an umpire; a Mediator) **of a superior** (stronger and better) **arrangement** (covenant; settlement; disposition) **which has been instituted** (set by custom; legally established) **upon**

**superior** (stronger and better)

**promises!"** (ch. 8:6, below) So the two parties are God and mankind, and God mediates the arrangement and makes himself the surety of its immutability by swearing on Himself as the proof.

We see again in ch. 9 (a chapter based upon the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement) that Christ is the Medium/Mediator/Go-between "**of a New Arrangement** (covenant; disposition)" – vs. 15. And then ch. 12:24 gives a third witness to this Messianic function, there setting Christ as better than all sacrifices – all the way back to Abel (Gen. 4).

We have a type of God being the

Medium/Mediator/Go-between in the confirmation of His covenant with Abram in Gen. 15:9-18. There the fire of the torch and the smoke indicated God's presence passing between the pieces of the sacrifices during the night, thus symbolically binding God to keep the covenant between Him and Abram. This happened while a deep sleep came upon Abram, so that he did not pass through the pieces. According to the traditions of that time and place, this meant that in this transaction Abram was bound to nothing – but God was. God took upon Himself all the judgment and responsibilities if this covenant was ever broken. It was a unilateral covenant which pictured the

new unilateral covenant/arrangement enacted by God in Christ's death on the cross.

**18. so that by two unchangeable transactions** (practice-effects) **in which [it is] impossible** (without power or ability) **[for] God to deceive** (to lie or be false), **we – those fleeing to refuge – may be constantly having** (holding; possessing) **strong consolation** (a calling alongside with relief, aid and encouragement; services of the Paraclete) **to be strong to get into one's power the prescribed and settled expectation** (or: expectant hope) **continuously lying before [us],**  
The two "transactions" were the

"**promise**" (vs. 13) and the "**oath**" (vss. 16-17). "Here the emphasis falls on the faithfulness of God, a faithfulness underlined by his oath" (Quanbeck, *ibid.* p 906). "There is therefore no possibility of being deceived or disappointed" (A.M. Stibbs, *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1970 p 1202).

Two different words are rendered "**strong**" here: the first simply being that adjective "strong" that applies to the strength and power of the "**consolation and encouragement**," while the second means to be strong in order to get something or someone in one's power and control. The strength inherent in the

services of the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit), along with the aid or relief which He brings, enables us to get "**the prescribed and settled expectation**" – which is continuously lying before us as a future filled with hope and expectation – into our power so that we can lay-hold of it and fully possess it. The present adjectival participle *prokeimenes* means literally "**continuously lying before,**" but it was used of settled pre-arrangements (something that was previously laid out and settled) such as a business contract, or a prize in the games, etc. Here we have an expectation in Christ that was previously arranged by God, and settled by His Word and

His oath. Such a situation should give us great consolation and encouragement as we endure the ordeals of this life.

Notice the descriptive dependent clause "**those fleeing to refuge.**" This is an aorist participle indicating indefinite action, and is thus simply stating a fact. This would be a general statement that refers to all who have sought, or who are presently seeking, the refuge, safety, deliverance and salvation that are resident within the Christ and within this new covenant that was created for the Second Human, the eschatological corporate Adam of whom Jesus is the Head and Source.

19. **which we continuously have** (hold;

possess) **as an anchor of and pertaining to the soul** (or: from the inner life and being), **both secure from falling and established** (firm; steadfast; = on sure footing), **even habitually entering into the interior** (or: then progressively going fully into the inner part) **with reference to the veil** (= entering into the interior [behind] the curtain)

Even though it is an "**expectation** (or: an expectant hope)," our author informs us that "**we continuously have, hold and possess**" it – so much so that it acts as "**an anchor**" which keeps us from drifting with the tide and secures our "position" in God's presence. His

presence is figured by this subtle reference to the temple and to the holy of holies that is behind the veil. See the description in ch. 9:1 ff. The soul can refer to our whole being, or to the interior life and all which that entails. This anchor (the **prescribed and settled expectation**) is secure and established – steadfast and on sure footing. It is not going to slip loose and let us drift or be blown away. And since the temple is also the covenant community, we are assured of our connection and position within His body.

20. **where a Forerunner** (= spy or scout), **Jesus, entered over us** (or: on our behalf; over our [situation]), **down**

**from** (or: in accord with; in the line of [succession of]) **the station** (order; placement) **of Melchizedek, being born** (or: coming to be) **a Chief** (or: Ranking) **Priest on into the midst of the Age** (or: [proceeding] unto the Age [of Messiah]). The picture described by this verse is the entrance of the Chief Priest into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement – the Day on which all the mistakes (sins, errors, failings; deviations) of the entire people were removed by that one Sacrifice. Jesus entered into our midst (and into the midst of us, individually) by His Spirit, for we are the heavenly temple into which He entered with His blood and sprinkled our hearts (ch.

10:19-22).

That He was the "Forerunner" implies that we can now follow Him – into the very presence of God within His throne room (pictured by the holy of holies).

This is here, within our midst corporately and individually. We do not need to seek "spiritual experiences" like the ancient Gnostics, nor like the modern ones.

**"Consider! God's tent (the Tabernacle of God) [is] with mankind (the humans), 'and He will live in a tent (dwell in a Tabernacle) with them, and they will be (will exist being) His people, and God Himself**

**will be with them** [some MSS add: their God]." [Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10; Jer. 31:33; Ezk. 37:27; 2 Chr. 6:18]

This happened on the Day of Pentecost, and He has been living with us ever since. The type of this new reality was God living in the tabernacle amidst Israel.

## Chapter 7

**1. For you see, this Melchizedek, a King of Salem, a Priest of the Most High God (or: from God Most High) – the One meeting with Abraham, [who was] returning from the cutting down (or: smiting) of the kings, and was speaking words of well-being to (or: blessing) him,**

We first saw Melchizedek mentioned in ch. 5:6 where the author first quotes Ps. 110:4 as the source text. In 5:10 he reminds his audience that the Son was proclaimed by God as a Chief Priest corresponding to the station of Melchizedek. Then in 6:20 he states this

again, then references it in 7:11 and 7:15, and then quotes Ps. 110:4 in 7:17 and 21, below.

This story is found in Gen. 14:17-24. Nothing is known about Melchizedek beyond what is stated in these verses. His priesthood was for the "Owner of the heavens and the earth" (vs. 19), and he also served as king of what was probably Jerusalem ("**Salem**"). Abram identified "**the Most High God**" as Yahweh in vs. 22 of that passage. By mentioning that Melchizedek was blessing Abraham, and then that Abraham gave a tithe of the spoil to him (vs. 2), the author is setting Melchizedek as being greater than Abraham – which

then lends weight to the argument that Christ is of a greater order of priesthood, and is likewise even greater than Abraham (who here is representative of the old covenant and the previous age).

**2. to whom also Abraham divided a tenth of all – being first, indeed, translated "King of the Way pointed out" (King of fairness and equity; King of Justice and Righteousness; King of Rightwised Relationships; also: = King of covenant living) and then also (or: afterwards) "King of Salem," which is "King of Peace and Harmony."**

The "**tenth**" of all which Abraham divided out and gave to Melchizedek,

was a tenth of the spoils of war – of "all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply," along with Lot's possessions, which Chedorlaomer and the other three kings had taken (Gen. 14:10-12). It was not a tenth (or, tithe) of Abraham's goods and possessions. Furthermore, Abraham took nothing of these spoils for himself. As stated above, the point is not a basis for tithing being brought into the new covenant, but that the new is greater than the old. "**Shalem** – akin in Hebrew to the word *shalom*, which means not only 'peace' but also 'health, integrity, wholeness' – is the city of Jerusalem. This is clear both from Ps. 76:2 [And His tabernacle is in

Salem; His dwelling place also is in Zion – NASB], where parallel lines of poetry identify Shalem (Salem) with Zion, and from traditional Jewish sources... In Isa. 9:6-7, one of the most important *Tanakh* prophecies of the Messiah (see Lu. 1:79), he is called 'prince of peace'" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1992, p 679, bracketed insertion mine).

The description of Melchizedek being a king as well as a priest opens the way for Christ to be the same – based upon the precedent set by this story from Israel's history. The tie-in of Salem with

Jerusalem also suggests that Jesus is the King of Jerusalem, a figure of being Israel's King. But by stating that this order, to which Christ belongs, is "**King of the Way pointed out**," etc., the author is placing Him as the head and ruler of the new age and new order that has replaced the old way of living with its particular kind of justice and fairness. The Messiah brings a new kind of peace, as well, which is different from the peace that the previous system (the world of the Jews) had given to them (John 14:27) and so they needed no longer to fear or have a troubled heart. It was His peace and harmony – based upon love – that established the covenant

communities.

Barclay sees here significance in the order of the listing of that of which he was a king. "Melchizedek from his name was King of Righteousness, and from his realm King of Peace.... *Righteousness must always come before peace*" (ibid. p 72, italics original). He then cites Rom. 5:1, "**Being, then, folks that were rightwised from the midst of faith, out of trust and with conviction as the source, we continuously hold and progressively have peace and harmony...**" and quotes Rom. 14:17, "The kingdom of God is... *righteousness, peace and joy.*"

3. **[Being] without father, without**

**mother, without a genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, yet being made a likeness from (or: being portrayed or pictured like) the Son of God, he continuously remains a priest to the whole length (extended or stretched into the unbroken continuance) [of time].**

The patriarchal society of ancient Israel was based upon family and clan lineage, and both the priests and the kings were also normally founded along tribal lines. Now all this has changed. God has broken down the dividing walls (Eph. 2:14) and now we are all enabled to be priests (Rev. 1:6) and sons of God (Rom. 8:14). Genealogy no longer

applies. Even the normal life-path (birth to death) no longer applies: it is a matter of spirit, a matter of being a part of God's family.

Being **"without father, without mother, without a genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life"** is considered to be an argument "drawn from the silence" of the Genesis text.

Genealogies are an important characteristic of the book of Genesis. To be a priest in Israel, one had to be able to show that he was a descendant from Aaron. We see in Ezra 2:61-63 and Neh. 7:63-65 that some were debarred from being priests because of an inability to show their genealogy. As to the word

**"without a genealogy"** Barclay states that "no Greek writer ever used [this word] before. It may well be that... [the writer] invented it." (ibid. p 74; brackets mine)

Christ's – and now our – priesthood continues into the times of the ages and is based upon His and our sonship.

Recall that Jesus said,

**"everyone** (or: all mankind)  
**presently** (or: continuing in)  
**living and trusting** (or:  
progressively believing;  
regularly exercising faith) **into**  
**Me can by no means** (or: may  
under no circumstances) **die-off**  
(or: die-away), **on into the**

**Age" (John 11:26).**

This qualifies all believers as being of the Melchizedek order: having no **"end of life"** and thus **"remain[ing] a priest to the whole length."**

**4. Now continuously be gazing as a spectator: How eminent and distinguished [is] this one! – to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth out of the topmost part of the heap [= the spoils of war].**

The author is employing a rhetorical device to call his historical type to be front and center of the audience's attention. He even uses a verb from a theater setting, or from the spectators of the games, in this first clause. This was

obviously a great man, to whom Abraham showed honor and respect – and Jesus is of this same order.

**5. And later, on the one hand, those out of the sons of Levi, in taking the office of a priest, hold (or: possess) an implanted goal (impartation of the finished product and destiny within; inward directive), down from and in accord with the Law, to be receiving tithes from the people, that is, their brothers, even those having come out of the loins of Abraham.**

**6. Yet on the other hand, he (or: the one the man), being not of their genealogy, caused Abraham to pay tithes and has spoken goodness and**

**well-being to (or: blessed) the one holding (or: possessing) the Promise.**

**7. Now without all contradiction (or: apart from every dispute), the inferior is being blessed by the superior (stronger and better; = more important).**

**8. And so here (in this place), in the one case dying-away (rotting; withering) men are receiving (or: taking) tithes; and yet there in the other case, it is being witnessed and attested that he continuously lives (or: he constantly lives and is alive)!**

In these verses the author is more specifically making the contrast clear between the Law with its Levitical priesthood and the new order of the

Messiah. Vs. 6 even says that Melchizedek "**caused**" Abraham to pay tithes, then it repeats the part about his blessing Abraham (the father of all of Israel) who was the possessor of **the Promise**. Vs. 7 makes the outright statement of the point of the argument: "**the inferior is being blessed by the superior.**" Our author strengthens the point in vs. 8 by contrasting the temporal lives of the Levitical priests with the apparent endless life of Melchizedek. So again, Melchizedek becomes a type of the spiritual, heavenly Priest: Christ.

**9. And thus even Levi, receiving tithes, has – if I may say it this way (or: = as it could be said) – been tithed**

(or: = regarded as part of that title)  
**through Abraham. 10. For you see, he was still in the loins of the Father (or: forefather) when Melchizedek met with him.**

We have in these statements a glimpse into the first century Jewish world view. Just as his descendants were in the loins of Adam, what he did affected all his descendants (see Rom. 5:12-21 for a development of this view). Here, what Abraham did was credited to his descendants. There is an unbroken cord that ties each person to the ancestors. Thus also, the Messiah – as the *eschatos* Adam, the Second Man – had in His loins all who would be brought to birth

from Him in the new humanity of the new creation. This is an important point to understand if we are to correctly interpret the arguments of these first century writers.

This point aside, the author is bolstering his argument by showing that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to the Melchizedek priesthood – which both preceded it and now succeeds it. Since Levi tithed to Melchizedek it means that Levi stood in a lesser position. The greater has now been reinstated.

**11. If indeed, then, attainment of the goal (or: completion; perfection; maturity; the finished product and destiny) was, and continued being,**

**through the Levitical priesthood – for based upon it the people have been placed under Law [= Torah] and set in a custom – what need [is there] still [for] a different [kind or line of] priest to be raising Himself up, down from (in accord with and in the line of succession of) the station (order; placement; appointment) of Melchizedek, and not normally said to be down from (in accord with and in the line of succession of) the station (order) of Aaron?**

Simply put: if the old system was sufficient, why change it to a new system? "**Attainment of the goal**" was not possible "**through the Levitical**

**priesthood."**

Note that **"the people have been placed under Law [= Torah] and set in a custom" THROUGH** and **"based upon"** the **"Levitical priesthood."** The name Levi means "joined," and it was the priesthood that joined the people together and joined them to the Law. So, change, transfer or after-place the priesthood, and the people are no longer under the old Law (Torah), or set in its custom.

**12. For it follows that with the priesthood being presently place-changed** (or: progressively after-placed and transferred), **out of necessity** (or: compulsion) **even a change of law [=**

Torah] **is being born** (or: also an after-placement transference of custom is coming into existence).

This is a critical argument. It was the Law that set up the Levitical priesthood. If the priesthood has been changed, then it follows that there must also have been **"a place-change/transference of law [that was] born into existence."** And this means that the associated customs have also experienced a change – for the term "law" also means "custom." Change the law and custom that created the society, and you then have a changed society. A society that was centered in a priest/sacrifice cultus disintegrates or must be re-configured if you remove that

cultus. This is what we have with the new creation, the new covenant, the called-out communities – which were "called out" from the former Law and customs. The old has passed, and the better, more excellent has come to be. Once again, the analogy with the butterfly life-cycle gives us an appropriate picture. There was a "place-change" from the earthly to the heavenly – and the one that flies through the atmospheres looks nothing like and behaves nothing like the one that crawled on the ground. Yet there was continuity: the old gave birth to the new. But the new is not just a "renewed" old – any more than if Mary was

"transformed" into Jesus. Birth means a complete break from the parent, even though the bloodline continues.

**13. For you see, He of (or: upon) Whom these things are now being said has shared in (or: partaken of; participated in) a different tribe, from which no one has attended (given heed to; held [something] toward) to (by; in; for) the altar (= participated in sacrificial duties).**

Under the Law and throughout the history of Israel, the priests came only from the tribe of Levi, and the Messiah, Jesus, was not a Levite.

**14. Now you see [it was] previously clearly visible and obvious that our**

**Lord has risen from out of Judah, into which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning a priesthood.**

The argument proceeds: the whole system of the Law which created the previous arrangement has been set aside, since Moses did not speak of the priesthood in relation to Judah.

**15. And so it is still superabundantly more clearly visible and evident if a different Priest is rising up according to (or: down from; in the line of succession of) Melchizedek's likeness,**  
**16. Who has not been born (brought into existence) down in accord with a law of a fleshly implanted goal (in line with an impartation of a finished**

[human] product and destiny within; or: in correspondence to a custom of a fleshly injunction; = following the pattern of a human directive), **but to the contrary, according to and on the basis of a power and ability of an indissoluble life** (a life not subject to destruction).

The phrase in vs. 16, "**down in accord with a law of a fleshly implanted goal** (etc.)" simply means being a priest because of tribal lineage or ancestry.

The selection of this "**different Priest**" is "**according to and on the basis of a POWER and ABILITY of an indissoluble life** (etc.)." This means the power from the Holy Spirit which

creates in us the Christ Life (first in Jesus, and now in us). There is now a new registry – no longer of the tribe of Levi – and it is symbolically called "**the scroll of 'The Life of the little Lamb'** (or: the little Lamb's scroll of 'The Life')" – Rev. 21:27. It is now all who have the Spirit of Christ living within them who bring the Father to humanity, and function in the "Melchizedek priesthood." For this new creation established the transformed Israel into one tribe including both Jew and Gentile in which Jesus is "**the Firstborn among, within the center of, and in union with many brothers** (= a vast family of believers)!" – Rom. 8:29.

**17. For He is continuously witnessing** [other MSS: it continues being attested],  
**"You [are] a Priest on into the Age, according to (down from) the station (order; placement; arranging; succession) of Melchizedek."** [Ps. 110:4]

Our author calls again his "proof text" to the minds of his audience. This prophecy about the Messiah predicts and prescribes a new priesthood with a new law (which Paul calls "**the principle and law of, and which is, the spirit and attitude of 'The Life within Christ Jesus'**" which "**frees you away from the Law of the Sin and the Death**" – Rom. 8:2).

**18. For on the one hand, a displacement** (or: setting-aside; annulment; repudiation; cancellation; abrogation) **of a preceding implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product and destiny within; inward directive) **is being born** (or: comes into existence) **because it [was] without strength and without increase** (without help, profit, benefit or gain) –

**19. you see, the Law perfects nothing** (brought nothing to its goal or destiny; finishes nothing) – **yet on the other hand [this is] a fully leading-in** (or: a bringing-in upon; an introduction; [note: according to Thayer, this was used in Josephus of the introduction of a new

wife in place of one repudiated]) **of a superior** (stronger and better) **expectation** (or: expectant hope) **through which we are continuously and progressively drawing near to and in, by and with God.**

So not only is there a setting-aside of the priesthood, but also a setting-aside of the entire Law, since it "brought nothing to its goal or destiny." The "**displacement**" of the "**preceding implanted goal** (= the Law)" was at the same time "**a fully leading-in of a superior expectation.**" This expectation is the Messiah, Jesus the Anointed One. It is He that is superior to the old arrangement. He brought us into the new

in which we are now the temple as well as the priests. We are "**continuously and progressively drawing near to and in, by and with God.**" We draw near to Him and in Him. We do this by God and with God. In the new creation we are "in Christ" and "**the person continually joining himself** (or: being habitually glued in intimate union; in himself being continuously welded) **to** (or: in; with) **the Lord exists being one spirit** (or: one Breath-effect)" – 1 Cor. 6:17.

Jesus spoke of this new arrangement as being "**in spirit and in truth/reality**" in John 4:23-24.

**20. Also, to the extent that [it was] not without a swearing of an oath, 21.**

for on the one hand there are indeed men that have become priests apart from a sworn oath, yet on the other hand, He [became one] with an oath sworn through, and by means of, the One saying to Him,

"The Lord [= Yahweh] swore (or: swears) and shall not be regretting (having after-care), 'You are a Priest on into the Age [other MSS add: according to and in line with the order and succession of Melchizedek]'."  
[Ps. 110:4]

Taking the argument even further, the author now contrasts "men" who become priests "apart from a sworn

**oath,"** to Christ, of Whom the prophecy in the psalms says that Yahweh swore concerning Him. So in even this aspect the new Priest and priesthood is superior to the old. "These verses must be read in the light of 6:13-20 (compare Gal. 3:15-18)." (Stern, *ibid.* p 682)

**22. Correspondingly, to that extent also, Jesus has become a guarantee (pledge; surety; sponsor) of a superior (stronger and better) arrangement (or: covenant; disposition).**

In the same way and to the same extent, Jesus – by giving His blood, and thus His life, to us – gave a "**superior arrangement/covenant**" to us. Recall what He said to His disciples at the

covenant meal with them,

**"This is the blood – pertaining to My arrangement (My covenant; or: My will; [with other MSS: This is My blood which is the source of the New Covenant]) – the [blood] being now progressively poured, scattered and diffused out over many [folks; peoples]."**  
(Mark 14:24)

**23. Furthermore, indeed, many are the folks having become priests, [in succession] – because of [predecessors], one after another, being cut off (thus: hindered) by death from continuing in abiding near**

(remaining at the side),

24. **but He, on account of His continuously remaining on into the Age, constantly holds** (continuously possesses) **the unable-to-be-walked-along** (or: the not-going-to-the-side; inviolate; infallible) **priesthood.**

He repeats the thoughts of vs. 16b by comparing the ordinary priests that eventually died to the resurrected existence of "**His continuously remaining on into the Age.**" The adjective that modifies the word "**priesthood**" is used only this once in the NT. I have given the literal meaning in bold, and then more extended meanings in the parenthetical expansion.

**"Unable-to-be-walked-along"** would suggest that this is a priesthood that cannot be lived or performed by a natural life: it is a spiritual, "heavenly" priesthood. **"Not-going-to-the-side"** would suggest that it would always follow the Way, the Truth and the Life. Inviolable would mean that it could not be violated or profaned and was unimpaired. Infallible would mean that it is certain and incapable of error. Since our author has been consistently comparing the natural priesthood to the exceptional Melchizedek order, I suggest that the bold rendering is the correct one.

**25. Consequently He is also continuously able and powerful to be**

**constantly delivering** (continuously setting-free, restoring to health and making whole) – **unto the finishing of all** (unto the completed goal of everything; into the midst of the all-perfection; unto the end of all; into the final act and destiny of all) – **those folks habitually approaching God through Him [Who is] always living to be repeatedly effecting encounters over them and to hit the internal target.**

All his previous arguments are headed-up in this consummating statement. He is "**continuously able and powerful,**" and so we can count on Him as a Savior, a Deliverer, One to set us free if we become enslaved or held captive, and

One to restore us to health and wholeness. Not only will He do this from time to time, as we need it, but He will do all this "**unto the finishing of all**," or, "unto the completed goal of everything (etc.)." The Greek phrase is: *eis to panteles*. The adjective, serving as the object of the preposition "into/unto/into the midst of," is composed of *pas* (all; every) and *telos* (goal; destiny; finished product; final act; perfection). The phrase speaks of a purposed movement toward a determined goal which will finish God's plan of the ages (Eph. 3:11). It also assures us that His deliverance will be with us throughout the entire process and

bring us into a state of "all-perfection" when the destiny of everyone has been attained.

As to "**approaching God through Him,**" recall John 14:6,

**"I Myself am (exist being) the Way (or: Path), the Truth (the Reality) and the Life (or: = I am the way to really live). No one is presently going to, or progressively coming toward, the Father, except through Me (through means of Me, or, through the midst of Me)." Cf**  
Acts 4:12

**26. For a Chief Priest such as this One was, and continues to be, fitting**

(appropriate; proper) **for us: loyal and dedicated, benign** (without bad quality; harmless; without bad form; not ugly), **unstained** (undefiled), **having been parted** (severed; separated) **away from those failing to hit the target** (those making errors; the sinners), **even being birthed higher than the atmospheres and heavens,**

Humanity needs this kind of Chief Priest – One that is **fitting, appropriate and proper** for our condition and situation. As is typical of Asiatic rhetoric, the author stacks up qualities and descriptions that paint a picture of the perfect Chief Priest, superior to all who came before:

**loyal and dedicated** – to us, as well as to God **benign, without bad qualities, harmless, without bad form, not ugly** (in attitude or behavior) – in other words, He is good, ideal and beautiful to us **unstained and undefiled** – not touched by the world's impurities or pollutions **parted away from those failing to hit the target** – this qualified Him for being able to deliver those missing the goal and making mistakes **birthed higher than the atmospheres/heavens** – He reigns over the atmospheres and the heavens.

He is the enthroned King. The three heavens (the place of God's home) were figured by the outer court, the holy place and the holy of holies: the temple. He was "birthed" to be in a place that transcends and fulfills the type set forth by the old covenant arrangement of God's house on earth. We are now the temple, the heavens, and He is the Head of the body which comprises this figure – and we are **"caused [us] to sit together within the things situated upon [thus, above] the heavens"** (Eph. 2:6).

**27. Who is not having daily necessity, just as the chief priests, to repeatedly offer up sacrifices over their own failures (errors; sins) before, and after that, those of the people. For this He performed just once (once for all; on one [occasion]), offering up Himself [other MSS: bringing (or: carrying) Himself toward {God, or, us} (or: presenting Himself)].**

The first point of this argument involves the daily offerings that the priests offered, as contrasted to the "once for all" sacrifice performed by Christ – in which He offered up Himself. Here we see an entirely new concept: the Priest is also the Sacrifice, yet it is the sacrifice

on the cross that inaugurated His Priesthood, with His resurrection allowing Him to enter the heavenly temple – which will be discussed below. The second point involved the repeated need to "**offer up sacrifices over their own failures**" which Barclay addresses:

"The greatest of all the Levitical sacrifices [the Day of Atonement] began with a sacrifice for the sins of the High Priest. That was a sacrifice Jesus never needed to make, for he was without sin" (ibid. p 85, bracketed insertion mine).

The phrase "**just once**" (*ephapax*)

referred to the sacrifice which happened just one time during the year, on the Day of Atonement, and which symbolized the cleansing of all of Israel and the removal of all the failures and sins from the entire people for the whole year. While also setting this in contrast to the daily offerings, the alternate meaning of *ephapax*, "once for all," signifies that this one offering was for all humanity and applied for all time. This had the effect of completely ending the sacrificial system, once for all.

David Stern makes an interesting statement,

"Jewish tradition condemns human sacrifice in the strongest

language, recoiling in horror at the primitive notion that an innocent person should be put to death for the sake of an intangible supposed benefit to someone else" (ibid. p 682).

Both textual traditions of the last participle phrase are well-supported, and each can be interpreted as referring to the procedures of the sacrifice.

However, the alternate MS readings (*prosphero*) can be understood with the emphasis of "presenting Himself" either to God or to humanity. With this interpretation, rather than an offering brought toward God, we can see a picture of God within Christ (following

Paul's wording in 2 Cor. 5:19) bringing Himself to us, presenting Himself face-to-face with (the idea in *pros-*) us to sprinkle His life-blood upon our hearts (ch. 10:20-22, below).

**28. You see, the Law (or: custom) is continually placing (setting down) people having weakness (want of strength) [as] chief priests. But the word pertaining to the sworn oath (or: which was the act of taking an oath) [which came] after the Law [appoints] a Son [Who is] One having been finished, perfected, brought to the goal and is now complete, [leading] unto (or: on into; into the midst of) the Age [of the Messiah]!**

The Law made use of fallen, estranged humans to function as the type of God giving Himself to us and for our predicament. In this alienated condition we are morally weak and dying. But in contrast to this, the "**word pertaining to the sworn oath**" came "**after the Law**" (written centuries later, during the time of the writing of Ps. 110) and functioned to appoint "**a Son**" (Jesus, the Messiah) as the "**finished, perfected**" Human that had been "**brought to the goal and is now complete.**" He is described by Paul as the "**purposed and destined** (or: complete; finished; mature; full-grown; perfect; goal-attained) **adult man**" in Eph. 4:13, and as the Last Adam, the

Second Human, in 1 Cor. 15:45-47. He is the one that has led humanity on into the midst of the Age of the Messiah, otherwise called, "the new creation."

## Chapter 8

1. **Now as a summary and main point, added to the things being presently said** (or: the head [topic] of the discussion): **we continue having such a Chief and Ruling Priest, Who sat down at the right of the Throne of the Greatness** (or: in union with the place of power and receiving in Majesty's seat of authority) **within the midst of the atmospheres** (or: in union with and participating in the heavens; = the realm of rule over the earth) –
2. **a Public Servant** [note: this word referred to a property owner performing public service at His own expense] **of**

**the set-apart folks** (of the holy ones; or: of the holy things; or: of the Holies; from the sacred places) – **even** (or: and) **of the true and real Tabernacle** (or: tent; = God's home among His people) **which the Lord** [= Yahweh] **pitched, not man** (or: people; humanity).

Jesus, the Messiah, is affirmed by our author to be the new Chief and Ruling Priest of this new order. But He is also the enthroned King – as is seen by the term **Throne**. Yet at the same time He is a Public Servant – a sponsor, as it were – of the set-apart folks, even of the "**true and real Tabernacle**" (also *cf* 9:11, below). The word "**set-apart**" is in the plural masculine and so I have rendered

it "**set-apart folks** (or: holy ones)" which would refer to the called-out communities. But if the author is meaning to continue the metaphor of the tabernacle, this word could refer to the holy things of the tabernacle, or – as an ablative instead of a genitive – "from the sacred places." All of these make sense to the context.

The last phrase of vs. 2 is a picture similar to what Paul describes in the last phrase of 2 Cor. 5:1,

**"For we have seen, and thus know, that if our house, of the tabernacle which is pitched on the land, would at some point be dismantled (or: that**

whenever our house, which is this tent upon the earth, should be loosed down), **we constantly have** (continuously hold; presently possess) **a structure** (a building) **forth from out of the midst of God: an eonian house** (a house having the qualities and character which pertain to the Age; a house for the ages) – **not made by hands – within the midst of the heavens** (or: in union with, or resident within, the atmospheres)."

This is the same tabernacle/house within which is located "**the Throne of the**

**Greatness**" of 8:1, above. See also 1:3 with the comments, above; the term **Greatness** is an echo of 1 Chron. 29:11. This is "a euphemism for God" (Stern, *ibid.* p 683). Keep in mind that "the heavens or atmospheres" is the realm and sphere of God, and the tabernacle was the place where He lived among the people. The ark, within the holy of holies, was His throne. What our author is telling these folks is that Christ has taken up His place as the Chief Priest among them (who are priests of this new order) and is ruling from being seated on the Mercy Seat that is within the midst of them (both corporately and individually – being joined in spirit to them). And so

we can understand Paul's reference to God's Peace "ruling" (acting as an umpire at the games) within our hearts – Col. 3:15. We can follow our author's line of reasoning when we realize that Ps. 110:1, which begins with the words, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool,' says in vs. 4, "You are a priest for the eon, according to the order of Melchizedek." (CVOT) We should also keep in mind that Rev. 21:3 informs us that **"God's tent (the Tabernacle of God) [is] with mankind (the humans), and He will live in a tent (dwell in a Tabernacle) with them"** – which has its reference to Lev. 21:11-12. See also the concept of

"Immanuel" in Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10 (this last verse ending "For God [is] with us"). We see that this applied to Jesus in Matt. 1:23. *Cf* Ezk. 37:27

In reference to Paul's mentioning "**the tabernacle which is pitched on the land... at some point be[ing] dismantled,**" above, Dan Kaplan suggests that Paul was alluding to the prediction by Jesus about the destruction of the Temple – which would happen in AD 70. Although on one level Paul may have been referring to our individual bodies, the fact that he used the corporate plural may suggest that here, too, he was referring to the body of Christ, the new Temple of God, when he

said, "we continuously have a structure forth from out of the midst of God... within the midst of the heavens (or: in union with, or resident within, the atmospheres)."

3. **Now you see, every chief priest is being placed (or: set down; or: = appointed) into the [situation; job] to be repeatedly offering both gifts and sacrifices. In consequence or consideration of this [it seems] necessary for this One to continue having something which He may offer.** This was the picture that the old covenant presented, and it was true for pagan priests, as well. The Messiah came to "fulfill" the old while

inaugurating the new. He was the Light that dispelled the shadows.

**4. Indeed therefore, if He were upon earth, He would not even have been a priest, there constantly being those folks who keep on offering the gifts according to the Law (or: in line with custom, or [Torah]),**

**5. who are constantly rendering service for (or: in) an example (underlying copy; the effect of something shown from under) and by (or: in; with) a shadow of the folks upon the heavens**

(or: of the super-heavenly ones; or: of the things pertaining to completely heavenly places and things; or: of [things

or situations] from the One [resident] upon the atmosphere), **just as Moses had been managed** (or: instructed), **being about to finish** (complete; perfect) **the Tabernacle. For He continues to bring to light by declaration,**

**"Continue to observe so as to see that you make** (or: construct) **all things down from and in accord with the pattern** (the type; the impress made by a strike; the mark of the wound inflicted) **shown to you** (presented to your sight) **on** (or: in; in the midst of) **the mountain."** [Ex. 25:40]

So if the old covenant had simply been "renewed" – or if a "transformation" (as David H. Stern renders *metathesis* in 7:12) had occurred – it would have still been "**upon earth**" (as opposed to it being a "heavenly" or spiritual covenant) and "**He would not even have been a priest**" because priests came from the tribe of Levi – it was a genealogical system.

The old covenant which Moses established was "**a shadow**" as compared to the real, the true. This is part of what Jesus meant when He said "**I Myself am (exist being) the Way (or: Path), the Truth (the Reality) and the Life**" (John 14:6). Up to then they had

only the "**shadow**," but in Him they could now have "**the Reality**." The entire new priesthood is "in Christ," our Chief Priest. The whole idea of a priesthood is itself simply a metaphor for our being image-bearers of God (Gen. 1:26) and for our bringing the Life of Christ to others through the proclamation of the message. He is the Path which leads to the Father. His life of self-giving love is **the Way** of this new cruciform priesthood. We are to lay down our souls for our friends, as Jesus said in John 15:

12. "**This is My implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward

directive; interior purpose and destiny): **that you keep on loving one another – correspondingly as** (to the same degree as; in the same sphere as) **I love you folks.**

13. **"No one continues holding** (or: having) **greater love than this: that someone should place** (set; lay; lay down) **his soul** (or: soul-life; inner being; self; person) **over [the situation or circumstances of]** (or: on behalf of) **his friends.**

14. **"You folks are** (exist continuously being) **My friends!**  
**So if you can – or would –**

[**simply**] **keep on doing** (or: be habitually producing) **whatever I Myself am constantly imparting as the goal in you** (or: repeatedly giving as inner direction to you; progressively implanting as the end for you; now implanting as the interior purpose and destiny by you)!  
..."

This "**implanted goal** (etc.)" is the new covenant. Loving other people in the way that He lays out in these verses from John is "**the Life**" of the new priesthood of Melchizedek that gives "bread and wine" (Gen. 14:18) to people in the same way that Jesus did – symbolized by

His life-blood that they were to drink from His cup.

The entire old covenant cultus was "**the pattern** (the type; the impress made by a strike; the mark of the wound inflicted)."

The symbolism inherent in the semantic range of this Greek word that our author highlights in choosing this quote should not be missed. And yet, that type pointed only to the death of the Messiah, and not beyond. For that shadowy pattern was discarded once Christ arose from the dead and came into the temple of His new creation, sprinkling our hearts with His life-substance (10:22; 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2). The "**mountain**" was Sinai. It was a figure of the Law [Torah], and Paul

instructs us what to do with Sinai (and thus, the Law) in Gal. 4:21,

**"Go on telling me, those of you constantly wanting or intending to be under Law (or: exist [controlled] by a legalistic custom or system, or [Torah]), do you not continue listening to and hearing the Law (or: paying attention to the [Torah])?"**

Then he builds his argument in vss. 24-26,

**24. – which things are habitually being allegorized (or: are normally being expressed in an allegory; are**

commonly spoken of as something other [than what the language means]) – **for these women are** (= represent) **two settled arrangements** (covenants; contracts; wills): **one, on the one hand, from Mount Sinai, habitually** (repeatedly; continuously) **giving birth into slavery** (or: bondage) – **which is Hagar.**

**25. Now this Hagar is** (= represents) **Mount Sinai, within Arabia, and she continuously stands in the same line** (row; rank; = corresponds to; or: is habitually rudimentary together)

**with the present Jerusalem,  
for she continues in slavery  
(or: bondage) with her  
children.**

**26. Yet, on the other hand, the  
Jerusalem above is (continues  
being) free, who is (or: which  
particular one continues being)  
our mother.**

He hammers home his point in vs. 30,  
**"Cast out (or: At once expel)  
the servant girl (the slave-girl;  
the maid) and her son, for by  
no means will the son of the  
servant girl (the slave-girl; the  
maid) be an heir (take  
possession of and enjoy the**

distributed allotment) **with the son of the freewoman."**

[Gen. 21:10]

The old covenant with its Torah (Law) will **"by no means be an heir with the Son."** Our author here and Paul preach the same message.

**6. But now He has hit the mark of a thoroughly carried-through public service, even by as much as He continues being a Medium (an agency; an intervening substance; a middle state; one in a middle position; a go-between; an umpire; a Mediator) of a superior (stronger and better) arrangement (covenant; settlement; disposition) which has been instituted (set by**

custom; legally [= by/as Torah] established) **upon superior** (stronger and better) **promises!**

All that was previous to the Messiah missed the mark, failing to bring folks to the goal. "**He has hit the mark of a thoroughly carried-through public service**" (*Cf* vs. 2, above, where the author refers to Him with a different form – "**Public Servant**" – of this same word). It was a finished work that was "**thoroughly carried-through.**"

I chose as the primary rendering of *mesites* "**Medium,**" in the sense of "an agency; an intervening substance or a middle state." The use of this word in the arts, today, also conveys the central

idea. But it can also mean "one in a middle position – as a go-between," or "an umpire; a Mediator." You may choose whichever fits your horizon or your theology. What this means is that He dispenses the "**superior arrangement**" to humanity. This is another way of saying that He is **the Way**. He is the substance of which this "stronger and better disposition/settlement and covenant" is made. He is the Agency that provides the Christ-life to us.

The word "**instituted**" is the perfect passive of the verb *nomotheteō*. Please observe my parenthetical expansion of the semantic range. It is made of *nomos*

(Law; custom; Torah – in Jewish contexts) and *tithemi* (set; put; place; lay). David Stern argues that this means that the new covenant is a new Torah, and in a sense, he is right. As Paul said in Rom.8:2,

**"For the principle and law of, and which is, the spirit and attitude of 'The Life within Christ Jesus'**

(or: For you see, the Law of Life's spirit, joined with [the] Anointing of Jesus; or: For the Spirit's law of life within Christ Jesus; or: the Law [= Torah] from the Breath-effect, which is Life in union with [the]

Anointed Jesus)

**frees you away from the Law of the Sin** (or: the principle of failure and the missing of the target; the code of behavior that produces error; the principle of deviation from the goal) **and the Death** (or: immediately set you [other MSS: me] at liberty from the law that deals with and has the character of sin and death)."

I suggest that here "**the Law of the Sin and the Death**" refers to the principle of the old Adamic life, and to Israel's Torah. Torah "also carries the sense of 'teaching' or 'instruction,' as reflected in more recent translations (Job 22:22; Ps.

78:1; Prov. 2:8; 4:2; 13:14; Isa. 30:9)" (*Holman Bible Dictionary*, Holman Bible Publishers, 1991, p 1358). In this sense I concur with Mr. Stern and have included this meaning in my translation. However, rendering this verb "given as *Torah*" as he does in *Jewish New Testament* (David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, 1989, p 302) where one of the definitions of *Torah* is given as "Pentateuch," seems out of place in this present context in which the teachings of the Messiah and His sent-forth messengers of the new covenant are put in contrast to the "teachings" of the Pentateuch.

Furthermore, the basis of what has been

**"instituted"** is "stronger and better" **promises**. This calls to mind how Paul's argument concerning the **promise** of covenant inclusion by grace from out of Christ's faith is set in contrast to **Law/Torah** in Rom. 4:13-16. Also, in a similar way to our author here reaching back before Torah to Melchizedek and pointing out that Ps. 110 was hundreds of years **after** the Torah, Paul argues in Gal. 3:16-18,

16. **Now the promises were declared** (said; spoken) **to** (or: for; in) **Abraham, and to** (or: for; in) **his Seed** (Descendant). **It** (or: He) **is not saying, "And to the seeds** (descendants)," as

**upon many, but rather, as upon One, "And to, for and in your Seed," [Gen. 12:7; 13:15; etc.] Who exists being Christ (or: which is [the] Anointed One).**

**17. Further, I am now saying and meaning this: the Law [= Torah], being that having come into existence after four hundred and thirty years, is not invalidating (depriving of authority; annulling) into the situation to idle-down (render ineffective, useless, unproductive or inoperative) the Promise – a settled arrangement (contract;**

covenant; will and testament deed of gift) **existing as having been previously validated** (confirmed; legally ratified) **by, and under [the authority of], God!**

**18. For if the inheritance** (the possession and enjoyment of the distributed allotment) **[is] from out of Law [= Torah], [it is] no longer from out of Promise. Yet God has Himself graced [it]** (has for Himself, in favor, freely granted [it]), **so that it now stands as a favor of grace, to (or: for; in) Abraham through a Promise** (or: because

of a promise).

**7. For if that first one was being unblamable** (without ground for faultfinding; beyond criticism; satisfying), **a place of a second one would not have continued to be sought** (looked for).

Notice the contrasting words: **the first one; a second one**. Again, it is not one that was later "renewed" or "transformed." They are totally different. **The first one** was bilateral; the **second one** is unilateral – like the covenant made with Abraham; God is the one that fulfills it.

Now as to **blame, faultfinding, criticism** and **dissatisfaction**, let us review what

Paul had to say about the **first one**:

- **"for the effect of letter habitually kills** (or: the result of writing something into a text repeatedly puts away in death)....
- **"the attending service of the Death** (or: the dispensing of provision from death; the serving of provisions and support, which is the death) – **being one that has been formed by a beaten impression of types and the outlines**

**of patterns that exists  
as engravings within  
letters and the effects  
of written texts  
chiseled on stones....**

- "which was being  
progressively  
unemployed so as to  
be brought down to  
having no work, to be  
ineffective and  
nullified....**
- "the attending service  
and dispensing of the  
corresponding  
evaluations and  
commensurate**

**decisions which follow  
the pattern (or:  
separations for  
condemnation;  
judgments which are  
down-decisions against  
folks)....**

- **"being made ineffective  
and nullified....**
- **"of that which was being  
progressively  
unemployed and  
brought down to doing  
no work and being  
made ineffective and  
nullified....**
- **"the results of their**

**mental conceptions,  
intellectual workings  
and thought processes  
were petrified....**

- **"the same head-covering  
(veil) continues  
remaining (dwelling;  
abiding) upon the  
reading of the old  
covenant (arrangement;  
thorough placement)....**
- **"because it [i.e., the old  
covenant and  
arrangement] continues  
being progressively  
and fully unemployed  
and brought down to**

**doing no work and  
being made useless,  
ineffective and  
nullified within Christ**  
(or: = the old  
arrangement and  
covenant is nullified in  
union with [the]  
Anointing, and in the  
midst of Christ)....

- **"whenever Moses should  
be repeatedly read  
[e.g., in the synagogue],  
a head-covering (veil)  
continues lying upon  
their heart (= the  
innermost being of the**

group)."

These are excerpts from 2 Cor. 3:6-15.  
(I owe the idea for this presentation to  
Dan Kaplan)

But Paul does not leave them with the  
old covenant, for like the writer of  
Hebrews he makes the positive contrasts  
of the new throughout this same passage:

- **"yet the Spirit** (or: the  
spirit; the breath-effect;  
the Attitude)  
**continuously gives life**  
(or: repeatedly makes  
alive; progressively  
forms life; habitually  
creates life)!....
- **"how shall not rather the**

**attending service and dispensing of the provision of the Spirit** (or: which has its source in the Breath-effect; marked by, pertaining to and being the effect of the spirit and attitude) **be within glory** (exist in the midst of a manifestation which calls forth praise; be in union with a good reputation, as well as imagination)?....

· **"to a much greater**

**degree does the  
attending service and  
the dispensing of the  
fairness and equity in  
rightwised  
relationships (or:  
righteousness from  
covenantal inclusion:  
that which corresponds  
to the Way pointed out,  
and which turns us in  
the right direction)  
progressively surround  
and continuously  
exceed in glory (or:  
habitually overflow  
with a manifestation**

which calls forth praise  
and brings a good  
reputation)!....

- **"on account of the transcending glory which is constantly surpassing [that] and progressively over-casting [us]...**
- **"to a much greater extent is the continuously remaining one (the dwelling, abiding and enduring one) [existing] within the midst of glory....**

- **"Therefore,**  
**progressively**  
**possessing** (having and holding) **an**  
**expectation** (or:  
expectant hope) **such as**  
**this, we habitually use**  
**much freedom of**  
**speech and bold lack**  
**of reserve** (or: are  
constantly telling it all  
with absolute  
unreservedness, based  
upon our citizenship)....
- **"Yet whenever the time**  
**should be reached**  
**when it [= the heart]**

**will twist and turn upon, so as to face toward, [the] Lord [= Christ],**

**"the head-covering (veil) is by habit progressively taken from around [it]" ....**

- **"so where [the] Lord's Breath-effect (Spirit; Attitude) [blows, there is] freedom (or: and so in the place in which the Breath-effect – the Spirit – which is [the]**

Lord [= Christ or  
Yahweh] [blows],  
liberty [comes])."

This is **freedom** from the bondage of the old covenant; it is being liberated from the Law [Torah]. Paul ends this passage with vs. 18,

**"But we all, ourselves – having a face that has been uncovered and remains unveiled** [note: as with Moses, before the Lord, Ex. 34:34] – **being folks who by a mirror are continuously observing, as ourselves, the Lord's** [= Yahweh's or Christ's] **glory** (or: being those who progressively reflect – from ourselves as by a mirror – the glory of [our] Owner), **are presently being**

**continuously and progressively transformed into the very same image, from glory into glory – in accord with and exactly as – from [the] Lord's Breath-effect (or: from [the] Spirit and Attitude of [the] Lord [= Christ or Yahweh])." – Comment: considering the context of this chapter in 2 Cor., this may refer to the transformation from the glory of Moses, into the glory of Christ; or, it may be speaking of a from-time-to-time transfiguration from the glory of humanity into the glory of the Anointing, on an individual basis.**

**The "twist and turn upon, so as to face toward, [the] Lord [= Christ]" is the turning away from the Law and the old**

covenant, the leaving it behind, and the focusing upon the Messiah and the new arrangement. So long as folks focus upon the OT Scriptures, and base their thinking upon what has passed away, they will not participate in the glory of the new: the glory of Christ. A veil will cover their eyes and their hearts and they will return to bondage.

Verses 8b-12, below, is the longest citation of the OT that is in the NT. It is another core argument involving the new arrangement that has come with the advent of the Messiah:

**8. For continuously blaming** (finding fault and being dissatisfied with) **them,**  
**He is saying,**

**"Consider! Days are progressively coming,' says the Lord [=Yahweh], 'and I shall progressively bring an end together (a conclusion of its destiny; or: a joint-goal) upon the house of Israel and upon the house of Judah with a new arrangement (covenant; disposition),**

This act of God did not involve just the Jews: it applied to both houses, and the house of Israel had been almost totally dispersed by the first century AD. Many, if not most, of the dispersion had lost their identity markers and had been absorbed into Gentile cultures. But the

point is that Yahweh was bringing an "**end together**" to the chapters of mankind's story that had begun with the covenant arrangements implemented through Moses. The Greek verb used here is *suntelo*, which is composed of *sun* (together; with; joint-) and *telo* (to bring to an end; to conclude; to finish; or: to bring to a goal). So the complete story of both houses has been concluded with the final chapter being the goal of the story: the arrival of the Messiah, which also brings to a finish the story begun in Gen. 3 and prophesied in vs. 15 there – the Seed of the woman that was to bruise/wound the head of the serpent. The word used for "**new**" here is *kainos*.

William Barclay discusses the two words used for "new" in the following:

"This covenant will not only be new; *it will be different in quality and in kind.* In Greek there are two words for *new*.

*Neos* describes a thing as being new in point of time. It might be a precise copy of its predecessors, but since it has been made after the others, it is *neos*. *Kainos* means not only new in point of time, but new in point of quality. A thing which is simply a reproduction of what went before may be *neos* but it is not *kainos*.

This covenant which Jesus introduces is *kainos*, not merely *neos*; it is different in quality from the old covenant" (ibid. p 92, emphasis his).

9. **"not down from nor in accord with the arrangement (covenant) which I made with their fathers, in a day of My taking hold upon their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not remain (abide; dwell) in My arrangement (covenant) and, for my part, I cared not for (was unconcerned about; neglected) them,' says the**

**Lord** [= Yahweh].

The prepositional phrase that begins this verse makes the difference indicated by the word *kainos* very clear. This arrangement is "**not down from nor in accord with**" the arrangement that came through Moses when God led Israel out of Egypt. This "different" covenant does not follow the lines of the first one. Jesus made two analogies in Matt. 9:16-17 which speak to this very topic: 16. "**Now nobody normally puts a patch of unshrunk cloth upon an old outer garment. You see, its filling-effect (i.e.,**

the pre-shrunken patch which fills in the hole) is progressively pulling up away from the outer garment, and the split-effect (tear; rip; rent) progressively becomes worse.

17. "Neither are people normally draining fresh, recently made, new wine into old skin-bags (bottles), otherwise the skin-bags are constantly bursting (being torn open), and then the wine is constantly being spilled out and the skin-bags continue being destroyed (ruined). To the contrary, people normally

**drain fresh, just-made, new wine into skin-bags having a new character and quality – and both continue being preserved."**

The idea of "renewing" the old covenant is contrary to the point that Jesus made in these two illustrations about the teaching which He was bringing to them. But He was destined to bring it to the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24) and the judgment that God brought upon them did burst the **skin-bag** of the old covenant, to the point of the temple being torn down.

10. **"Because this is the arrangement (covenant; disposition) which I shall continue arranging for**

**the house of Israel, after those days,' says the Lord:**  
**'progressively giving My Laws into their thought** (into that which goes through their mind; into their perception and comprehension), **and I shall progressively imprint them** (write or inscribe marks) **upon their hearts, and I shall continue being in and among them** ([in relation] to them; for them), **into** [the position of] **a God, and they shall continue being** (exist being) **in Me** ([in relation] to Me; for Me), **into** [the position of] **a people.**

And so it has happened: His teachings have been implanted into our **thoughts** and have been figuratively **imprinted** and inscribed upon the cores of our beings. And this is a progressive work.

The last half of the verse would seem strange if it was applying to the old covenant, for Israel was already His people and He was already their God. So here, again, we see that something entirely new is happening. You see, the new arrangement involves all humanity, for the ethnic multitudes (the Gentiles) have been

brought near (Eph. 2:12-13) and now this new creation in the Second Humanity (1 Cor. 15:47) has come to **"be in Him into [the position of] a people"** and He is now **"among them (or: in them) into [the position of] a God"** for them. I left the prepositions with their literal meanings to indicate that this change is a change in position and relation.

11. **"And they may by no means teach each one his fellow-citizen, and each one his brother, saying, "Know the Lord (or: You must be intimate**

with [Yahweh])," **because everyone (all) shall progressively perceive and thus understand and be acquainted with Me, from a little one even to a large one of them,**

We should keep in mind that this verse is speaking about the people who have been placed into this new covenant – those to whom this new arrangement existentially applies: the called-out communities. All these folks are in union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit now dwells within them and they are God's house. All of these

folks have direct access to the Father and they can constantly commune with Him and learn from Him. Jesus said in Matt. 11:

**28. "So everyone come here, toward Me! – all those constantly weary and exhausted from toil and labor, as well as folks having been caused to carry a load, and continuing burdened down – and I, Myself, will refresh you and cause you folks to rest.**

**29. "At once lift up My crossbeam (or: the yoke which is Me; the balance beam that**

comes from and pertains to Me) **upon you people, and instantly learn from Me, because I am** (or: I continuously exist being) **mild-tempered** (gentle, kind and considerate) **and humble** (low) **in the heart, and ‘you folks will find refreshment and discover rest in and for your souls** (the whole inner person; the mind, emotions and nerves).’” [Jer. 6:16]

"No privileged intermediate class, whether of priests or prophets, will be needed to teach men about God. For all shall know Him directly" (A.M. Stibbs, *ibid.* p 1205).

Jesus said in John 6:45,

**"It exists having been written within the Prophets: 'And they will all exist being God's taught-ones (or: folks having had God as the source of instruction).' [Isa. 54:13]**

**Everyone hearing from the Father (at the Father's side), and learning [D and others read: progressively learning], is progressively coming toward Me!"**

The new had come with Jesus.

12. **"because I shall continue being (exist being) merciful with a cleansing covering for their**

**injustices** (behaviors contrary to the Way pointed out; inequities) **and acts of lawlessness, and then I would by no means be reminded further of their mistakes and failures** (errors and falling short of the target; sins).'" [Jer. 31:30-33]

Barclay makes an interesting observation, "In Jeremiah's words about the new covenant there is no mention of sacrifice. It would seem that Jeremiah believed that in the new age sacrifice would be abolished as irrelevant..." (ibid. p 94). But we find throughout the Psalms that the authors recognized God's

continued mercy to Israel... even though punctuated with judgment from time to time.

Yahweh Himself continued being "**merciful with a cleansing covering**" in this new arrangement in which,

**"God was existing within Christ** (God was and continued being in union with [the] Anointed One) **progressively and completely transforming [the] aggregate of humanity** (or: world) **to be other [than it is]... not accounting to them** (not putting to their account; not logically considering for them; not reasoning in them) **the**

**results and effects of their falls to the side (their trespasses and offences)..." (2 Cor. 5:19)**

And He is **"by no means reminded further of their mistakes and failures (errors and falling short of the target; sins)." What a wonderful statement. This is the situation between God and humanity that now exists – this is indeed "Good News." The author of Hebrews and Paul are in concord on this matter.**

**13. In thus to be saying "new [in kind and quality]," He has made the first (or: former) "old," and that [which is] progressively growing old and obsolete (failing of age; ageing into**

decay), **[is] near its disappearing**  
(vanishing away).

Our author here gives his interpretation of what Jeremiah meant by the prophecy. He was writing during the period of transition, prior to the destruction of the Temple, but its end was in sight, and the old arrangement that was inherent in it had "aged unto decay." AD 70 would bring its burial.

## Chapter 9

1. **The first, indeed then, also continued having effects of rites and products of the way then pointed out** (= ordinances and regulations for the right way to do things) **in respect to worship and sacred service, besides the set-apart (or: holy) place pertaining to that system** (suited to that ordered arrangement),

The subject is still the old arrangement, or first covenant, of 8:13, above. The author is referring to the duties of the priests within the **set-apart (or: holy) place** – the first chamber of the tabernacle – which "**pertain[ed] to that**

**system"** of religious worship/service, and which was "suited to that ordered arrangement (*kosmikos*)."

The "**effects of rites and products of the way then pointed out** (= ordinances and regulations for the right way to do things)" were the cultuses of the first arrangement: they comprised the rituals which the priests would perform.

**2. for a tabernacle was furnished** (equipped, prepared), **the first [part; compartment] – in which [was] both the lampstand and the table, even the setting forth of the breads, as well as the golden censer-altar** [reading with B: Vat. MS #1209, & Sahidic witnesses] – **which is being called set-apart** (a

holy place; [the] Holy Place; a separated place).

Here the furniture of that first compartment, or chamber, is being described to set the scene of the arguments which follow.

**3. But after the second veil, a tabernacle being called the set-apart of the set-apart ones (the Holy of Holies; the separated one of the separated ones; = the most set-apart),**

**4. having the ark of the arrangement (or: chest pertaining to the covenant), having been covered round about by gold, in which [was] a golden pot (or: urn) continuously holding (or: having) the manna, and Aaron's rod – the one**

**sprouting** (budding) – **and the tablets of the arrangement** (disposition; covenant),

Verse 3 takes us into the innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, which was the place where the high priest would go four times on the Day of Atonement, the topic of the discussions in this chapter.

Verse 4 now describes the furniture of that second compartment. In it was only "**the ark of the arrangement** (or: chest pertaining to the covenant)." Next the items that had been stored within the ark are listed. The "**tablets of the arrangement**" would refer to the stone tablets of the Law.

Before moving ahead, we should keep in

mind that the tabernacle (which evolved into the temple, under Solomon's reign) is used in Paul's writings as a figure that foreshadowed the body of Christ, which Paul calls "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22). Taking 1 Cor. 6:19 (which refers to the body as being God's temple) with the words of Jesus in John 2:19 which are explained by John in 2:21 as referring to Jesus' physical body, we can gain an insight into the symbolism of the articles within the ark, and of the innermost chamber of the temple where the ark resided. The holy of holies was the "heart" of the tabernacle/temple. From this picture we can extrapolate the

meanings which correspond to both the individual and the corporate community. The pot of manna speaks of eating the bread from heaven (John 6:32-58; Rev. 2:17) which resides within our hearts. Aaron's rod was a figure of God choosing us to be priests (Nu. 17:6-10) and that God was the One who selects folks for their place of service in the body. It also gives us the picture of God caring and protecting with the rod of a Shepherd (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15 – where in each verse the verb traditionally rendered "rule" actually means "to shepherd") from within the heart of His people. The significance of the tablets (the Law)

of the arrangement is explained in 10:16, below, "**Continuously giving My laws upon their hearts, I will even write them upon their mental perception** (or: comprehension; that which passes through the mind)."

**5. but up above her** [i.e., the ark] **[are] cherubim, which have the character and quality of and express [the] glory, continuously overshadowing the mercy seat** (the place of gentleness and graciousness), **concerning which things** (or: ones) **there is now nothing to be saying corresponding to [that] part** (or: down from, or in accord with, a part; = in detail).

Part of the cover of the ark – which was

called the "mercy seat" – was "**cherubim**" (one on each end) whose wings "**overshadow[ed]**" the cover, or lid. The **mercy seat** and the **cherubim** were made of a single piece of beaten gold. The description of the construction can be found in Ex. 25:17-20; 37:6-9. This mercy seat was God's throne among His people, and He told Moses, "There I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony (witness)..." (Ex. 25:22). We should not miss the corporate picture of "two witnesses" in this symbol, and the fact that God "communes" between the two,

in regard to His word to or for the community. So our author is describing the place of access to God's presence as He had made Himself available to His people under the old covenant.

The beautiful veil (or: curtain) that sectioned off this holiest place had cherubim embroidered into it (Ex. 26:31-33). This would have given the picture of this being a heavenly realm, and the curtain was the gate of the way into communion with God. When Solomon replaced the tabernacle with the temple, he had "all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, within and without" (1 Ki.

6:29). The environment represented a garden or an oasis. Combining the ideas of a garden with cherubim and an entrance with cherubim which "guarded the way" into the place of communion with God would take the mind back to the story of the Garden of Eden where God held discourse with Adam, the entrance into which was kept, preserved and watched over by cherubim (Gen. 3:24).

**6. But of these things, having been thus prepared (equipped; furnished; constructed), the priests, indeed, habitually entering into the first tabernacle [i.e., compartment], are repeatedly completing (ending upon;**

fully finishing) **the sacred service,**

The author follows the common rhetoric of rehearsing an ongoing situation to continue setting the scene before making his point. Two things can be observed: 1) the writing of this letter is prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, for the priests are still performing their tasks; 2) the holy place (the first compartment) was the scene of habitual (actually, daily) activity.

**7. yet into the second one [i.e., compartment], the chief priest alone (or: only), once a year, not apart from blood – which he is offering over (or: on behalf of) the effects of ignorance (things resulting from a lack of**

knowledge or insight) **of himself and of the people** –

Now he sets the contrast of "**once a year**," i.e., once in the annual cycle.

This was a shadow symbol for the "**just once** (once for all)" that would conclude the age of the first covenant and which the Messiah completed (7:27) on the cross. The particular **offering** to which he is referring here is the Day of Atonement. The Greek *agnoematon* is often rendered "sins" or "sins of ignorance," but "**effects of ignorance** (or: things resulting from a lack of knowledge or insight)" is the correct rendering. These things may have been mistakes, errors or sins of ignorance, but

the cause of these **effects** was a lack of knowledge and insight – or, ignorance of the Truth and Reality. This was the root cause of all missing of the mark. The remedy is what Jesus said in John 8:32,

**"and you will come to know the Truth (or: Reality; that which is unsealed, open and without concealment) by intimate experience, and the Truth (Reality) will liberate and make (or: set) you free."**

**8. the set-apart Breath-effect (or: Holy Spirit) making this clearly visible: the Way (Path; Road) of the set-apart places (or: of the separated ones; pertaining to the sacred folks; of**

the Holies) [was] **not yet to have been manifested** (caused to appear; brought to light) **while the first tabernacle is having a standing** –

The **Way**, of course, is Christ (John 14:6). He is the Path for the tabernacle/temple (His body of separated ones – the sacred folks) to walk. But this **Way** was not manifested and caused to appear in clear light while the old order (figured by the "first tabernacle") still had "a standing" – i.e., a place in God's economy. His ministry and the offering of Himself for us put an end to the standing of the **first tabernacle**. The **Way** was revealed by Paul as being "in Christ," the right

relationships (righteousness; being pointed in the right direction with fairness and equity; the justice from God) that created the covenant communities in the Holy Spirit.

But the other aspect of Him being the Path and the Way was that this signified how we would have access to the Father. **"No one is presently going to, or progressively coming toward, the Father, except through Me** (through means of Me, or, through the midst of Me)" – John 14:6b. But this was not manifested until the old covenant had been buried with Him and He was resurrected into the life of the new creation.

**9. which is a parable, [pointing] unto the present season** (or: the fertile moment and situation having been placed within the midst and which is now here) – **in accord with which [parable] both gifts and sacrifices are continually being offered, [though] not being able** (or: not having power) **to perfect** (complete; bring to the goal and destiny; finish; mature), **in regard to conscience and shared consciousness, those repeatedly doing the sacred service,**  
The first tabernacle is a parable that portrays our **present season** – i.e., "the fertile moment and situation having been placed within the midst [of humanity] and which is now here!" The priests

were actors playing a role that told the story of the old covenant, but that story was a parable which was "cast along the side" (*para-bolē*) to portray the ultimate offering – the offering of the Life of God to humanity to bring about the salvation of all. The word "**season**; fertile moment; situation" is the Greek *kairos*, and speaks of the opportunity which elsewhere is called the Day of the Lord (Cf my discussion on this phrase in the chapter which discusses 1 Thes. 5:1-5 in *Peter, Paul and Jacob, Comments on 1 Pet., Phil., Col., 1&2 Thes., 1&2 Tim., Titus and Jacob*, Harper Brown Publishing, 2012, p 128-129). It was the season when the Messiah would come.

In typical Jewish story-telling fashion, our author fleshes out the scene with details about the work of the priests of that order – and then underlines its inferiority by pointing out that their "**sacred service**" was not "having power" and was not **being able** to bring folks to the maturity of the goal, the perfection that would only be found in the Christ. The Law could not "complete or finish" the work that God intended to do in humanity. The human conscience needed to be matured and brought to its destined goal: the conscience of the Christ.

The word **conscience** is *suneidesis*, from *sunoida*, a feminine, perfect

participle composed of *sun* (with; together) and *oida* (to know or perceive from having seen). Strictly speaking, it is a "knowing and perceiving together from what has been seen or perceived." Thus, the noun can have two senses: 1) **conscience** – an inward moral impression and judgment regarding actions and principles based upon what one has seen of life and has learned from his or her cultural environment; 2) **shared consciousness** – an awareness of something that is shared with another person; or – a joined knowledge from the combined parts of our being: body, mind, heart, soul, spirit (e.g., from what is physically felt, emotionally felt,

mentally perceived and known in the heart or by the spirit).

We can look at two verses to help us understand the thinking embedded in this phrase of the last clause of this verse:

1) 1 Cor. 2:11 – " **For who, of humanity** (of mankind), **has seen so as to know** (*oida*) **the things of the human** (or: the [matters] pertaining to a person), **except the spirit of the human** (or: the person's spirit) – **the one within the midst of him?**"

2) 1 Cor. 6:17 – " **Now the person continually joining himself** (or: being habitually

glued in intimate union; in himself being continuously welded) **to** (or: in; with) **the Lord exists being one spirit** (or: one Breath-effect)."

So with God's Spirit joining Himself with our spirit through the union "in Christ" and "Christ within and in union with [us]," we experience a joined knowledge and **shared consciousness** which in turn transforms our **conscience**. Dan Kaplan shared with me another contrast between the two covenants: the old was represented by the people "offering" **both gifts and sacrifices** through the priests; the new one consists of God making the sacrifice, and then

**"He gave (or: gives) gifts to mankind (or: to, for and in humanity)" – Eph. 4:8.**  
The new priesthood continues acting out His ministry by giving gifts to the people (e.g., Peter and John with the lame man at the gate of the Temple – Acts 3:1-8; or, as Jesus suggested in the parable in Matt. 25:34-40).

**10. [relying] only upon foods and drinks and various immersions (baptisms; ceremonial washings), as well as rites and products of the way then pointed out (or: applications of fairness and equity) pertaining to the flesh (or: = [the] flesh's [religious] ordinances and external regulations of justice; or: = the system of human**

works), **continuously lying upon them** (thus: pressing upon them; = being imposed by them) **until a fitting situation** (or: season; fertile moment) **of raising-up-through** (or: thoroughly raising upright and making straight). Note how he characterizes the old covenant cultus: dietary rules; immersions/baptisms or ceremonial washings; **rites and products of the way then pointed out** (or: applications of fairness and equity) **pertaining to the FLESH**. This was mainly mechanical, rather than spiritual. Like the rituals of many other cultures, how the rites were done was the main concern.

All this carried on "**until a fitting**

**situation** (or: season; fertile moment) of **raising-up-through** (or: thoroughly raising upright and making straight)."

Now keep in mind vs. 9, above, that this "**fitting situation** (season; fertile moment)" was "**present**" and "now [there]" at the time of the writing of this letter – in the first century! What I have rendered "**raising-up-through**" is a literal translation of *diorthosis*. It can also be literally rendered "thoroughly raising upright and making straight." It is unfortunate that the KJV, NASB, Concordant, e.g., translate this word as "reformation," as this gives a wrong understanding of what the author is saying. The old system is not being

reformed, it is being replaced by what Jesus described as "Spirit and Truth" (John 4:23-24). The NIV's paraphrase comes closer to the idea and renders it "the time of the new order." *Orthos* means "erect, upright" – and from that, "straight." It comes from *oro*, "to raise up." So the author is describing a situation and a season of **"raising-up-through"** which aptly describes resurrection or being caused to sit upon the heavens in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). The idea pictured in "thoroughly raising upright" is almost congruent to *anastasis* (**a standing back up again;** resurrection). The secondary meaning of "making straight" pictures the idea of

being right and being on target and centered in the Way of Truth.

11. **So Christ** ([the] Anointed One; [Messiah]), **after suddenly coming to be present at [our] side [as] a Chief** (or: Ruling; Ranking) **Priest of the good things happening** (or: of virtuous people being birthed; [with other MSS: pertaining to impending excellent things]), **by means of the greater and more perfect** (more matured, complete and destined) **Tabernacle not made by hands – that is, not of this creation – and not by means of blood from he-goats and calves, but by means of and through His own blood**

Whereas the old Law, priesthood and

tabernacle could not **perfect** anything (7:19; 9:9, above; 10:1, below), "**the greater and more perfect Tabernacle**" – the Christ – was able to (10:14; 11:40; 12:23, below). But to be a faithful Chief Priest, He went through the process that brought Him to the goal of perfection (2:10; 5:9, above), fulfilling all the types foreshadowed in the old.

The participle phrase that modifies "**Chief Priest**" has good MS support for both readings, and each reading can be seen as true. But the Gospels, Acts and other writings of the NT all witness to the fact that "**good things** [were already] **happening**" and "virtuous people [were] being birthed" into the kingdom during

the ministries of Jesus and His students. These things were happening through the "greater and destined Tabernacle" – the Messiah and His body. It was a body of people, not something constructed by human hands and was not a part of the natural creation. It was, in fact, the new creations, itself.

The work of the "complete Tabernacle" had nothing to do with animal sacrifices, but it did involve the blood of Jesus and was a covenant of blood – or, life – for the life of the new was in the blood and life of Jesus: both of which He gave and gives to all mankind. It was fulfilling the type of the chief priest on the Day of Atonement (of the old covenant) when

He gave His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28) which Paul later explains was "**a correspondent ransom** (a ransom in the place of and directed toward the situation) **over [the situation of and] on behalf of** (or: for) **all** (everyone; all humanity and all things)..." – 1 Tim. 2:6.

**12. entered in at once and once for all into the midst and core of the set-apart ones** (or: the holy places), **at once finding in Himself an unbinding** (a loosening for release and liberation; redemption) **proper to, belonging to and having its origin in the Age [of the Messiah]** (or: eonian, or, age-lasting liberation).

Having died upon the cross, when He was resurrected He **"entered in at once and once for all into the midst and core of the set-apart ones."** Now the object of the preposition *eis* (into the midst and core of) is the plural noun *ta hagia* (which can be rendered "the holy places" which refers to the tabernacle, which was the type). However, vs. 24, below, instructs us that **"Christ did not enter into set-apart places made by hands."** So he did not enter into the natural tabernacle or the physical temple. Therefore, I chose **"the set-apart ones"** as an informed rendering, for we know through Paul that the called-out folks are, and His body is, the

temple of the new covenant (John 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21).

The verb "**at once finding in Himself**" is in the aorist tense, and the middle voice (which means that the action of the verb applies to the subject). He found that "redemption: **an unbinding** and a loosing for release and liberation" was inherent within Himself through the Holy Spirit. This was the "**release and liberation for [the] captives**" and the "**liberation in those having been shattered by oppression**" (Lu. 4:18). All this came with the new creation, which is **the Age of the Messiah**," so the **unbinding** (etc.) pertained to the new age, which by association with the

Advent of the Messiah was also the origin of it, and it belonged to this new age. These expressions about the Age present to us the various functions of the genitive case of the noun, and thus added perspectives about it.

**13. For you see, if the blood of bulls and of he-goats, as well as ashes of a heifer repeatedly sprinkling the folks having become defiled (made common or ceremonially unclean), is continually making [a person] set-apart (or: making holy and sacred) with a view to and leading toward the cleanness of the flesh (= the physical body or human relationships),**

**14. to how much greater an extent**

**shall the blood of the Christ (Anointed One; [Messiah]) – Who through means of a spirit (or: attitude; [the] Breath-effect) pertaining to the Age offers Himself (or: brought Himself face to face and offers Himself) without blemish by and with God (or: in, to and for God) – continue cleansing and pruning your conscience and shared consciousness from works of death (or: dead procedures and activities; deeds of dead folks) [leading] into [the situation] to be continuously rendering sacred service, as well as habitually doing the business and duties of life, for, in, by, to and with the living, as well as true and real, God?**

The old covenant cultus did set the people apart, and thus served as a type for the reality that would come with the Messiah. But it only could clean the flesh, i.e., the physical with its relationships within the community. But the author points out "**to how much greater an extent**" the work of the Messiah would "**continue cleansing and pruning**" the "**conscience and shared consciousness**" of people. I included the meaning "**prune**" (which is an agricultural application) because the NT is full of agricultural metaphors for people. Christ accomplished this "**through means of a spirit pertaining to the Age.**" This can be looked at from

two different perspectives: from the view of the old age, or through the window of the new age. The cross worked in both directions: being the ultimate Sacrifice of the old, but laying out the Pattern of the self-giving love of the new. With this latter, we can see the meaning of *pneuma* as "attitude" has appropriate application, for our attitude towards everything is affected by the new age with its new creation: the New Being of the Second Human, the corporate Christ. The old attitude of "us and them" is replaced by the attitude of union and oneness in Christ. Our old attitude of "all about me and my being number one" is displaced with the

attitude of concern for the welfare of others. It is now what Jesus taught, an attitude of service fueled by the denial of self (e.g., Matt. 16:24-25). We should also note the progressive, durative aspect of the future tense: the work of the cross and the Spirit continues in our lives.

I gave both the cultus application of *prosphero*, which is the presentation and offering of a sacrifice, and then the literal meaning of the verb (since in Christ all has changed): "brought Himself face to face" to us as He entered the temple which IS us. Note the multiple prepositions on offer: the bringing of Himself is both "**by God**" as

the means, and "**with God**" Who comes to us within the Christ. The offering is "**in God**" and is ultimately "**to God**"

Who resides within all of creation and in all people (there is no place where God is not), and the offering is "**for God**" for this whole idea and plan is to bring Him pleasure. Further, it is God who is working within humanity (Phil. 2:13) through the proclamation of the message of goodness, ease and well-being.

The "**works of death** (etc.)" would have a first application to the works of the Law, and specifically to the animal sacrifices of the Law cultus with its "procedures and activities" which brought no life to the people. But a

secondary reference would be the "deeds of [metaphorically] dead folks" who needed to be resurrected from the death of the old Adam nature.

The effect and result of this cleansing and pruning was so that those now with the Christ could function as the new priesthood so as **"to be continuously rendering sacred service, as well as habitually doing the business and duties of life."** Here I have presented both aspects of the word *latreuo* since in the new covenant our service applies to every area of our life – including whatever business in which we may be involved. The word originally spoke of both religious duties and **"the business**

**and duties of life."** Our service is  
"outside the walls."

The prepositional phrase that is joined to this clause about service is in the dative case, with no expressed preposition. Therefore, I have expressed all the functions of the dative, with their representative prepositions, since all of them make sense in this context. Our service, business and even menial duties are all **"for, in, by, to and with the living, as well as true and real, God."**

As Paul put it,

**"within the midst of and in union with Him we continuously live** (or, as a subjunctive: could be constantly

living), and are constantly moved about and put into motion, and continue existing (experiencing Being)" – Acts 17:28.

Our whole life is wrapped up in Him, and He within us.

**15. And now because of this, He continues being a Medium** (an Agency; an Intervening Substance; a middle state; One in a middle position; a go-between; an Umpire; a Mediator) **of and from a New Arrangement** (a disposition and covenant that is new in kind and quality) **so that, pertaining to a death occurring** (or: from a death having happened) **[which leads] into an**

**unbinding-away of the steppings-to-the-side [that were] based upon the first arrangement,**

(or: in order that by birthing Himself from death into the midst of a redeeming [of people] from the deviations [that came] upon the first disposition;

or: so that at one point coming into existence from death [and] on into the center of a ransom-paid release from transgressions [that were founded] upon the former covenant,) **the people having been called and now remaining invited can at some point take hold of** (or: may seize into possession; or: would suddenly receive) **the Promise of the**

**inheritance pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age [of Messiah]** (or: the eonian possession and enjoyment of the allotment; or: the inheritance of, from and for the ages). The "**this**" of the first clause refers back to the **offering and bringing Himself face to face** with us and **cleansing us** (vs. 14, above). He is "**a Medium, Agency and intervening Substance**" (note: our author does not give us a definitive meaning from the semantic range of this word) of the "**New Arrangement**" in which His **death** unbinds the Hebrews from the **transgressions** and deviations that were **based upon the first arrangement** (or:

former covenant). And so "**the people**" – i.e., Israel – had been "**called and [are] now remaining invited**" (note: this expresses the meaning of the perfect tense of the participle) so that they now can "**at some point take hold of the Promise**" which is enjoyment of the allotted inheritance which has "**the qualities of the Age**" of the Messiah. This is just another way of saying "to participate in the Life of Christ and in the kingdom of God – or, to be included in the covenant community." I have given three renderings of the aorist tense of the verb ("**take hold,**" etc.) of the final clause which gives us the simple fact of the indefinite action described by the

verb ("may seize..."), or signifies it as happening "**at some point**" of time (punctiliar action), or implies a suddenness of a completed action ("would suddenly receive"), seen as a "snap-shot" view of it.

The first rendering, "**an unbinding-away**," in the second clause is the literal meaning of the Greek *apo-lutrosis*. This is commonly rendered "redemption," or "release by ransom," and refers to the "**occurring**" of the death of the Messiah which led "**into the unbinding-away of... the people**" from the effects of their transgressions of the Law. This is the first interpretation of this clause. The word "**death**" in this second clause

is either in the genitive case, or in the ablative (both cases are spelled the same way in Greek). The aorist participle "**occurring**/having happened/birthing/coming into existence" (*genomenou*) is in the middle voice, which means that the subject acts upon or on behalf of itself. And so, reading **death** as an ablative together with taking the third meaning of the participle gives us the second parenthetical rendering "by birthing Himself from death." In John 10:18 we read Jesus saying in reference to His soul/life,

**"I constantly hold authority**  
(continuously have the right and

hold the 'position'; or: continue possessing privilege from out of the midst of Being) **to place it** (put her; lay it), **and I constantly hold authority from out of being** (continuously possess the right, forth from [My] existence; = am in the authoritative position) **to take it** (or: receive her; resume it) **again."**

So here in vs. 15, with the first parenthetical option ("in order that by birthing Himself from death..."), we would read our author as referring to the resurrection of Jesus – who had "authority to take [His life] again" from

death.

"He birthed Himself (yet it was by the Spirit of the Father) out from death into super-intensified (resurrected) life from within and into a people whose due time had come to take the first step into the Reality. All the scenes presented to us in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances in the gospels and Book of Acts, are accounts essentially of Jesus taking His rightful place within that new covenant community. What those early disciples saw as external to themselves (as the

only way the present state of our physical vision could interpret the reality), was really an internal happening, an internal change from one condition to another.

"Since all things were created in Him, and we are in Him, there is really nothing that is outside of us. Great contemplation is called for to even begin to understand that where God placed Adam was within Adam. "Ye are God's place of planting (His farm/garden/husbandry), ye are God's building." Though

certainly not mere introspection, our spiritual journey is a journey into Him in us, the goal of which [is] a new heaven and new earth where God [is] known as He is, the All in all." (John Gavazzoni; from a private email; bracketed changes, mine)

Although the term "**the people**" first applied to Israel since Jesus was their Messiah, Paul tells us that God has done away with race classifications and has included all the ethnic multitudes in His covenant (Eph. 2:11-19) by including all in the Second Human, the *eschatos* (or: last) Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47). So now all people are those "**having been called**

**and now remaining invited."**

The second parenthetical rendering ("... so that at one point coming into existence from death [and] on into the center of a ransom-paid release from transgressions [that were founded] upon the former covenant,)" takes "**the people**" as the subject of this clause: it was the people that came into existence from death, and entered into the ransomed release from their transgressions. This is viewing the Greek construction of this verse as speaking to what Paul referred to (in Rom. 6:3-5) as having been immersed into His death and then raise up into "newness of life" – and "**the one at some point dying** (or: suffering death)

**has been rightwised away from the Sin" (Rom. 6:7).**

**16. For you see, where [there is] an arrangement (or: covenant; also: a will; a settlement), a necessity to be brought [is] the death of the one arranging (or: making the will; covenanting),**

Our author is now focusing on the secular meaning of the word *diatheke*, "will and testament." His audience would have been well aware of the Hellenistic use of this word, and such a switch from its covenant meaning to its secular use is a rhetorical maneuver as he starts a new argument: the new covenant cannot come into effect apart

from the death of the Messiah.

However, looking back to Israel's beginning, we see the death of the firstborn in Egypt; the figurative death of Israel by their passing through the Red Sea; the death-based sacrificial system that inaugurated them as a nation, as we see in vss. 18-22, below. Looking back farther we see sacrifice in the stories in Genesis. Nonetheless, our author's point is that it was necessary for the Messiah to die in order to activate the new arrangement/covenant/will.

**17. for an arrangement** (a will; a covenant) **based upon dead folks [is] firm** (fixed; guaranteed as valid), **since it is never** (not once) [other MSS: not

then] **strong** (or: in force) **at the time when the one making the arrangement** (or: covenant; will) **is alive** (or: continues living).

Building on the idea of a will, here he points out that the arrangement made by Christ is now **firm, fixed and guaranteed as valid** – because of His death. We can count on what it says and gives to us. No one can change it.

18. **Consequently, not even the first** (or: former) **has been initiated** (innovated; inaugurated; or: dedicated) **apart from blood, [signifying a death].**

19. **For every implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inner destiny; inward directive)

**down from the Law was spoken by (and: under) Moses to and for all the People, taking the blood of calves and he-goats, with water, scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the scroll and all the People,**

**20. saying,**

**"This is the blood of the arrangement (covenant; disposition) which God imparted as the goal to you (or: directed as the end and destiny in mind, with a view to you folks)." [Ex. 24:8]**

Returning to the more normal use of *diatheke*, he cites the beginnings of Israel's first covenantal arrangements to

seal his argument which associates Christ's death with the initiation of the new arrangement.

**21. Furthermore, in like manner he sprinkled the Tabernacle, and even all the vessels of the public service, with blood.**

**22. And so, down from and in accord with the Law, nearly everything is being cleansed in (or: in union with) blood, and apart from blood-shedding a sending-away (or: a causing to flow off; an abandoning or a divorce; or: forgiveness) is not coming into existence (is not being birthed; does not occur).**

Here he picks up the topic of **cleansing**

from vs. 14, above, now stressing the need for a sacrifice to effect **a sending away** (etc.). He is calling to the entire sacrificial system as an anchor for his argument. In the old covenant "**apart from blood-shedding**" there was no "causing to flow off of, being abandoned by or divorced from" the people's sins and failures.

**23. Indeed, then, [it was] a necessity for the under-exhibits (examples; copies; effects of suggestive signs) of the things within the atmospheres and heavens to be cleansed by these [means], yet the very super-heavenly things (or: the things [situated] upon the atmospheres) themselves by superior**

(stronger and better) **sacrifices besides these.**

Again: the contrast of the "**under-exhibits** (etc.)" to the "**superior**" and the "**super-heavenly.**" It would take more than animal sacrifices and grain offerings to cleanse and prune the area of the spirit and heart – of which the tabernacle was an outward representation. It would take the resurrected Life of Christ bringing life from the dead, and "**the hearts having been sprinkled from a consciousness of evil** (or: a joint-knowledge full of labor; a conscience in a bad condition), **and then the body having been bathed in and by clean water**" (10:22, below)

**"by the bath of the Water [that is] within a result of a flow (or: in union with a gush-effect; or: in the midst of a spoken word, a declaration, or an utterance)" – Eph. 5:26b.**

**24. For Christ did not enter into set-apart places made by hands (= by humans) – representations (things formed after a pattern) of the true and real things – but rather into the atmosphere and heaven itself, now to be manifested (exhibited to view; caused to appear in clear light; made apparent) by the presence of God over us (or: in God's face and countenance [being] on our behalf).**

**The "true and real things" do not refer**

to the "essences and forms" of Plato's philosophy, but to the things related to Christ, Who is the Truth and Reality (John 14:6). They are the things of the Spirit of God, and refer to God dwelling within His temple of the new creation. He entered into the atmosphere of the called-out community in a way that was patterned by Yahweh dwelling in a tent among the people of Israel.

Note that Christ is "**NOW to be manifested,**" i.e., "**exhibited to VIEW,**" and "**caused to APPEAR in clear light**" and "**made apparent**" – for people to SEE! Christ is to be manifested by His followers, His new temple. This happens "**by the presence of God**"

being "**over us.**" Here I have given the metaphorical meaning of *prosopon* (e.g., as it was used in Acts 3:13, 19 and 2 Cor. 8:24) and the literal meaning of *huper* (**over us**) – which calls to mind the picture of Yahweh manifesting His presence as a cloud over the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34; Lev. 16:2). In the parenthetical option is the literal rendering "face" with another extended meaning "countenance" and the extended meaning of *huper* (on our behalf). Here I also rendered the dative case in its location function, "in." Both views – from each of the two renderings – present a beautiful picture of the result of Christ's work and path, each of which

had humanity in view. He covers us with His presence, as His glory fills us.

**25. Nor yet [is it] that many times He would be repeatedly offering Himself, even as the chief priest is repeatedly entering into the set-apart (or: holy) places yearly in blood belonging to another,**

The author now brings us back to the central theme that runs through this entire chapter: the Day of Atonement. But now the type has been fulfilled so the annual re-enactment of the play need no longer be staged. It was done just once, and for all. But keep in mind the setting that has been once again placed in front of us – so that we will understand the scene

depicted in vs. 28.

26. **otherwise** (or: in that case) **it was continually binding Him to experience [it]** (or: to suffer; to have sense-experiences and to feel) **many times from the founding of the organized System of [their] religion and culture** (or: the casting down of the world or universe). **Yet now** (at this time), **once, upon a conjunction** (a joined destiny; a bringing of [two] ends together ["denoting the joining of two age-times" – E.W. Bullinger]) **of the ages, He has been and remains manifested** (has been brought to light and continues visible) **into a displacement of failure** (of error; of sin; of failure to hit the target)

**through the sacrifice of Himself** (or: through His sacrifice; or: by means of the sacrificial altar-offering which was Himself).

Note that I have rendered *kataboles kosmou* first as a localized and specific situation, "**founding of the organized System of [their] religion and culture,**" and then in the more usual cosmic sense in the parenthetical expansion. The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement – which is the subject at hand in this passage – related specifically to the Law and the religious cultus of Israel. Not only that, the context of the verse speaks of the **conjunction** of the age of the first covenant with the age of the new

covenant. I inserted Bullinger's comment to help readers understand the picture that is being painted here. There is a **"joined destiny"** of the two, as there is with a mother and a Son.

The cross was a historical manifestation of the heart of God in the Father giving His Son as the remedy for humanity's situation (John 3:16). He **remains** manifested in clear light and "continues visible" through the life of His called-out followers. The verb **"has been and remains"** presents the force of the Greek perfect tense.

The manifestation of the Messiah led **"into a displacement of failure (etc.) through the sacrifice (*thusia*) of**

**Himself."** Here we see an echo of vss. 12 and 14, above. I have also presented another function of the genitive case, that of apposition, in the rendering "the sacrificial altar-offering which was Himself" to nail down the full sense of what He did.

**27. And now, according to as much as it continues lying-away (or: laid away; reserved-off; stored) in (or: with; for; to) mankind (or: people) to die-away once, but after this a process of evaluating (a separating and making a distinction to be a judging and determining; a deciding),**

Here we approach a climax along the journey through this letter. He brings in

the final destiny of mankind – in regard to this earthly life – and ties it to the death of the Messiah. "**It continues lying-away** and reserved" describes the certainty of this matter and the continued state of affairs for humanity – the "human predicament," to use Paul Tillich's term. It speaks of something that was planned. Of course the author is reaching back to the Garden story and the judgment for the disobedience (consider that Paul centered on the disobedience, not the fact that the fruit was eaten – Rom. 5:19). And as an end to our own story, we only **die-away once**. The final phrase of this verse has given rise to a great deal of speculation.

Probably our author remained ignorant as to what all this entailed and about the setting, or of what the immediate outcome would be. Or, perhaps our Father did not want such matters revealed to us since what seems to be the most important thing to Him – in regard to us – is how we live our lives here and now. But to give as much insight as possible, I expanded my rendering to give the semantic range of the word *krisis*. It primarily means "**a process of evaluating.**" What comes to my mind is what we experience in this life as a "final examination" after completing a course of instruction, or a "board review" to determine

qualifications. It involves "a separating and making a distinction" of the facts in view, but its purpose is "a judging" of what a person did in this life (e.g., with the scrolls being opened to evaluate a persons "works" – Rev. 20:12), and a "determining" of the person's results. All this leads to "a deciding." And this is done by a Father who has been revealed to us through the life of Jesus Christ. So He is a God who does not count our trespasses against us (2 Cor. 5:19) and seeks for us to be reconciled to Him, and loves us. His Son has covered our sins, and the whole message of the Day of Atonement was the carrying of the effects of these mistakes away from us.

And we should keep in mind the thoughts that He has toward us (e.g., Isa. 55:8-13).

**28. so also, the Christ – being once borne (or: carried) close into the many (or: being offered once unto and for the many) to carry failures (errors; sins mistakes; deviations; misses of the target) back up again – will continue being made visible (will be progressively seen) forth from out of the midst of the second [place (cf 9:3, 7 & 10:9; {comment: = the holy of holies})] – apart from failure (apart from sin; apart from a sin offering; apart from error in attempting to hit the target) – in those (or: by those; to those; for**

those) **habitually receiving** (or: progressively taking) **from out of the midst of Him, [progressing] into a deliverance** (or: [leading] into a rescue; with a view to health and wholeness; into the midst of salvation).

[note: the Greek word translated "receiving from out of the midst of" is *apekdechomai*, which is *dechomai*, which means "to take and receive with the hands," with the preposition *apek*, a contraction of *apo*, "from," and *ek*, "out of the midst of" added as a prefix. This verb should not be translated "looking for," or "awaiting"]

Because of the phrase "**into the many**" which shows the literal destination of the action of the verb, I chose as the first rendering "**borne (or: carried) close**" for this passive aorist participle. It also has the connotation of "being offered" so I included this in the parenthetical expansion, where I then rendered *eis* as "unto or for" – giving a secondary, and then a more remote meaning of this preposition. He has been offered unto us, but more literally, Christ was "**once borne**" by the Spirit into "**the many**" – which is a figure for mankind or the ethnic multitudes.

We encounter our same verb *phero* (to bear; to carry) in "**to carry... back up**

**again,**" but here with a different preposition (*ana*) prefixed to it. So Christ was **carried toward** us in order to **carry back up again** our failures (etc.). The phrase "**back up again**" calls to mind the picture of the smoke ascending, as it were, to God in the burned sacrifices. All things return into God (Rom. 11:36). Here He was also the "Scapegoat" of the Day of Atonement – or, as John the Immerser put it,

**"Look!** (Pay attention, see and perceive)! **God's Lamb** (or: the Lamb from God; the Lamb having the character and qualities of God; or, in apposition: the Lamb which is

**God), the One continuously lifting up and carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System**

(or: habitually picking up and taking away the failure and error brought on by the organized system; progressively removing the falling short and the missing of the goal from the world of culture, religion, economy and government [= from

humanity and secular society])!" – John 1:29.

But in our present context He was the Chief Priest that entered into us, the heavenly temple, sprinkled our hearts (10:22, below), and carried out of our midst our deviations and times of missing the target.

The final Day of Atonement involved the Messiah as the Sacrifice, and people as the tabernacle or temple. This was the **superior** Sacrifice (vs. 23) that cleansed the **super-heavenly** temple.

But now let us turn our attention to the beautiful promise that is focused on this **super-heavenly** temple. Christ, the Messiah, "**will be made visible** (will be

seen) **forth from out of the midst of the second [place (cf 9:3, 7 & 10:9; {comment: = the holy of holies})]."**

Unfortunate exegesis has put this off to some future "time," and this is due primarily to the KJV adding the word "time" after the word **second**. Mostly because of that translation addition do we have the sad teaching that Christ will return to earth in a "second coming."

This paradigm has shaped the interpretation of OT prophecies and NT statements in a way that has shifted fundamental and evangelical eschatology so as to focus attention away from the present and off into the indefinite future – resulting in detrimental mindsets about

our life here and our earth environment. I, too, have added a word to the text – as seen in the bracketed [**place**]. My reason for pointing my readers in this direction is that the holy of holies was the "place" into which the chief priest entered on the Day of Atonement, and when he came out and was "made visible" to the people the final time on that day, tradition has it that he said, "It is finished." From vss. 9 and 7, above, we see that the **second** referred to the holy of holies, and it was in the context of this specific day of the year. Now considering that the holy of holies is now within the heart of His people (who comprise His temple), the "place" from

which He **will be made visible** is His called-out covenant community, His body. When this happens (continuously, we would hope) He is not dealing with the sin issue: that was finished at the cross. So He will repeatedly be seen **apart from** the people's **failure** – "apart from error in attempting to hit the target." Now take note that this happens "**in those** (or: by those; to those; for those) **habitually receiving** (or: progressively taking) **from out of the midst of Him.**" This is another witness that our author is speaking of a "place" and not a time. "**By those**" would also center His being made visible "in them." He will also be visible "to them" as they perceive Him

working within people and in the earth. And, of course, this happens "for them," as well.

The "**those**" is identified by the qualifying participle phrase "**habitually receiving** (or: progressively taking) **from out of the midst of Him.**" In my translation I have the bracketed comments at the end of this verse which explain how the present participle should be translated. It is the habitual and progressive **receiving from out of the midst of Him** that progressively leads us into complete deliverance (which we all have experienced as being a life-long work of the Spirit in us). He is the one from whom we receive our

life, as we "eat His flesh and drink His blood." So for those that are living "abiding in the Vine (Christ)" – John 15:1ff – **Christ will be made visible** from out of the midst of His Temple: His people.

Verse 9 in the following chapter makes another application of the term "**the second**," there referring to the second tabernacle and the second covenant. This all applies to the here and the now.

## **Chapter 10**

**1. For the Law (= Torah), holding a shadow of (having shade from) the impending good things (virtues; excellent, agreeable or useful qualities or results) – not the very image of or the same reproduced likeness from those transactions (results of executing or performing; effects of practices) – continues not even once able (or: still never has power) at any point to perfect (bring to the goal and destiny, finish, complete or mature) those folks repeatedly coming near (approaching) by offering the [other MSS: their] same sacrifices every year, on into the**

**whole length** (or: extended or stretched into the unbroken continuance) [**of its existence**].

The shadow, being nothing in itself, could do nothing. Barclay said, "Without Christ you cannot get beyond the shadows of God" (ibid. p 113). The Law was the shade from, and thus pointed to, "**the impending good things**" that were packaged within the Messiah, but it was not even the **very image of or the same reproduced likeness those transactions**. What transactions? The **transactions** were the **good things** (etc.). The parenthetical amplification gives three other meanings of the Greek *pragmaton* (the results and effects of

transacting, practicing, performing, executing, committing, etc.). This word is rendered "things" in the KJV, NWT & NASB, "realities" in the NRSV & NIV, "matters" in the CLNT. But this noun derives from the verb *prasso* which means "to transact, practice, etc." as is seen in the meanings of the noun. The **transactions** were the work of the cross and then the resurrection which created the new covenant arrangement. The **good things** which this brought to mankind were the **results of executing** the creation of the Age of the Messiah and the **results of performing** the functions of Chief Priest in sprinkling our consciences. They are also the **effects**

**of practicing** sacrificial love to others and doing what Jesus taught – performing as priests of the Melchizedek order in following the pattern of Jesus. Notice the parenthetical expansion of **good things**: virtues; excellent, agreeable or useful **qualities** or **results**. They are characteristics of the Life in Christ – not material things or crowns or wonderful experiences. They are the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His fruit; the gifts of the Spirit which are to be used for the benefit of humanity; deliverance, salvation, being reconciled to God and made other than we were – etc. They were not new rituals, restricting rules, legislated moral codes,

or anything that comes from the knowledge of good and evil. They are lives lived in the freedom of union with God which is the result of the New Being – the new humanity.

But the Law brought none of these, and the repeated, ineffective annual sacrifices kept Israel tied to the futility and death of the old creation. "Many hold 'shadows' of the Law of Sinai instead of the 'very image' in the New Covenant of grace" (from an unpublished writing by Harper Brown Mitchell).

**2. Otherwise would they not cease being habitually offered? Because those constantly serving, upon having once for all been cleansed, would not**

**still continue to have even one consciousness about sins** (or: awareness of failures, mistakes or errors).

The second half of the verse answers his rhetorical question. His logic is that if the old covenant was able and had the power to cleanse from the "**consciousness about sins** (etc.)" the priests would have ceased making the sacrifices. But it was not, so the annual cycle continued.

**3. But in contrast, in these folks [there is] yearly** (or: year by year) **a remembrance of sins** (a recollection of failures and falling short of the goal). This is the result of living under the Law

(Torah). Many Christian traditions and teachings import portions of the Torah into their theology and teaching, and therefore keep their congregants in a **"consciousness about sins**, an awareness of failures or mistakes," and keep them remembering their sins and shortcomings. This is living in death and darkness – and it continues the same, year after year.

4. **For you see, blood from bulls and from he-goats [is] without ability [and is] powerless to be periodically carrying away sins** (or: lifting failures from; taking off misses of the target).

The bold rendering of *aphaireo* "carrying away" calls to mind the Day

of Atonement, again, where the **he-goat** "carried" the sins of the nation "away" from the camp of Israel. The rendering of "lifting... from" is another picture of the root meaning. "Taking off" presents another nuance of the verb. The burdens of the nation's sins and mistakes was figuratively "lifted from [it] and taken off," then they were "carried away" from the midst of the community. The bull was offered for the sins of the chief priest, then "the goat upon which Yahweh's lot fell" was offered as a sin offering to "make an atonement for the holy [place] because of the uncleanness (or: impurities) of the sons of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all

their sins" (Lev. 16:6-16). So our author is carrying forward his argument from the setting of the Day of Atonement which he began presenting in ch. 9. But the bottom line is: the type and shadow was "**without ability [and was] powerless**" to truly accomplish its intent.

5. **Wherefore** (or: Because of which), **repeatedly** (habitually; continually; periodically; or: presently) **coming into the System** (or: entering the cosmos and the world of religion, culture, secular society and government) **He is saying,**  
**"You do not will** (purpose; intend) **sacrifice and offering,**  
**but You completely equipped**

(thoroughly adjusted down, put in order, knit together) **in and for Yourself a body for and in Me.**

The participle "**coming into**" or "entering" in vs. 5 is in the present tense and so suggests the continual or repeated involvement of Yahweh with people. However, the context of this psalm speaks to the coming of the Messiah. So our author may be speaking in terms of the Son, at the time of entering His ministry, having then "presently" quoted this passage. The first verse of the psalm reveals the heart of Yahweh on the matter of

**sacrifices and offerings** and our author presents this as applying to the new covenant to bolster his argument.

The second half of the verse (quoted from the LXX rather than the Hebrew Scriptures) can be interpreted in more than one way, but let us first consider the middle voice of the verb

**"completely equipped (etc.)."** I have given dual meanings of this voice by the words **"in and for."** Yahweh did the work both in Himself (all things originate in God) and for Himself – i.e., for His purposes.

The "**for and in Me**" expresses two functions of the dative case of the personal pronoun **Me**.

The body was "thoroughly adjusted down, put in order and knit together" **for** the Messiah. Here we may see this statement applying to the physical body of Jesus, or to the corporate body of His followers. We can also understand this as referring to what the Father did **in Him**, in the corporate sense. As an example are the words of Paul in Eph. 2:10, "**we are** (we continually exist being) **the effect of what He did** (or: His creation; the thing

He has constructed; the result of His work; His achievement; His opus; the effect of His Deed): **people being founded from a state of disorder and wildness** (being framed, built, settled and created), **within and in union with Christ Jesus...**"

6. **"And the results and effects of whole burnt offerings about sin** (concerning failure to hit the target) **You do not think well of** (or: have a good opinion about).

Again, we see that the sacrificial cultus of the old covenant was not something with which He was content, nor was it His ultimate goal –

and it was not a delight to Him.

The "**results and effects of whole burnt offerings**" did not bring the people to the goal but only pointed to the goal, which is Christ. God did not have a "good opinion" about ritual.

Mechanical religion is fruitless. There were other OT passages that said similar things. Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice..." (1 Sam. 15:22). In Hos. 6:6 we read, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God, rather than burn offerings." Cf Ps. 50:14; 51:16-17; Isa. 1:11-20;

Micah 6:6-8.

7. **"Then I said, 'Consider! I am arriving to do (make; form; create; produce; perform) Your will (purpose; intent; resolve), O God!' – in a little head of a scroll (a summary of a little scroll), it has been written concerning Me.'"** [Ps. 40:6-8]

The word "**do**" (*poieō*) also means "to make; to form; to create; to produce; to perform." Each of the meanings has rich application to the work that the Messiah did. Jesus "did" the things that He saw the Father doing. He "made" peace in the hearts of humans. He

"formed" the anointed, corporate body to be God's temple. He "created" all things new (Rev. 21:5). He "produced" a whole family of sons. He "performed" His Father's will, and His obedience reversed the disobedience of Adam (Rom. 5:19). And He continues "doing" within the covenant community as He transforms us by the renewing of our minds.

**8. Up above, in saying that, "You do not will (purpose, intend), neither think well of (or: approve), sacrifice and offering and the result and effect of whole burnt-offerings, even concerning sin (failure; error) [offerings]" – which things, down from**

**and in accord with Law and custom, continue being repeatedly offered –**

The author's inserted comment shows that this letter was written before the destruction of the temple (AD 70).

Following the crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews continued the sacrificial cultus.

**9. He then said, "Consider! I am arriving to do (form; make; create, etc.) Your will (purpose; intent; resolve), O God!" – He is habitually (or: progressively; or: presently) taking back up the first, so that He could make the second [cf. ch. 9:28] to stand (or: that He may place and establish the second) –**

The arrival of the Messiah "[took] back

**up the first"** arrangement/covenant **"so that He could make the second [covenant] to stand."** Again let us notice, there is a clear distinction being made between the two by the use of the words **first** and **second**. The old covenant no longer exists: God took it back. The old relating to God through outward sacrifice no longer exists. It is now **ONLY** "in spirit and in reality (truth)" – John 4:23-24.

The present tense of "**taking back up**" can imply a present, progressive action by God during the period of the writing of this letter, or, a **habitual** aspect may be in view. We can observe constant change as we review the story of Israel

– even the change inherent in one generation passing and another being established. Yahweh took away Israel's first king in order to establish the kingdom under David. He took away the slavery of Israel in Egypt in order to set Israel free with Yahweh as their King.

10. **within which will** (or: in union with which intent and purpose), **we are folks having been made set-apart ones** (sanctified folks; sacred and holy people) **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

We are NOW "**within [God's] intent and purpose.**" And His intent was to set **[us] apart** to be a sacred, holy people. To use ecclesiastical language, "**we are**

**folks having been sanctified."** This expresses the present, perfect participle. So we are now **set-apart**, sacred and holy. The setting-apart (making holy; sanctifying) happened in "**the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.**" It was a "**once for all**" affair. The cross made us something that we were not before. It was an action of God upon humanity within the work of Christ. It happened to all humanity "**once for all**" – but the majority is UNAWARE of the fact! That is why we have been given this ministry: "**even placing within us the Word** (the Idea; the Reason; the message) **of the corresponding transformation to otherness** (or: the full alteration; the

change from enmity to friendship; the conciliation)" so that,

**"Over [the situation] in regard to Christ, then (or: Then for Christ's sake), we are elders of God, performing as ambassadors from God, as [Him] continually calling alongside to give comfort and relief (performing as a Paraclete) through us. We are constantly begging and urgently asking, on behalf of Christ (or: for Christ's sake): "Be fully transformed in, be correspondingly altered by, be changed from an enemy to be**

**a friend with, be reconciled to,  
and be altered to be another  
[person] by, God!"**

(or: "You folks must be  
completely exchanged in God;  
or: Be conciliated to, for and  
with God!") – 2 Cor. 5:19b-20.

All humanity has been "set-apart" for  
this. All creation has been "made holy  
and sacred" through the blood of Jesus  
Christ. Col. 1:16 instructs us that,

**"because WITHIN Him was  
created the whole** (or: in union  
with Him everything is founded  
and settled, is built and planted,  
is brought into being, is  
produced and established; or:

within the midst of Him all things were brought from chaos into order) – **the things within the skies and atmospheres, and the things upon the earth** (or: those [situations, conditions and/or people] in the heavens and on the land); **the visible things, and the unseen** (or: unable to be seen; invisible) **things: whether thrones** (seats of power) **or lordships** (ownership systems) **or governments** (rulers; leadership systems; sovereignties) **or authorities** – **the whole has been created**

**and all things continue founded, put in order and stand framed through means of Him, and [proceeds, or were placed] into Him (or: = He is the agent and goal of all creation).**

See my comments on this verse in *Peter, Paul and Jacob*, *ibid.* This is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Zech. 14:20-21,

"In that day [the Day of the Messiah] there shall be on the horse shades [or: bells]: Holiness to Yahweh. And the pots in the House of Yahweh [i.e., in the temple: His called-

out folks] will be like the sprinkling bowls before the altar. And every pot [or: vessel – a figure of each person (we have this Treasure {Christ} in jars of clay)] in Jerusalem [i.e., the Jerusalem which is above – Gal. 4:26; the New Jerusalem – Rev. 21:2] and in Judah [the Land, or the people, of the New Jerusalem] will come to be holy [set-apart; sacred; sanctified] to Yahweh of hosts. And all who are sacrificing [in spirit and in truth/reality] will come and take of them and cook [for covenant table fellowship in the house-

churches] in them..." (CVOT;  
bracketed additions mine)

**11. And so, indeed on the one hand, every priest has stood daily, publicly serving and offering the same sacrifices many times (or: often) – which things not even once (never) are able or have power to take away sins (failures; errors) which surround (which envelop) [us].**

This simply pounds more nails in the coffin, in regard to the Torah-based covenant.

**12. Yet on the other hand this One, after at one point offering one sacrifice – stretched for the whole length – over [the situation of] sins**

(or: on behalf of failures and errors), **sat within the right [part or side] of God** (or: at the right [hand] of God; centered in God's [place of power, honor and acceptance]) **on into the whole length** (or: extended into the unbroken continuance),

"**[T]his One**" is Christ Jesus, the Messiah; the "**offering one sacrifice**" was Himself, on the cross. But where did He go to sit down (where is His sabbath, after His work was done)? He went to His Father's house – and God's House is His Temple: His people. As we dwell and abide in Him, He also dwells and abides in us.

This verse has a construction involving

an adverb for which I have given the multiple renderings: "**stretched for the whole length/on into the whole length**/extended into the unbroken continuance." You may have noticed that these renderings are in two different places in my translation of this verse. The reason for this is that I have provided both interpretations from scholars that are divided as to which verb this adverb is modifying in this sentence. It is located between the aorist participle **offering** (to which some scholars feel that it should be attached) and the aorist verb **sat** (to which other scholars feel that it should be attached). Since there is no way to arrive at a

grammatical decision, and both applications make sense to the context and to theological interpretations, I decided to translate it twice. This may have been a clever rhetorical device, and presenting the force of this adverb in both directions may have been the author's intent. Catholic translations have the adverb modifying **sat** (and Ronald Knox's translation of the Latin Vulgate also reads this way); Protestant translations favor it modifying **offering**. Young sets off the part of the verse that follows "**offering**" with dashes, and reading his version one can interpret it either way.

So what is the difference? Having it

modify **offering** implies that the effect of Christ's one offering "**stretches for the whole length**" of the ages. Having it modify **sat** implies the finished work of Christ and that He is seated as King throughout all the ages. Both pictures are beautiful.

13. **continuously, one after another, taking hold with the hand to embrace and welcome from out of the rest** (the remaining and leftover) **until the hated ones that belong to Him** (His enemies; the ruiners that He has; folks who are hostile in relation to Him) **can be placed [as] a footstool of His feet** (= would be set in a humble and supportive position in relation to His body).

From vs. 12, above, we see that He is sitting enthroned, and from that position of power and authority He is

**"continuously, one after another, taking hold with the hand to embrace and welcome from out of the rest (the remaining and leftover)"** of humanity – as one by one they turn to Him.

I discussed a longer form of this verb at the end of 9:28. Here it is missing the first prefix *ap-*, but you can see from that discussion that *ekdechomai* means **"to embrace and welcome from out of."**

The root idea of *dechomai* is to take into one's hands or arms. It thus means to embrace, receive and welcome. It implies "acceptance." Christ is now

repeatedly accepting folks into His arms. He does this through the "arms" of His body, but through them wraps each one in the "arms" of His Spirit. We see *dechomai* used in Acts 3:21 where the sense can also mean "receive and retain." Paul used it in Phil. 4:14, "**I have been filled full, receiving from beside Epaphroditus the things from your side.**" In our verse here, with the prefix *ek-* (from out of), we see that the Messiah is receiving by welcoming and embracing folks "**from out of the rest, or the remaining folk.**" He is **continuously, one after another,** doing this "**until the hated ones that belong to Him can be placed [as] a footstool**

**of His feet."**

I have presented four rendering of the nominative phrase that is the subject of the last clause: **the hated ones that belong to Him**; His enemies; the "ruiners" (folks who ruin things) that **He has**; folks who are hostile in relation to Him. He has them all; they all belong to Him; they presently function as His enemies and the folks who ruin things ("I have created the waster to destroy" – Isa. 54:16b). Many of these that belong to Him are simply folks that are **hated by other people**; they are "the hated ones." For the Jews it may be the Muslims; for the Muslims it may be the Jews. But they all belong to Him.

One by one, these folks are put in a position of support for His rest (remember that He is seated, and needs a footstool to support His feet). Another view of this metaphor is that His feet are the members of His body that walk or stand (i.e., live their lives) on the earth. He can make folks that are presently hostile to the called-out community to wind up being a support for them. Jesus spoke of this in Rev. 3:9,

**"Consider! I am constantly giving to those from out of the synagogue of satan (the assembly of the adversary; the congregation which is the adversary) – the ones**

**repeatedly saying [that] they themselves are Jews, and they are not, but are lying – Consider! I will form them (construct them; make them) so that they may arrive, and they may worship in front of your feet and can know that I, Myself, love you!"**

Rebecca Mitchell comments,

"Those welcomed and embraced and becoming His footstool... this makes me think of the woman at His feet (Lu. 7:37-50). Or of the prodigal saying "make me as one of thy hired servants" ... perhaps becoming

His footstool is a needed (and wanted) position and role close to Him, somewhat like the strayed lamb taken up into the arms of the shepherd after being found. Also maybe by being close to the "feet" (that part of His body), i.e., those who carry out His heart/will, they will learn how His heart responds to others."

The Lord is going to do some work on these folks (just as He is now doing to us). He is "**giving**" a new heart, instruction, grace, mercy, love, acceptance, transformation by the renewing of the mind, life from death,

etc. He turns His adversaries into His friends, making them other than they were (2 Cor. 5:19).

**14. For you see, by and in one offering He has perfected** (brought to the goal; matured; completed; finished; brought to their purposed destiny) – **on into the whole length** (or: extended or stretched into the unbroken continuance) – **those folks being one after another set-apart**

(separated; made sacred and holy; [*p46* reads: restored back up again into the original state and condition; rescued back and delivered again; made healthy and whole again]).

Note how well this verse follows 13 when 13 is translated correctly. Now vs. 12-14 make perfect sense. Once again our author has put the same adverb of vs. 12 between two verbs here in 14. Verses 12 and 14 are bookends to vs. 13. The once for all offering has ongoing results as He continues enthroned as King of all.

Do not miss the perfect tense of "**perfected** (brought to the goal; matured; completed; finished; brought to their purposed destiny)." From the position of His throne, it is a completed, finished work which was **transacted** (10:1, above) on His cross. But from the perspective of here in the ages, it is the

ongoing work of a lifetime. He **set-apart** the whole new creation (the all; all things; all humanity – 1 Cor. 13:7), and one person after another as well as one thing after another – as He continues creating new stars and planets and solar systems, etc., then saying "It is very good" – and each in its own class and order (1 Cor. 15:21-23) is brought to the goal.

**15. Now the set-apart Breath-effect (or: Holy Spirit; Sacred Attitude) is also habitually witnessing (or: progressively attesting; periodically testifying) to us, for us, in us and by us, for after His having before said,**

**16. "This [is] the arrangement**

(covenant; disposition) **which I will continue arranging** (covenanting; disposing) **toward them after those days," the Lord [= Yahweh] says,**  
**"Continuously giving My laws upon their hearts, I will even progressively write them upon their mental perception (or: comprehension; that which passes through the mind), [Jer. 31:33]**

17. **"and I will by no means still continue having called to mind** [other MSS: in no way would I at any point still be reminded of] **their failures** (sins; errors;

misses of the target) **and of their lawlessnesses** (unlawful behaviors)." [Jer. 31:34]

"Finally, as is his habit, the writer to the Hebrews clinches his argument with a quotation from Scripture" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 118). In vs. 15 I expanded the rendering of "**us**," giving four functions of the dative case that make sense in the context of the work of His Spirit on our behalf. The **set-apart Breath-effect**, the Holy Spirit which brings the Sacred Attitude, was then, and is still now, **habitually witnessing** and progressively attesting **to us and for us** that the new has come. But not only that, He is periodically testifying **by us** and we

have His witness **in us**. So there is no question that the new **arrangement** is "**continuously giving [His] laws and principles upon [our] hearts**" – "**even writ[ing] them upon [our] mental perception** (comprehension; that which passes through the mind)." This is from the Holy Spirit, and the effect of the Breath of God is joined with our breath and spirit (the Greek *pneuma* means both) – and it is simply happening **to us**. By our abiding in the Vine (John 15:1 ff) the life from the Root flows through us and produces growth and fruit in us. Note that both the **heart** and the faculties and activities of the **mind** are combined in this new **transaction** (10:1). This

affects our whole being.

We can see that we no longer need to deal with our **failures, mistakes, errors, sins or times of missing the target**, because **He** will **by no means still** call them to mind. He will not even be reminded of any unlawful behaviors or actions that are contrary to His laws or principles. Will this mean that we can do whatever we want to do with impunity? Of course not. Paul address this same question in Rom. 6:1-2 when he asks the rhetorical question "Shall we continue to sin so that grace may abound? Of course not!" But our Father **DOES** treat us as His children and makes necessary corrections in our

behaviors – because He loves us. *Cf* 12:6-7, below.

But with this new arrangement we can just let Him do the needed pruning, and we need not be conscious about our failures and shortcomings any longer. We need only focus on Christ and on the flow of the Breath-effect through our being.

18. **So (or: But; Now) where [there is] a sending away (a release; forgiveness and a causing to flow away) of these things, [there is] no longer an offering concerning sin (failure)!**

Again, not only is there **no longer an offering concerning sin** (failure; etc.) – which should make it perfectly clear that

the old covenant has completely passed away and that the Torah no longer applies to anyone – we do not need to be **concerned** about this issue. Jesus completely took care of the sin issue, and He continues taking care of any errors or failures to hit the goal.

**19. Therefore, having freedom, openness and boldness of speech which comes from being citizens, brothers (= fellow members), with a view to the Entrance of the set-apart places (or: into the Pathway-into the midst, pertaining to the Holiest Place, which is the separated ones and which pertains to the sacred folks) – within and in union with the blood of Jesus;**

We are now possessing "**freedom, openness and boldness of speech which comes from being citizens.**" We are citizens of the New Jerusalem, as mentioned above. We can speak directly to our Father just as Moses did to Yahweh. We can speak directly to Jesus as He sits enthroned upon the Mercy Seat, within us – and within our fellow members. We have **the Entrance** (recall that Jesus said, "**I Myself am the Door for the sheep** {or: the sheep's Gate and Entrance}" – John 10:7) because we are **within and in union with the blood** (= the life) **of Jesus**. Through Him we are having access to Yahweh (our Father) and to Jesus who sits at our Father's

right hand – within the called-out community which is His temple (abode; dwelling; home). We were included in the death of Jesus and were "**immersed** (or: were then baptized) **into His death... [and] are** (or: were) **buried together** (entombed together with funeral rites) **in Him** (or: by Him; with Him), **through the immersion** (baptism) **into the death...**" (Rom. 6:3-4). Here our author terms this as being "**within and in union with [His] blood.**" He took us within Him (in His blood) into the holy of holies as He completed the final sacrifice of the final Day of Atonement.

20. **a Way** (Path; Road) **which was done anew** (or: which He innovates and

makes new in species, character or mode, within and in the midst) **for us and in us, recently slain and yet living, through the veil that is His flesh** (or: which way through the veil He did anew for us – that is, His flesh [= His body]: recently slain, and now living) – He is the **Way**, Path, Road into the presence of God. We walk this same Path, within Him, into this same intimate and manifest Presence – which is the true "Parousia." The verb "**done anew** (innovated and made new within and in the midst)" is *en-ekainise*, the aorist active of *egkainizo*: to make new (*kainos*: new in species, character or mode); to innovate; to inaugurate. The

**Way** (Jesus, the Messiah) is the new road into the presence of God. It is no longer through the ritual of a Levitical chief priest. All has changed; there has been an innovation that is different in kind and character.

Note the paradox: "**recently slain and yet living.**" John saw a picture of this in the vision recorded in Rev. 5:6, "**within the midst of the throne** [which is the Mercy Seat, within the holy of holies]... **a little Lamb standing, as one having been slaughtered.**" The "**veil that is His flesh**" corresponds to the veil which is the entrance to the holy of holies, and our author ties this to the literal body of Jesus on the cross – or as John the

baptist described Him,

**"Look!** (Pay attention, see and perceive)! **God's Lamb** (or: the Lamb from God; the Lamb having the character and qualities of God; or, in apposition: the Lamb which is God), **the One continuously lifting up and carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System."**

Dan Kaplan has pointed out another picture of the **veil** of the tabernacle being representative of **His flesh** on the cross. It was suspended above the ground (as

was Christ upon the cross), hung with hooks that were attached to poles of acacia (the LXX reads "incorruptible") wood (Ex. 26:32).

But in the Greek text we have two possible renderings: "**through the veil that is His flesh** (or: which way through the veil He did anew for us – that is, His flesh." So is His **flesh** the **veil**, or the **Way**? I suggest that the author has skillfully placed a dual metaphor before us: both ideas were represented in His flesh. Both signify access to the Father, through union with Him. He is the Way, but no one comes to the Father but by Him (figured by His flesh, which was central to the crucifixion and the

resurrection).

## 21. **along with a Great Priest**

**[enthroned] upon God's House** (or: the house from God) –

God's **House** was the tabernacle, then the temple and is now His called-out folks. Used in the sense that Paul often used the metaphor of "house," this phrase also refers to the Messiah being the Head of His Household. But the immediate picture is the **Great Priest** (Jesus) – who was also the Sacrifice whose blood was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat – who sat down upon this Mercy Seat and is now the enthroned King over the inclusive House of Jew and Gentile combined into one new

People of humanity.

**22. we can be continuously and progressively approaching with a true heart in fullness of faith** (or: in faith's being brought to the full), **the hearts having been sprinkled from a misery-gushed consciousness of what is evil or unserviceable** (or: a joint-knowledge full of labor; a conscience in a bad condition), **and then the body having been bathed in and by clean water.**

Through the finished work of the Messiah, Jesus, we can "**continuously and progressively [be] approaching**" the presence of God. Note that we now have "**a true heart in fullness of faith** – or, in faith having been brought to the

full." This is the new creation. This is the new covenant. Our hearts – our own holy of holies, the core of our being – have **"been sprinkled** [with His blood – a figure for His life – through the Holy Spirit] **from a misery-gushed consciousness of what is evil or unserviceable.**" Note the amplification of this last phrase: a joint-knowledge full of labor (i.e., ritual works); a conscience in a bad condition. Our conscience has been changed – it is no longer in a "bad condition" – and our consciousness has been changed – we are no longer focused on evil or the gush of misery and sin that plague humanity. Our consciousness is of the new creation

in the New Being (the resurrected corporate Messiah) and our conscience has the character of Christ.

The last clause about the bathing can refer to the figure of the chief priest on the Day of Atonement having to be bathed in clean water as a part of his duties of performing the sacrifice. It therefore also has reference to our baptism into Christ's death (Rom. 6:2) and the figurative washing that our Chief Priest accomplished on the cross – the blood and water that came out of Him when His side was pierced (John 19:34).

**23. We can and should be continuously retaining** (holding down to have in

possession) **the unwavering same Word** (or: unbent like-thought and similar message; or: unbowed, binding association-agreement) **of the expectation** (or: from the unwavering expectant-hope), **for you see, the One promising [is] Faithful, Trustworthy and Loyal!**

Because of the trustworthiness and loyalty of God (the Promiser), we can continuously retain "**the unwavering same Word of the expectation.**" The adjective **unwavering** (etc.) has normally been translated, then read and understood, as though it were an adverb modifying the verb **retain**. The NIV sadly reads, "Let us hold unswervingly

to the hope we profess..." The NASB has, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering..." Nyland gives us "Let us hold on firmly to the agreement about what we hope for without being moved..." All these common renderings put the burden on us to hold fast "without wavering or being moved." But the Greek does not read this way. What is **unwavering**, and not bent to one side or the other, is the **same Word**, the like-thought and similar message – or, the binding association-agreement. This feminine adjective can modify either **same Word**, or **expectation**. Also, **expectation** can be rendered as an ablative and so it would

then be saying that this like-thought and similar message comes from (or has its source in) the **expectation** (which we know to be Christ in and among us).

Both the **same-word/message** and the expectation are **unwavering** – because it is our **Faithful** God who gave us this expectant hope and this binding association-agreement. And because of His faithful loyalty we are able to hold these down in our possession. Recall the role of expectation in Rom. 8:24,

**"For in the expectation and with hope we are suddenly made whole and healthy**  
(or: You see, **by** the expectation we are delivered and saved; For

we were at one point rescued to expectation; To be sure, we were kept safe for the expectation)!"

**24. And so, let us be constantly directing [our] minds to give careful attention to** (or: keep on bearing in mind and fully considering) **one another into an incitement of love and fine works** (or: unto a keen spurring on of unrestricted acceptance and beautiful acts; to a sharpening alongside from love's urge to overcome separation or estrangement, and from ideal deeds), What an outlook; what a focus! Our careful attention is not to be on our own fulfillment, or on our own personal

experiences or on elitist secret knowledge like the Gnostics. Neither is our attention to be on "spiritual warfare," but rather upon the covenant community. Paul instructed us in Rom. 12:5 that,

**"thus we, the many, are and continue to exist being one body within Christ (in union with [the] Anointed), yet individually (or: the situation being in accord with one), MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER (or: but still, [being] on one level, [are] members whose source is, and who belong to, each other)."**

He reminded us that our lives affect each other,

**"And further, whether one member is continuing to experience the effect of something, or constantly undergoes suffering, all the members continually experience the effect or the suffering together with [it]; or if a member is being constantly glorified or is progressively receiving a good reputation, all the members are continuously rejoicing together with [it]" (1 Cor. 12:26).**

The goal of our attention is not to be controlling or critical or even nosey, but rather to lead:

a) **into an incitement of love and fine works** in their lives,

or,

b) **unto a keen spurring on of unrestricted acceptance and beautiful acts**, or,

c) **to a sharpening alongside from love's urge to overcome separation or estrangement, and from ideal deeds.**

I listed these optional renderings simply to emphasize the important aspects of our covenant life as a body of the

Anointed One. We are intertwined with one another – whether we realize this or not. We should set **careful** attention on enhancing the lives of one another so as to promote the bearing of the fruit of accepting love and profitable actions. This is the new arrangement!

25. **not repeatedly abandoning** (leaving down within; leaving helpless) **the leading of ourselves together upon [someone or some occasion]** (or: the added gathering together of ourselves), **according to a custom for** (or: by; among) **certain folks, but rather and to the contrary, continuously calling [them] to the side for aid, relief and encouragement** (or: to receive the

service of a paraclete), even to so much greater a frequency, for, as much as you folks are presently seeing (continuously looking at and observing), **the Day progressively drawing near!**

The present participle phrase that follows "**but rather and to the contrary,**" in the center of this verse, is a restatement of the whole idea of vs. 24. One needs to come together with someone in order to actively focus attention on them and spur them on to action. Such incitement is part of the encouragement and aid in being a paraclete (one called to be alongside another to give some sort of help) to others. To **abandon** this is to abandon

community. This admonition is much more than telling the recipients of this letter not to quit coming to their house meetings (or in our day: stop going to "church"). It is a call to maintain an active role in the covenant community. These two verses (24 & 25) need to be taken together if we are to properly understand vs. 25.

The last clause of this verse should alert us to the particular historical context. Seasons of persecution of the followers of Christ were periodically happening in the first century. Such situations would naturally call for the members of the community to pull together for mutual support – and **"to so much greater a**

**frequency, for, as much as you folks are presently seeing** (continuously looking at and observing), **the Day progressively drawing near!**" Now if John A.T. Robinson is correct in dating this letter at AD 67, consider what was happening to the Jews and the "Hebrew Christians" in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas during this period of history. They would have been "continuously looking at and observing" the activities of the Roman army in their area. Having known the predictions that Jesus foretold regarding the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24; Lu. 21), they would be "**presently seeing**" that Day **progressively drawing near.**

The noun *sunagoge* is the ordinary word for a gathering together. It came to have a specific use for a Jewish gathering together of the community: what we call a synagogue. But here we have the preposition *epi-* prefixed to this word – and thus my parenthetical rendering: "added gathering together of ourselves," for "added" is one of the meanings of this word whose basic meaning is "upon." This could well have been speaking about extra meetings to plan strategies for what they were seeing approaching. Or, they could have been meetings to deal with current persecutions or special needs of individual families in the communities.

My first rendering "**the leading of ourselves together upon**" may suggest that they were coming together "**upon**" specific issues.

Another possible scenario was within the context of persecution situations where people were called upon to sacrifice to the patron deity of a trade union. Then there was the situation of being required – upon pain of death – to proclaim "Caesar is lord." Verse 26a, below, may be referring to failures of loyalty to Christ in such instances.

Furthermore, an abandoning of gathering together would be seen as deserting the community in times of persecution

**26. For you see, [at] our deliberately**

(voluntarily; willfully from one's being) **making mistakes** (entering into error; failing; shooting off-target; sinning) **as a habitual way of life, after taking hold of** (or: receiving; obtaining) **the full, experiential knowledge and insight of the Truth and Reality, there is no longer a sacrifice concerned with sins** (failures; etc.) **repeatedly** (or: continuously) **left behind** [D\* reads: left around; = available for us],

If we follow the writer's line of thought, we see that vs. 26 continues the context of vs. 25. Deliberately making mistakes as a habitual way of life would mean abandoning the covenant community and returning to one's former way of life –

whether that would be Judaism, or some form of paganism, or simply embracing the secular culture. It would be no longer abiding in the Vine (John 15:6), and thus no longer producing fruit, or a good field crop. The situation would soon be that described in 6:6 & 8, above.

But the reality is that the new age has come, and the old has been done away. There is no going back to an ineffective sacrificial system that was only a shadow of reality. A new arrangement has been instituted. The Messiah does not need to offer Himself as the Sacrifice again. The sin issue was dealt with on the cross. Christ died once and for all. There is no longer any other

sacrifice for sin which is willful and voluntary. As my friend Steve Dohse has said, "Jesus is not going to climb back up on the cross again" – His was the end of all sacrificing. He disciplines His children, as we see that He did with Israel. He even sent them into slavery, but then brought them back, then later came to save the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." But His judgments don't have to wait until people die. They didn't in the past. They can come in this life. They can also come in the next, for He is the same: yesterday, today, and on into the ages (13:8). He will continually be correcting and adjusting humanity, for He is the Lord (Owner) of all and

continuously rules as King. One way is to bless them as they walk away from the Father's house, as we saw in the parable of the "lost son" in Lu. 15:11-32. Our challenge is not to be like the older brother when we ultimately see these brothers that strayed (and were "dead" to the Father – vs. 24) being welcomed back by our Father.

**27. but instead, [there is] a certain fearful taking (or: receiving) in hand from out of a separation for a decision, leading to a judging, and a zeal of Fire being about to be continuously and progressively eating (or: consuming) the hostile folks (the ones under the circumstance of being in**

an opposing position).

Recall ch. 6:4-8, above; both there and here correction is what is needed. The **"taking (or: receiving) in hand from out of"** is from the verb *ekdechomai* that was discussed in 9:28, above. Here it is a poetic way of saying "an experience." And it might not be pleasant. We find a similar term to **"zeal of Fire"** used in Ezk. 36:5, where it speaks of Yahweh's judgment of Edom. That was a historical judgment in the there and then.

Peter tells us that judgment was, in his day, going to begin at God's house, a figure for His people (1 Pet. 4:17). This happened to the unbelieving Jews of the 1st century. They were broken out of

their olive tree via God's judgment of Jerusalem. Via the Roman Empire God sat as a Refiner of them (*cf* Mal. 3). But recall Paul's words in Rom. 11: they can be grafted back in again, for all Israel WILL be saved (vss. 23 & 26). God's judgments are purposeful. We see this in the types in the OT where His judgments came into the Land so that His people would learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9).

A parallel passage using fire for God's dealings with people is found in 1 Cor. 3:12-17. There the figure is a building – God's temple. In vs. 9, Paul has said that we are God's fellow workers on this building. Then he goes on in vs. 12 to

describe different materials that could be used in building on the foundation of Jesus Christ: gold, silver, precious stones – wood, hay, stubble (straw – building God's temple with straw??). Now vs. 13 says that every man's **WORK** will become manifest, for the day will make it evident, because **"it is being unveiled (revealed) within FIRE. And the FIRE will be testing each one's WORK."** Here it is "work" that is produced by a worker; in Heb. 6 it is "a crop" that is produced by a field. The parallels seem obvious. Verse 15 says that if any man's work is burned down, **"he will suffer loss, YET, HE HIMSELF will be saved, yet, thus, as**

**through means of fire."** This is like the field being recovered for use through means of the burning. The message should be clear. In vs. 17, Paul goes on to relate that the wood, hay and stubble ruins (spoils; makes corruptible) God's temple, and to do this will result in God ruining (spoiling; making corruptible) such a person. But keep vs. 15 in mind: this ruining in the fire of God's dealing will cause him loss, yet he, himself, will be saved by this process of burning. Looking again at Rom. 11, vs. 15 instructs us,

**"For if their [i.e., Israel's leadership's] casting away [means] THE**

**RECONCILIATION OF THE WORLD, what [will be] the receiving [of them] if not life forth from out of the midst of dead ones?"**

Look at the PURPOSE of God's judgments!

And then vs. 32 Paul states,

**"For God encloses, shuts up and locks all men (everyone) into incomppliance [oh, but I forgot their free will!], to the end that He may MAKE ALL MEN RECIPIENTS OF MERCY!"**

You say all this is illogical? Yes, to our way of thinking. But this is God's Word,

and His plan!

Then in vs. 33 Paul bursts into worship -  
- **"O, the depth of God's riches.... How unsearchable His judgments, and untrackable His ways..."** This, leading to vs. 36, shows a glimpse of the grand plan of the ages,

**"Because, forth from out of the midst of Him, then through the midst of Him (or: through means of Him), and [finally] into the midst of Him, [is] the whole (everything; [are] all things; or: = Because He is the source, means and goal/destiny of all things – everything leads into Him)!"**

**By Him** (In Him; To Him; For Him; With Him) **[is] the glory** (the manifestation of that which calls forth praise; the reputation; the notion; the opinion; the imagination; the credit; the splendor) **on into the ages. It is so** (Amen; So be it)!"

**28. Someone displacing** (setting aside; violating) **a custom of Moses** (or: Moses' Law) **dies, apart from compassions, upon [evidence or testimony of] two or three witnesses.**

**29. By how much worse punishment** (= heavier the sentence) **do you suppose he will be thought worthy and counted deserving: the one trampling down the**

**Son of God, and considering the blood of the arrangement (or: covenant) common (= profane) – within which he was set-apart (made sacred and holy) – even insulting the Breath-effect of joyous favor (or: Spirit of Grace)?**

It will be a period of experiencing God's fiery dealings, as we saw in 6:8, above. The field must be purged of the useless overgrowth and of the inward crucifying of the Messiah afresh (6:6). Death by stoning (e.g., Deut. 13:10) was harsh but a quick end. But a life lived in estrangement from the life of the kingdom with His Breath-effect would be the misery that we see all about us today in the world at large. Jesus spoke

of this plight of humanity in John 3:36, in regard to the unpersuaded, in-compliant, stubborn and disobedient person,

**"God's inherent fervor**

(teeming passion and swelling desire; mental bent and natural impulse; propensity and disposition; or: anger, wrath and indignation)

**is continuously**

**remaining** (is now habitually dwelling and abiding) **upon him."**

Jesus also addressed the issue of **"insulting the Breath-effect (Spirit)"** in Matt. 12:32,

**"Yet [for] whoever may speak down against the Set-apart Spirit (the Breath-effect of the Holy One; the Sacred Attitude), it will not be caused to flow away from him (or: he will not be pardoned and forgiven by Him; it will not be released and sent off in him) – neither within this age, nor within the one being about to be (the impending one)."**

When a person serves a term in prison it is because he or she was not "forgiven" for the offense, but had to "pay the debt to society." The idea behind this is a reformation of the person to cause them

to be better fit to once again join the society. As noted above, God brings judgment so that people will learn righteousness (the Way pointed out; rightwised behavior with equitable relationships; be pointed in the right direction). Jesus' kids (immature goats, Matt. 25:31-46) needed to see Him in His brothers (in regard to their needs), and to treat them accordingly, with mercy and care. This called for some pruning: a period of fire to refine and mature them into being adult goats, ready to offer themselves to others, in helping them. (again, *cf* Mal. 3)

Since our author is referencing the custom from Moses, a look at some

statements concerning Yahweh's judgments of Israel from the Prophets seems in order. Here is a short collection:

*ZZZZZZ*

## GOD STRIKES, AND THEN HEALS

(In Wrath There Is Mercy and  
Restoration)

In the Hebrew Scriptures (the OT) we find clear statements that the outcome of God's "wrath" and "judging" is healing and mercy. Let the following examples speak for themselves. These are my

renderings of the Septuagint (LXX):

Isa. 19:22 (LXX),

And so [the] Lord (= Yahweh) will smite and wound (or: strike down with a fatal blow) the Egyptians, and then shall completely heal them – and thus they will be fully turned back toward (or: face to face with) [the] Lord (= Yahweh). Then He will listen unto them and thoroughly heal them.

Hos. 5:14-6:4 (LXX),

Because of this, I Myself am like (or: exist being as) a panther to (or: for; in) Ephraim, and like a lion to (or: for; in) the house of Judah: thus I Myself will tear, and then journey on; I will take (grasp in [My] hand; seize), and there

will be no one to be rescuing and dragging [folks] out of [My grasp]. I will journey on and return into My place until they will be caused to disappear, and then they will search for My face, and seek My presence. Within the midst of (or: When encompassed with and joined to) their pressure and affliction they will seek Me early and come to Me before the dawn, repeatedly saying, "Let us go our way and return to [the] Lord (= Yahweh) our God, because He Himself tore [us], and yet He will heal us. He will smite and wound (or: strike down with a fatal blow), and then He will bind us and bandage the wound. After two days He

will make us sound and healthy; within (or: on) the third day we shall stand back up again from out of the midst (or: will be raised forth again) and then we will live before Him – in His sight and presence – and we will have insight (*gnosis*) and intimately know by experience! Let us press forward and run to intimately experience and know the Lord (= Yahweh) firsthand: we will find Him ready and prepared – like the early morning (or: as the dawn), and then He will come to us (or: for us; in us) – like [the] early and latter rain to and on the Land (or: in the earth)."

Hos. 11:1-4 (LXX),

1. Because Israel [is] a young

child, I Myself also love him, and I once called his children together from out of Egypt.

2. The more I called them [to Me], the more they distanced themselves and kept away from My face (or: immediate presence). They sacrificed to the Baals, and then burned incense to the carved and chiseled images (= idols).

3. And so I, Myself tied the feet of Ephraim together (i.e., restrained him; = hobbled him to keep him from wandering) [then] I took him up upon My arm – and yet they did not realize (or: know) that I had healed them.

4. In the thorough ruin and destruction of humans I stretch out to

them and lay [My hand] on them in binding ties (or: bonds) of My love.

And so I will be to them as a person slapping (or: striking) [someone] on his cheek, then I will look upon him (= either: keep an eye on him; or: give respect to him). I will prevail with him and then give ability and power to him. Then in vs. 8-9, Yahweh says re:

Ephraim,

... My heart is turned for a change within itself, My change in care and interest is jointly stirred and excited: I will not do or perform in accord with (or: to the degree of) the inherent fervor of My hard-breathing

passion – I  
will not leave Ephraim down  
within the midst of the  
[situation] to be wiped out of the  
midst, because of the fact that I  
Myself am God, and not human,  
a Set-apart One within your  
midst!

Hab. 3:2 (LXX),

.... Within the [situation for] my soul to  
be troubled, in the midst of inherent  
fervor (or: anger; wrath), You will  
remember mercy.

Ps. 77:7-9 (LXX),

Will [the] Lord (= Yahweh) cast  
[folks/us] away on into the Age, and will  
He no more set forth the [situations] of

goodwill and thoughts of goodness and ease?

Or will He cut off His mercy unto the end (or: on into the goal and consummation) – from generation to generation? Or will God forget to be compassionate or will He restrain His compassions in the midst of His inherent fervor and anger?

Pause and consider this!

Ps. 7:11 (LXX),

God [is] a fair and just evaluator and decider (or: judge), as well as a Strong One who takes a long time before breathing hard and rushing into passion. He is not one who is constantly bringing on anger from inherent fervor (or:

passionate wrath) every day.

Isa. 48:9 (LXX),

For the sake of My own Name and Reputation, I will point out, show and demonstrate the fury of my rushing passion (or: wrath), and then will bring upon you My inner glory – to the end that I will not destroy you out of the midst.

*ZZZZZZ*

And so, His "**judging, and a zeal of Fire**" is not necessarily what tradition has taught us.

**30. For we have perceived, and thus know, the One saying,**

**"Execution of right in fairness out of the Way pointed out [is] by Me. I will continue giving back (repay) in its place,"**

**says the Lord [= Yahweh], and again,**

**"The Lord [= Yahweh] will continue separating and making a decision about (or: judging) His people." [Ex.**

**32:35-36]**

We should first of all take note of the last

phrase here. The context of verses 26 through 31 is "**His people.**" God is intimately involved with His people and He responds to how we live our lives. He often separates us (either inwardly or physically) in order to deal with specific issues in our lives – whether it be a time of pruning to bring more fruit (John 15:2; Matt. 25:46, literal rendering: "into an eonian pruning"), or giving us a time of needed rest and nourishment. His decisions about us are always positive, even if the situation may seem negative for the time.

Consider the principle stated in the promise, "**I will give back (repay) in its place.**" This is saying that God will pay

us back for any losses we incur due to some injustice – we do not need to seek justice for ourselves. God makes things right to us and for us. He executes fairness of what is right. It is all based upon the Way which is Jesus. Christ is the new righteousness which God executes within folks. He puts them into the Way (Christ) that He has pointed out to us.

31. **[It is] fearful** (a fear-inspiring [experience]) **to suddenly fall-in – into hands of a continuously living God!** Suddenly falling-in is a scary, fear-inspiring experience. When someone falls through a roof, through the ice on a lake, or into a pit, it will always be

accompanied with fear – even from its mere suddenness. Falling into God's hands is fearful because we do not know what this experience will entail. Chronic illness suddenly appearing; the sudden loss of our means of income; the end of a close relationship; the outbreak of war; the devastation of an earthquake, a tsunami, a flood, a tornado, a volcanic eruption – all these are fearful experiences. But in all these we should realize that we have fallen into **His** hands. And we should realize that this is just our initial emotion. What accompanies our landing in His hands in a new experience is the presence of His love within this new context. And His

love will cast out all of our fear –  
because we can trust the One who made  
the Promises: He is **Faithful,**  
**Trustworthy and Loyal.**

This verse should not be taken in  
isolation, but in the context of the  
correction of the previous verses, and  
with the context of what immediately  
follows:

**32. Yet be remembering the first (or:  
former) days in which, being  
enlightened (illuminated), you at one  
point remained under (patiently  
endured while giving support in) a great  
conflict (contest or athletic combat) of  
the effects of sense-experiences  
(results of emotions, passions, sufferings**

and things that happened to you),  
33. **partly both by reproaches and by pressures; partly being birthed** (coming to be) **folks of common being and existence** (partners; participants; sharers) **of those thus conducting themselves** (turning themselves step-by-step), **being constantly exposed and gazed upon as a public spectacle, as in a theater.**

These folks had some experiences under their belts. "The Christian churches did not escape persecution for long – the description here is presumably typical of what they suffered. Under persecution, Christians needed **endurance** and **faith**. Faith is one of the themes of the letter,

and is about to receive fuller treatment: it is a deep and many-sided attitude" (Harvey, *ibid.* p 707).

In vs. 32, "**the effects of sense-experiences** (etc.)" is the word *pathema*. The *-ma* ending means an effect or a result. We carry with us the effects and results of our experiences. The word *pathos* means a "**sense-experience**" of any kind: inward or outward. It is something that our senses experience – either good or bad. The pressures, reproaches and exposure to public gaze can have deep emotional consequences. The **conflicts** could have covered the whole semantic range of this word – from physical to

mental/emotional. Being a follower of Jesus means being counter-cultural on many levels. There is always resistance to change.

**"Common being and existence, partners, participants, sharers"** is a common theme in the NT writings. The writers remind their audiences that they are not alone, that they are a part of a larger body of believers who are experiencing similar things. This word *koinonos* (a cognate of *koinonia*) pictures the new existence in the New Being of the corporate Christ, a many-membered body. This existence and being is also the partnership, the participation and the common sharing

that is God's reign and kingdom: the called-out covenant community. Cf Rom. 12:13; 15:27; Heb. 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 1:3, 6, 7.

**34. For you even feel with** (experience with; sympathize with) **those bound or in prison** [other MSS: with me in my bonds], **and you at one point received to yourselves** (accept; embrace) **the seizure** (plunder; confiscation) **of your possessions** (properties; things having their origin below) **with gracious joy, knowing and realizing to have for yourselves a superior** (stronger and better) **and continuously remaining** (or: dwelling; or: abiding; = permanent and lasting) **possession** (or: property) [later

MSS add: within the heavens (or: atmospheres)].

Now he recounts to them an example of this very **common participation** and sharing: their "**feel[ing] with,** experiencing with and sympathizing with **those bound or in prison.** The "bound folks" could be those who are in some sort of personal bondage, whether interior or bound in slavery. This word was also used for people that were in prison or under arrest.

He reminds them of the time when they received and accepted the confiscation or plunder of their possessions or properties. This could refer to the time when Claudius banished the Jews from

Rome (Acts 18:2), or there may have been other instances. But they **received [it]** and accepted [it] **with gracious joy**. The verb is our word *dechomai* with the prefix *pros-* and is in the middle voice. They took the situation in their arms and brought it toward themselves in a gracious and joyful embrace, allowing our Father (a consuming Fire – 12:29) that resided within them to incinerate the injustice and the negative. This verb is in the aorist tense, so I also rendered it as a timeless present, "accept; embrace," which could refer to their normal attitude toward such things.

Then he points to their awareness of what they have in Christ – for they abide

in Him. The new covenant is about **superior and continuously remaining** aspects of existence within God's kingdom. Their lives are "**hidden so that [they are] now concealed together with the Christ, within the midst of God** (or: in union with God)" – Col. 3:3.

**35. Therefore may you not cast away your freedom and openness in speaking** (boldness and confidence which comes from being a citizen) **which continuously has a great discharge of wages.**

**"Cast not away** –implying that they now have 'confidence,' and that it will not withdraw of itself, unless they 'cast it

away' willfully (*cf* ch. 3:14)" –  
(*Jamieson Fausset and Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, 1961, p 1430*). Consider the full meaning of this word: **freedom and openness in speaking**; boldness and confidence which comes from being a citizen. It is very likely that a good many of these Jewish Christians were not citizens of Rome or of any city in the Empire. They were not likely to have all been like Paul – he would seem to be one of the exceptions. So our writer is reminding them of the citizenship in the Jerusalem which is above (Gal. 4:26) where their "**abiding property**" figuratively was

located. They were citizens of the Messiah's kingdom. The **wages** (typically not specified) would be,

**"down from His wealth [being] within [the] glory [that resides] within Christ Jesus**  
(or: that accords to His wealth that resides within the opinion or imagination [which is] within Christ Jesus; to the level of His riches, within a manifestation of splendor which calls forth praise, within Christ Jesus; down through His abundance, within the reputation [arising from] within the midst of Christ Jesus; in the sphere of and in

line with His riches [which are] in union with a glory resident within an anointing from Jesus)" – Phil. 4:19.

**36. For you continuously have need (necessity of the use) of persistent patient endurance (steadfast remaining under for support), so that doing (or: performing) the will (intent; purpose) of God you may carry away for yourselves – in order to provide and care for – the Promise.**

Here he is building on vss. 34 and 35. The cultural, political and religious environment within which the called-out communities lived continued to be hostile to this new spreading of God's

kingdom. They would continue to experience persecution and resistance – as it has been even to this day, in many parts of the world. So they would always **"have need of persistent patient endurance,"** with a "steadfast remaining under" the hostile or difficult situations – in order to give support to the community. Paul admonished Timothy to,

**"continuously pursue** (or: rapidly follow, press forward and chase) **fair and equitable dealings in right relationships in the Way pointed out** (rightwisdom; justice; = loyal covenantal living), **faith** (trust;

trustworthiness; loyalty), **love, persistent remaining under in patient yet relentless endurance to give support, meek and gentle sensitivity** (mildness of temper)" – 1 Tim. 6:11.

In ch. 12:1, below, he admonishes them to "**through persistent remaining-under** (or: relentless patient endurance and giving of support) **keep on running the racecourse continuously lying before us** (or: lying in the forefront within us; or: lying ahead, among us)." We come across this word again and again in the NT. Their life-situations presented the need for it. We see this

word in Rom. 5:3, 4; 8:25; 15:4, 5; 2 Cor. 6:4; 12:12; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:10; Jas. 1:3, 4; 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:6. It is a necessary attribute of the Spirit for which life in this world calls – and is a specific requirement for "**doing (performing) the will, intent and purpose of God.**"

Note the connection between the first and last halves of this verse: "**so that.**" There is an expectation that is included in this admonition. When we patiently endure situations and by God's grace are able to continue giving support to others within those ordeals, we can be confident that we will **carry away** from them the very presence and Spirit of

Christ (**the Promise**) – or as Jacob (James) 1:4 tells us, we,

**"may be** (or: can exist as) **perfect ones** (complete, matured and finished folks who have attained the goal), **even ones having an entire allotment** (or: whole folks having every part), **being left behind in nothing** (or: lacking not one thing)."

37. **For you see,**

**"Yet a very, very little while, [and] the One repeatedly coming will by habit be arriving, and He will not be late** (or: continue delaying or

taking time).

38. **"Now My just One who is fair and equitable and in right relationship in accord with the Way pointed out [other MSS: the rightwised person] shall continue living from out of trust and faith (or: from out of faith will be continuously living; [other MSS: out of My faith], and if he should lower his sails and shrink back (place himself under; cower), My soul is not thinking well within him (or: taking delight in him)." [Hab. 2:3-4]**

Again our author ends a section of

argument with a witness of documentary evidence. It is presumed that the audience accepts the authority of Scripture. Paul frequently did the same in his writings.

Dan Kaplan pointed out that in the Hebrew version of the Hab. reference, above, the subject of the passage is the vision (the *Tanakh* renders it "prophecy") that the prophet was to write "plain on tablets" (vs. 2). It was "for a set term" but "even if it tarries, wait for it still" (*Tanakh*). But our author quotes from the LXX, as usual, and inserts a masculine pronoun before the participle **repeatedly coming**, so now it reads "**the One** (or: He that is)." So the

vision has now become a Person. This is like the Word becoming flesh, in John 1:14. In the LXX, vs. 3b reads,

"And He will bud and shoot up into the midst of the limited conclusion (*peras*), and yet not into a vain or futile result that lacks purpose or content..."

That limited conclusion was the end of the age of the old covenant and the Law. But note that this is not necessarily speaking about an eschatological event. The present tense (**repeatedly coming**) speaks of habitual action. Verse 37 witnesses that "**He will not be late or continue delaying.**" He would be walking within their midst just as He

constantly was doing among the communities of Asia Minor (Rev. 1:20-2:1, 5, etc.). The prophet ties this in with a life that is **"fair and equitable and in right relationship in accord with the Way pointed out"** and that draws life **"from out of faith"** – or, from out of "God's faith" (reading with the other MSS). The last part about a person **"lowering his sails and shrinking back – cowering"** may have been included by the author from having in mind what he said about deliberately making mistakes (etc.) in vs. 26-31, above, and then becoming discouraged, or it may refer to the fear of persecution. This was being applied to a present context for them,

and it continues to be so for us. The descriptive picture of "lowering the sails" (as during a storm) is the literal meaning.

The simultaneous presence and connection of faith and righteousness (which is the Way of corporate covenant living with fairness and equity) are a thread that reaches from Genesis to Revelation. They are the core of the Christ-life.

**39. Yet we ourselves do not relate to or exist from a lowering of the sails and a shrinking back into a state of being lost, nor into destruction, but rather [we exist] from faith and confident trust, [leading] into an**

**encompassing which is from [the] soul  
and defines soul**

(or: unto creating a secure  
surrounding pertaining to life  
and breath; unto establishing a  
perimeter around [our] person;  
into a forming-around which  
originates in feelings, desires,  
instinct, emotions, will, and  
expressions of life which are the  
soul).

The "we" expresses the solidarity of all  
followers of Jesus; "ourselves"  
expresses the emphatic use of the  
pronoun. He is emphasizing the fact that  
his listeners are NOT a part of those  
who **cower and lower their sails**. We

"**do not relate to**" renders the genitive with a negative. "**Or exist from**" renders the verb with the negative and the noun as an ablative. Together, these expanded translations give a more complete view of the Greek.

I also gave two renderings to the noun *apoleia*: **state of being lost; destruction**. To understand the use of this word by the NT writers, we need to see the two meanings together: to be destroyed is to be lost; to be lost is to be destroyed. The noun is derived from the verb *apollumi* which Jesus used in a number of contexts. One is the three parables of the "lost" things (sheep; coin; son) in Lu. 15. We should consider

that each item that was at one time  
"lost/destroyed" was eventually "found."

He also used this verb in Matt. 15:24,

**"I was not commissioned and sent off as an emissary (representative) – except into the midst of those sheep having been destroyed, the ones that belong to the house of Israel (or: unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel)."**

He also used it in Lu. 19:10,

**"You see, the Son of the Man (= the eschatological messianic figure; = Adam's son) came to seek after, and then to save, deliver and restore what is**

**existing being lost and destroyed."**

What this tells us is that those who **ARE lowering their sales and cowering** are moving away into the state and condition in which they existed before the Messiah came. In doing so they put themselves into the category for which the Savior came (as He described in Lu. 19:10). And since "**Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and on into the ages (13:8),**" we can be confident that He continues "**to seek after, and then to save, deliver and restore what is existing being lost and destroyed.**" But we are not a part of those, "**but rather [we exist] from faith and**

**confident trust, [leading] into an encompassing which is from [the] soul and defines soul."** I parenthetically added three expanded options for rendering the last phrase: *eis peripoiesin psuches*. The first noun derives from the verb *poieo* (make; construct; create; form) and the preposition *peri* (around; = encircle; = encompass). Let us consider these options:

1) **an encompassing which is from [the] soul and defines soul:** this is a state of existence in Christ which encompasses us. "**Which... defines**" is my rendering of the genitive of apposition of the word "**soul.**" "**From**

**[the] soul"** renders the same word as an ablative. His presence, His Spirit, the Christ within whom we now exist, are the things that now define who we are.

2) "unto creating a secure surrounding pertaining to life and breath": here I rendered "soul" as "life and breath," which speaks of our existential life here. He creates a secure surrounding as our lives are "hid with the Christ within God" (Col. 3:3).

3) "unto establishing a perimeter around [our] person": this is a military expression for setting up a defensive posture when in hostile territory; here I rendered "soul" as "person."

4) "into a forming-around which

originates in feelings, desires, instinct, emotions, will, and expressions of life which are the soul": here I expressed the noun "soul" as both an ablative (which originates in) and as in apposition (which are), and gave the meanings that are commonly associated with the word "soul."

If we take these together, we get a more extensive view of what the Spirit of Christ does for us. Following our author's lead, I will give an OT quote to support these renderings:

"An agent from the Lord [= Yahweh] will encamp round about them that habitually revere Him, and He will drag them out

of danger" (Ps. 34:7, LXX).

## Chapter 11

"Chapter 11 is a homily on 10:35-39" (Stern, *ibid.* p 714). We can see from the Habakkuk quote in vs. 38, and then from the reference to faith and confidence in vs. 39, that the author was leading them to what follows in this chapter. He is now accessing the story of Israel and its origins to make a point about the new covenant, which he will make in ch. 12.

**1. Now faith continuously exists being** (or: trust with loyal conviction is) **a standing-under** (a substructure; a basis; = the ground on which to build; that which underlies the apparent, and thus is the substance, essence or real nature) **of**

**things being habitually expected and anticipated** [*p*13 reads: is a standing-away from things being presently hoped for]; **an evidence from a test which proves concerning effects of practices** (or: an evidence-based proof of the results of matters, actions or deeds) **[that are] not presently seen or normally being observed.**

[note: Karen Armstrong, in *The Case for God*, has suggested that *pistis* not only involves trust and loyalty, but also engagement and commitment. Paul Tillich saw faith as "the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the

transcendent unity of  
unambiguous life." (*Systematic  
Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 131)]

The semantic range of *pistis* is given in my expanded renderings and the note, above, that I included in my translation. Some may offer more English words, but I think these suffice to have a good understanding of this central word of both Judaism and Christianity. A stronger word than "loyalty" might be "allegiance," and in the relationship of a follower to his or her leader, or King, we might find that allegiance is a very strong motivator to be faithful to the imparted expectation, and even a stand-in for an assumed reality of the vision

that has not yet been realized or observed. The idea of allegiance can be seen in Abraham, Moses and the prophets. However, the central theme of this letter has been the replacement of the old – with its literal sacrifices and priesthood of a literal nation and race – with the new and better, with its spiritual sacrifice in which the life of the sacrifice (Christ) is given to a united humanity (composed of Jew and Gentile), figured by the life-blood of the Messiah sprinkled on the hearts of people, and a "heavenly" tabernacle that is composed of the united spirits of the metaphorical "body of Christ" (His followers).

The point of this verse is not to give a definition of the word *pistis*, but to show that it is a foundation upon which the unseen and unobserved kingdom of God is based, and that its presence and existence is **evidence** which gives proof **concerning effects of practices** of the covenant community – proof of the actions and deeds of those in Christ. The author's argument about "**things being habitually expected and anticipated**" and "**effects of practices** (or: an evidence-based proof of the results of matters, actions or deeds) [**that are**] **not presently seen or normally being observed**" will culminate in 12:18-24, below: that "**you folks have**

**approached so that you are now at Mount Zion – even in a city of a continuously living God; in 'Jerusalem upon heaven'."**

Paul spoke of the new situation regarding **faith** (etc.) by referencing the Law (Torah),

**"The result of the flow (the gush-effect; or: the saying; the declaration; that which is spoken; the speech) is (or: exists) near you – within your mouth and within your heart!"**  
[Deut. 30:11-14]

**– that is, the effect of the gush from The Faith (or: the result of the flow which is the saying**

that pertains to the conviction of trust; the effect of the flux and movement of the Faith; or: that which is spoken which is trust; or: the speech and declaration which comes from faith, trust, reliance and fidelity) **which we are habitually announcing publicly** (proclaiming extensively)" – Rom. 10:8.

The following verses will illustrate the nature of the **faith-trust-conviction-loyalty** which comes from the Spirit of God with the presence of His reign and engagement in His kingdom – by selected individuals in Israel's history, but now in called-out communities in the

new age. How **faith** (etc.) came to these folks is stated by Paul in Rom. 10:17,

**"Consequently, the faith (or: the trust; confidence; loyalty) [comes or arises] from out of the midst of, or from within, hearing, yet the hearing [comes] through a gush- effect of Christ, even through the result of a flow which is Christ (or: through Christ's utterance; through something spoken concerning Christ; or: by means of a declaration which is anointed, or from Christ; through a word uttered which is Christ; [other MSS: God's speech])."**

**2. For in the midst of and in union with this the ancient ones** (or: the folks of old time; the elders) **were given testimony** (or: had witness and evidence borne to them that gave them a reputation; had their record attested):

The author now reaches back, starting in the next verse with a reference to the "creation story" of Genesis. It is noteworthy that Adam is not included in this group of "**ancient ones.**" In that story there was an absence of faith in Eve, in regard to the Word which was spoken to Adam about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. My wife, Lynda, pointed out that it was the faith in the fathers and prophets of Israel that

was the substructure of Christ's faith. Moses and the prophets bore the weight (glory) of the Word that came to them, and that Word was the foundation for all that was to come in the Messiah. Thus do we see all the NT writers reaching back and quoting from the OT as they build their arguments. The faith that comes through His Word to us is the building material that is used to make us into pillars in His temple (Rev. 3:12).

**3. In faith and by confident, loyal trust, with the mind we constantly perceive (or: with the intellect we now understand) the ages to have been completely equipped by (and, or: thoroughly adjusted to; knit together and**

put in order in) **God's gush-effect** (or: the result of that which flowed from God; or: a declaration or speech that had the source, character and qualities of God; or: a spoken word which was God), **into the [resultant situation]: the thing continuously being seen** (being looked at and observed) **has not come into being from out of the midst of things which are normally appearing**

(or: continuously shining and exposing themselves to view; or: presently becoming visible or being given light and thus being made to appear).

The subject of the first clause is "**the**

ages," not the material universe. The subject of this letter is moving from the old age of the first covenant and into the new age of the present new covenant-arrangement. But it was **God's gush-effect** – the result of that which flowed from God – that has **equipped** all the **ages** that led up to the present one. The resulting situations did not come about from out of the arrangements that already existed within the nations – which had "**appeared**" upon the earth. In the age that created the race of Israel, God did not set up a kingdom, but a people. There was no "head of state" – no natural king – until the people asked for one in the time of Samuel. The

arrangement was created from the unseen realm of God, in accord with what Yahweh showed Moses on Mt. Sinai. It was an arrangement of types and shadows which pointed to the real that would come at the conjunction between that age and the present age which followed it. But this narrative starts in the age following Adam's expulsion from the Garden in Eden, and the first "hero" of the list is Abel, Adam's son (we might call him a son of man):

**4. In faith, by trust, with loyal confidence and to express faithful allegiance, Abel offered to God much more of a sacrifice than (or: compared to) Cain, through which he was given**

**witness (a testimony) to be one in accord with the Way pointed out, with fairness and equity in rightwised relationship (a just one), God's continuous witnessing [being] upon his gifts [with other MSS: a continual testimony upon his gifts, by and in God]; and through it [i.e., faith and God's testimony] he, being dead, is still continuously speaking.**

Here, and in the verses below, we have the word *pistis* in the dative case, with no expressed preposition in the text. So I have given a variety of prepositions to express the potential functions of the dative noun, and at the same time rendered the semantic range of *pistis*.

What we have is that *pistis* is "**the Way pointed out,**" which includes **fairness, equity, rightwised** (turned in the right direction) **relationships and justice.**

This example of *pistis* as **the Way pointed out** is what is still continuously speaking to us.

**5. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for loyal allegiance, Enoch was transported** (transferred; translated; changed to be in another place), **pertaining to the [situation] to not see death** (to not behold, perceive or observe a death; or: = to not experience death), **and he continued not being found, because God transported him. You see, before his transport** (transfer;

change of place), **he had received testimony** (or: is attested) **to have pleased God well.**

It was in, by, with and for (= because of, or, for the cause of) *pistis* that Enoch was transported. Another quality of *pistis* – which is **the Way** – is

**pleas[ing] God.** This is the reading of the LXX, but the Hebrew text reads:

"**Enoch walked with God**" – which speaks of living his life with God.

Whether the LXX was translating from a different Heb. MS, or whether "**pleased**" was the translators' interpretation of the Hebrew word, is not known.

Just what happened to Enoch is not known either, but many traditions have formed

around him, over the centuries. Does **not see death** mean not die? Or did it mean that he would not be around to see the death brought on by the flood in Noah's day? We are not told to where he was transported or transferred. It means that he was changed from where he was to be in another place – perhaps an area not affected by the flood in the land (*erets*) where Noah lived. The Heb. word *erets* means "land, earth, country."

**6. Now apart from faith, trust, confidence and loyal allegiance, [one is] powerless (or: unable) to please [God] well. It is necessary and binding for the person habitually approaching God to believe (to be convinced and**

trust) **that He is** (or: that He exists), **and that He habitually comes to be** (or: becomes) **the One who pays back wages** (or: gives away rewards) **to, in and for those folks repeatedly** (or: constantly) **seeking Him out** (or: seeking from out of Him).

Here we get more explanation of *pistis*. One must have it in order to **please [God] well**. One must *pisteusai* (i.e., use faith, believe, trust, exercise faithfulness and loyalty, be convinced) **that He exists and that He habitually comes to be the One who pays back wages...** in order to **habitually approach God**. Notice that the author is speaking about **"the person habitually approaching**

**God."** The context is the covenant community – folks that have already been brought to God, for no one can come to Christ unless the Father drag him, or forcefully draw her (John 6:44).

But once we have been existentially brought to Christ, we have access to Him, as Paul instructs us in Eph. 2:18,

**"that** (or: because) **through Him we both continuously have** (hold and possess) **the procurement of access** (conduct toward the presence; admission, being led), **within one Spirit** (or: in union with one Breath-effect and Attitude), **to** (or: toward; face to face with)

## **the Father."**

Our **approaching** is the effect of the operation of the faith and trust that has been imparted into us by the coming of the Word and the Spirit. We **believe** because we have been placed within the covenant community and have been "jointed and glued in intimate union to the Lord" (1 Cor. 6:17). So the "**necessity and binding**" simply means that this happens only in the realm of trust, faith and conviction. The believing is generated by the Spirit of Life that dwells within us.

John Gavazzoni reminded me of Paul's phrase in Rom. 8:38, "**For you see, I have been persuaded and now stand**

**convinced...**" It was the truth of the revelation from God that persuaded Paul and convinced him, so that through that Word to him he now **"had faith, trust, confidence and loyal allegiance."** John also cited 1 John 4:16,

**"And we have come by intimate experience to know and have believed, trusted and are convinced of the Love which God has (or: holds) continuously within (or: among) us,"**

and then says, "We KNOW and BELIEVE. We can't have the latter without the former, and we are completely dependent upon God's

convincing initiative." (from a private email)

Paul speaks of the wages that will be paid to those that work on God's temple (His people) in 1 Cor. 3:8-17. The pay will be from,

**"... the riches of the glory of this Secret** (or: the wealth which has its source in this sacred mystery's manifestation which calls forth praise) **within the multitudes** (among the nations; in the Gentiles; among the swarms of ethnic groups), **which is** (or: exists being) **Christ within you folks, the expectation of and from the**

## glory

(or: which is [the] Anointed in union with you people: the hope of the manifestation which calls forth praise; or: which is [the] Anointing within the midst of you folks – the expectation which is the glory)" – Col. 1:27.

But our author may also be accessing Israel's story, when in Gen. 15:1 Yahweh says to Abram,

"You must not be fearing, Abram! I [am] your Shield, your exceedingly increased Reward."

**7. In faith, by trust, with confidence and loyal allegiance, Noah, being instructed** (or: being managed in public affairs) **concerning those things as yet not seen, acting cautiously** (or: receiving carefully; being shown [as] one who is taking hold well), **prepared** (made ready; furnished and equipped) **an ark – [leading] into a deliverance** (a rescue; a keeping safe) **of his house – through which he made a corresponding evaluation and a commensurate decision about the aggregate of humanity** (or: separated down the secular world; condemns the System; makes a judgment which falls in line with and follows the pattern of the

ordered arrangement) **and came to be an heir** (an enjoyer of an allotment) **of fair and equitable dealings** (of justice and rightwised relationships in accord with the Way pointed out; also: = of covenant inclusion) **down from faith, which is in line with trust and is in the sphere of convinced loyalty.**

God's instruction to Noah, and His management of the public affairs in Noah's time and area, were the results of the flow from God's Spirit to him and those among whom he lived. This brought the environment of faith to Noah and it equipped him with trust, confidence and loyal allegiance to Yahweh. That he did what Yahweh told

him to do was proof of the faith that had been imparted to him. As a result he **"came to be an heir – an enjoyer of an allotment"** of the Way of fair and equitable dealings that God had pointed out to folks of that day, and it included him in that particular covenant which God arranged for him. All of that came **"down from faith, [was] in line with trust and [was] in the sphere of convinced loyalty."**

**8. In loyal faith, by trusting allegiance and with confident faithfulness, Abraham obeyed** (humbly listened and submissively paid attention, under [God]), **continuing to be called to go out into the place which he was, and**

**continued being, about to take in hand** (or: receive) – **into an inheritance** (an enjoyment of an allotment). **And he went out not presently putting his thoughts on** (or: not being versed in or acquainted with) **where he was progressively going.**

Abraham's obedience in going, when called to leave his native country, demonstrated the faith that had come to him from Yahweh's instruction (Gen. 12:1, 4). His thoughts were on obeying what God told him to do, not on "**where he was progressively going.**" This calls to mind Paul's words in Rom. 8:14, **"For as many as are being continuously led by God's**

**Spirit** (or: are being habitually led in [the] Breath-effect which is God; are being progressively led with an attitude from God), **these folks are God's sons** (these continuously exist being sons of God; or: = these are folks who have the character and qualities of God)."

The sphere of this leading is "**in loyal faith.**" The means of this leading is "**by trusting allegiance.**" What attends this leading is "**confident faithfulness.**" This is covenant living. We often do not know **where He is progressively leading us.** But by the **faith** (etc.) imparted by the effect of the flow of His Spirit within us,

we are given the ability to obey.

**9. In faith, by trust, with confident loyal allegiance, he sojourned** (resided as an alien in a foreign country; lived alongside as a temporary inhabitant) **[settling] into the land of the Promise as not his own** (as belonging to another), **dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise.**

In faith he accepted the life of a nomadic existence – living **in tents** with his son and his son's family, and then with his grandson. By trust **he sojourned** as a temporary inhabitant of **the land of the Promise**. But with confident, loyal allegiance he regarded that land **as not his own**. He did not view it as something

to be grasped in selfish greed – which reminds us of the attitude of Christ (Phil. 2:6).

**10. For he continued taking with the hand from out of** (or: reaching in and receiving, then taking away from within) **the city continuously having the foundations – whose Craftsman** (or: Technician; Artisan) **and skilled Worker for the people** (or: Producer; Architect) **[is] God.**

Abraham was not "looking for" or "waiting for" this **city**. Dr. Ann Nyland (*The Source NT*) and *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* are the only other translations which I have come across that accurately

render *ekdechomai* in this verse. The verb is in the imperfect tense, and Nyland points out in a footnote that this was a "continual process" (Nyland, *ibid.* p 449 fn 5). In faith and by trust he was continually receiving from out of this **city**, even while being a nomad. Jesus said of him,

**"Abraham, your father, was exceedingly glad (or: exulted) to the end that he could see My day, and he saw (caught sight of; beheld; observed; perceived) [it] and then was graced (or: favored; or: rejoiced; was made glad)"** – John 8:56.

Christ's day was the realization of the new age where that **city** descended out of the heavens into the earth (Rev. 21:1-2) in the new creation/new covenant. But by faith, trust and conviction Abraham was able to continue "**taking with the hand from out of the city.**" Notice that this city is one that is "**continuously having the foundations.**" Its **Craftsman, Architect and Producer is God**, not a human. It is made of people and is founded on the Rock which is the Anointed One and is the Anointing that He imparts. These heroes of the faith were able to live from out of God and receive from His city by means of the faith and trust that He imparted to them

from the flow of His Spirit. It is an alive and growing city, and Paul speaks to our being co-builders with God in 1 Cor. 3:

**10. Corresponding to, in accord with and to the level of God's grace and favor [which are] being given to (or: by) me, as a skillful master-carpenter (a wise chief-builder; a clever head-artisan; [the] learned and insightful leading-builder; wise architect, engineer or foreman; a wise originating begetter) I lay [other MSS: have laid] a foundation (or: laid a foundation [Stone]), yet another is progressively**

**building a house upon [it]. Now let each one continue watching to observe (= take care) how he keeps on building the house upon [it] (or: upon the house),**  
**11. for no one can (or: continues able to; is having power to) lay another foundation (or: to place or set another foundation [Stone] of the same kind) beside (or: in addition to and distinct from) the One lying (or: continuing being laid): which is (continues being) Jesus Christ (Jesus [the] Anointed One; = Jesus, [the] Messiah).**

In like manner to Abraham, we also continuously receive from this city as we partake of the other members of Christ's body, whom we are at the same time to be building up with gold, silver and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12).

**11. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for loyal allegiance, also, Sarah herself – being sterile – received (or: laid hold of) power and ability unto a conception (a depositing; founding; casting down) of seed (= offspring), even beyond [the] fertile season of maturity (full age and prime of life), since a Faithful, Loyal and Believable One – the One promising – took the lead (led the way; presided; or, an**

alternate meaning of *hegeomai* yields: since she regarded the Promiser trustworthy and believable),

**12. on which account, also, were born from one [couple] – and these of one having been deadened – [people] corresponding to the stars of the heaven (or: sky) for fullness of multitude, and as the sand beside the lip (shore) of the sea: the innumerable.**

[Gen. 15:5-6]

The Word of the Promise came to her, as well, and upon hearing the **faith and trust** was implanted in her. In this faith-impregnated condition, and by the resultant trust in Yahweh, **she received power and ability...** leading into a

**conception** which resulted in the birth of Isaac. And this was just a "natural" miracle of conceiving and giving birth to a child in one's old age. But it is an example for us of hearing a word, which brings faith, which results in a work of God. But this foundational faith in Abraham and Sarah are but a shadow of the faith that comes with the better Promises of the better arrangement, or covenant, in Christ.

As noted in the parenthetical expansion, the verb **took the lead** can also mean **regard, consider** or **esteem**. **Took the lead** is the literal meaning (the others being secondary) and tells us that Yahweh initiated this. It takes God

initiating something for us to have faith for it. He **takes the lead** through the Word that He speaks to us.

The use of the word "**deadened**" in vs. 12 should give us an indication of how the word "dead" (*nekros*) was used at this time and in this culture.

13. **Down from faith** (or: In line with confidence; Corresponding to trust; In the sphere of loyal allegiance and faithfulness) **all these folks died off, not taking hold of** (or: receiving; [other MSS: not being ones carrying off to themselves for kindly keeping]) **the promises, but still, after seeing them forward at a distance, and drawing them to themselves and clinging to**

**them, even speaking alike** (saying the same thing; confessing in verbal agreement) **that they are, and continue being, strangers and sojourners** (or: foreigners and alien residents living in a foreign place) **upon the land** (or: earth). All those folks of the old covenant, and before, engaged in the flow of the Spirit of God in accord with God's arrangement during their own age. They lived in the shadow, and not the full Light of the Anointed One, and so they were not able to **take hold of** (*lambano*) that which was to come later in the Christ and the Jerusalem which is above. It is what Jesus said in regard to John the baptizer in Lu. 7:28,

**"among the people born of women, no one exists being greater than John [with other MSS: there is not even one prophet more important than John the immerser; or: no one continues being a greater prophet than John the Baptist]. Yet the smaller (= less significant) person within the midst of God's reign (or: in union with the sovereign kingdom of God) exists being greater (= more important) than he."**

But these ancient folks were **"seeing them forward at a distance, and**

**drawing them to themselves and clinging to them."** This is what **faith** allowed them to do.

Like Abraham, they "verbally agreed" that they were "**strangers and sojourners** (or: foreigners and alien residents living in a foreign place) **upon the land** (or: earth)." Those to whom faith was given realized that the physical **land** in which they lived was not the faith-meaning of the Promises. The true Promise was the Messiah and the reign of God which would join the heavens to the earth. The "land" was a figure for the people that God would form to be His temple on earth.

**14. For those** (or: people) **constantly**

**saying such things are continuously shining within because** (or: are causing to clearly appear that) **they are habitually seeking upon** (or: in earnest seeking for) **a father-land** (a land of the Father).

They were not seeking possessions or land on the physical plane, but knew that the Promise came from, and was, the Father. The land of the Father was the place of their origin – the realm in which our Father dwells. It is the sphere of the Spirit of God – also known as the atmosphere, the sky, the heavens. Jesus referred to it as His Father's house (John 14:2). It turned out to also be referred to as the kingdom of heaven (or, of God).

But it was all right here, as the writings of the NT indicate. It is symbolically referred to as Mt. Zion (ch. 12:22, below; Rev. 14:1).

The verb *emphanizo* is composed of *en* (within) and *phaino* (to shine; to cause to appear; to set in clear light).

**"Continuously shining within"** paints a beautiful picture of the person who houses the Light within himself. We see this in Jesus: "In Him was life, and the life was the Light..." (John 1:4). We are the light (Matt. 5:14). "But if a person is walking in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light IN him" (John 11:10). Matt. 6:22 instructs us,

**"If, then, your eye may**

**continue being single-fold** (or: simple and uncompounded; perhaps: single-focused and suggest being straightforward; may = healthy; may suggest generosity), **your whole body will be** (will continuously exist being) **illuminated** (enlightened; or: lustrous; luminous; radiant; shining)."

The secondary meaning of *emphanizo* is that they "are constantly causing to clearly appear that..." Their lives show the light that is within. The author has moved his focus from the past to the present: "**those constantly saying such things...**" These people "**are habitually**

**seeking upon** (or: in earnest seeking for) **a father-land** (a land of the Father)."

**15. And if, indeed, they were still being mindful of and continued remembering that from which they came forth** (or: went out) **they would have continued having a fitting season** (situation; occasion) **to bend back up again** (or: return),

**16. yet now they are continuously stretching themselves out in order to touch a superior** (stronger and better) **one: this is one belonging to the superior-heaven** (or: that is, pertaining to the One upon the atmosphere; or: this exists being one from the added,

superimposed heaven). **Wherefore God is habitually not ashamed of them, to be called upon [as] their God. You see, He prepared (made ready) a city for (or: by; with; among) them.**

Still speaking of folks of the present time, he says of them that if **"they were still being mindful of and continued remembering that from which they came forth (or: went out)..."** What does he mean by **"that from which they came forth"**? For the Jews it would be the old covenant – Judaism. For others it would be paganism or the secular world. So if they wanted to do so, **"they would have continued having a fitting season (situation; occasion) to bend back up**

**again** (or: return)." "**Yet now...**" they are in the new, with the new orientation, "**continuously stretching themselves out in order to touch a superior** (stronger and better) **one**." Our author has picked up his main theme again: **the better, the stronger, the superior**. The body-language is intense. It is like Paul's racing metaphor: "**continuously pressing forward, pursuing down toward** [the; or: an] **object in view** (a mark on which the eye is fixed; the awarded contest prize)..." (Phil. 3:14; *cf* 1 Cor. 9:24).

The "**superior** (stronger and better) **one**" (vs. 16) translates the word *kreittonos* and signifies that the situation, condition

or quality of what is sought is "stronger and better" than what they had left behind. The meaning of "**superior-**" in the next clause, "**is belonging to the superior-heaven** (or: that is, pertaining to the One upon the atmosphere; or: this exists being one from the added, superimposed heaven)," means superior in position. This last term in this clause is the genitive case of the substantive *ouranios* with the preposition *epi-* prefixed to it. I have given three optional renderings:

- a) the first rendering expresses the genitive of possession: what they were trying to touch "**belongs**" to **the superior-**

**heaven;**

b) the second rendering expresses the genitive of association: their minds were on "the One" (Christ or God) Who rules upon the heavens;

c) the third rendering expresses the genitive of source (also called, the ablative): "this exists being one from the added, superimposed heaven."

The terms "**superior-**," "upon," "added," and "superimposed" are expressions of the prefix *epi-*.

In a) the phrase describes this "**father-land**" (vs. 14, above) as belonging to the sphere that is in a position that is above

the heavens of the old covenant. The economy of the new covenant is described by our author as being above (superior to) the old covenant. In the world view of the ancient cultures of the middle east, the ruling powers of a kingdom were associated with the concept of "heaven," and the kings themselves were often regarded as gods who lived in a heaven on earth (palaces with gardens). With Israel, God ruled from His throne in a tent (later a temple) that was located in the heart of what was designed as a garden-palace. When Nebuchadnezzar's understanding returned to him (Dan. 4:34) he came to know that "the heavens do rule" (Dan.

4:26). Paul refers to "**the Jerusalem above**" (Gal. 4:26) and John saw it "**descending out of the atmosphere** (or: heaven), **from God**" (Rev. 21:10). In b) the rendering emphasizes "the One" (God) Who rules "upon" (*epi-*) the heavens. Because God had "drawn them" those having been born into this "heavenly" kingdom had their focus on God.

In c) I rendered the verb "exists being" and described their quest as being from the "added," or "superimposed" heaven. This is a picture of God's kingdom (what Matthew's gospel often called "the kingdom of the heavens") as taking dominion (Dan. 4:34) of the newly

combined kingdoms of Israel and those of the ethnic multitudes in God's new creation with an "added heaven" (2 Cor. 5:17). See also Rev. 11:15. Paul describes this "superimposed heaven" as "the kingdom of the Son, which is His love" (Col. 1:13).

Because of which, or, **"Wherefore, God is habitually not ashamed of them, to be called upon [as] their God."** Not only this, **"He prepared (made ready) a city for (or: by; with; among) them"**

This calls to mind John 14:3,

**"Even if I should journey on and prepare (make suitable, fit and appropriate) a place (or: a spot; a position; a role) in you**

**folks** (or: with you; for you)..."

The **city** – just like the temple, the land – is composed of people. The **place** to which Jesus was referring is a place within His body – a particular member – or, a living stone of His temple.

Verses 13-16 have been a break from the listing of the adventures of faith – a rhetorical design to give the audience a breather from the historical rehearsal. Keep in mind that these letters were usually read aloud within the assemblies. But now the author returns to the accounting.

**17. By faith, in trust and with confidence, Abraham, being progressively tried** (or: being

repeatedly tested for loyal allegiance) **had presented and handed-over Isaac; even the one taking up and receiving the promises back again, began offering the only-begotten.**

**18. [He] toward whom it was spoken that,**

**"In Isaac a seed shall continue being called (or: an offspring continue being summoned) for (to; in; by) you," [Gen. 21:12]**

**19. was logically reasoning and considering (reckoning; figuring; counting on) that God has power and is able to repeatedly arouse even out from among dead folks – whence also, in a parable, he took him back into**

**keeping** (or: he recovered him).

This had to be the greatest test in all of Israel's history – and the greatest attestation of Abraham's faith, trust, conviction and allegiance to God. But added to the offering of his son was the giving back to God the gift of the Promise, logically reasoning "**that God continues able** (or: constantly has power) **to at once raise up** (or: awaken) **children to [me] from out of these [altar] stones**" (Matt. 3:9, bracketed altering mine).

The story as recorded in Gen. 22 reveals that Abraham was about to complete the act when the voice of the agent from the atmosphere stopped him. So in effect, he

offered Isaac on the altar, and in his mind the son of the Promise was dying at the command of Yahweh. Thus, it was like recovering Isaac from the dead.

This episode was a figurative prophecy of John 3:16a, and the Messiah laying down (John 10:18) His life for the aggregate of humanity. We should note the author's connection of the new arrangement based upon **faith** with the reference to the resurrection of the Promised Son. Resurrection life was a theme common to the NT authors.

**20. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for faithfulness, also, Isaac spoke well of (or: blessed) Jacob and Esau concerning impending things.**

These patriarchal blessings are recorded in Gen. 27. The words that a father spoke to his sons (when the father was near death) conferred the inheritance and leadership of the tribe, and were considered as prophetic for the sons' futures. They were believed to direct their destinies and be as the word of God upon their lives, and so they were a matter of faith, trust and confidence. It was a duty and a responsibility for the father to do this, so it was thus also a matter of faithfulness in regard to the future of the clans. It was through this act that Jacob became the line that would become Israel and in time produce the Messiah.

The impending things involved Esau serving Jacob until the former finally broke Jacob's yoke upon him (Gen. 27:40) when King Herod (a descendant of Esau) came to rule Jacob's descendants. For the Hebrews to whom this letter was written, this was a matter of faith that had been lived out in their story up to their present time.

**21. In faith, by trust, with confident faithfulness and for loyal allegiance, Jacob, when dying away, spoke well of (or: blessed) each of the sons of Joseph, and kissed his hand toward [them] (or: worshiped; or: showed respect), [leaning] upon the top of his staff.**

Jacob repeated the tradition when he was near his death. This reading follows the LXX. The Heb. text has Jacob leaning "upon the head of the bed" (Gen. 47:31). By listing these incidents from Israel's history, the author is showing how **faith** was passed on to the succeeding generations and was the vital thread in the fabric of the story of Yahweh in relation to His people.

**22. In faith, by trust, with confidence and with loyalty, Joseph, finishing** (ending; completing his course; reaching the goal of his destiny), **called to mind** (was mindful) **concerning a way out** (an exodus) **of the sons of Israel, and imparted instructions for the goal,**

**concerning his bones.**

The line of **faith** continues, displaying a vision for the future of the tribes, imparting a word of an expectation.

Memories such as this would be an inspiration to those who were presently under the rule of the Romans. Recalling the physical exodus from Egypt speaks to the spiritual exodus that the Messiah has brought to people, leading them out of their internal bondage into the freedom of the Christ (*cf* Gal. 5:1).

**23. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for loyal allegiance, Moses, being born, was hidden three months by his parents (or: fathers), because they saw (perceived) the little boy [was]**

**belonging to a city** (well-bred; well-formed, genteel), **and they were not frightened by the effect of the mandate of the king.**

A parallel can be drawn here to Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt in order to protect Jesus when He was a little boy (Matt. 2:12-18). Each set of parents protected their future saviors.

Responding to the leading of the Spirit was always an act of **faith**.

**24. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for loyal allegiance, Moses, coming to be great (= important), refused (denies; disclaims; rejects; disowned) to be declared (or: termed) a son of Pharaoh's daughter,**

**25. choosing for himself** (taking to himself) **more** (in preference; rather) **to constantly encounter adversity and ill-treatment along with God's People, than to have a temporary** (toward a limited period of time marked by a suitableness of circumstances) **enjoyment and pleasure involved with falling short of the goal** (which are a failure; that originates with error; characteristic of missing of the target; of sin),

**26. considering the reproach associated with being the anointed one** (or: pertaining to the Christ; or: = of Israel [at that time]) **[to be] greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt,**

**for he began, and continued, looking away and giving his attention unto the reward** (or: the discharge of wages).

We can see a parallel in the life and ministry of Jesus in these words that describe the choices of Moses as God led him to his destiny. Jesus associated Himself with the outcasts, the "lost and destroyed" sheep of Israel's house (Matt. 15:24). He did not attempt to be a part of Israel's elite.

We should consider well what our author is saying to us in vs. 25 as an example of faith. How many of us normally make choices for the "preference" of "**constantly encounter[ing] adversity and ill-**

**treatment along with God's People"?**

Such a choice reveals one's outlook on life, and one's goals in this life. Now this is not some "law" that must be adhered to in order to believe in Christ. In fact, the message of the NT is clear: only by being in Christ can such fruit be produced (John 15:1-5) – and as Jesus said,

**"... that apart from (or: separated from) Me you folks continue having ability and power to do (make; construct; create; form; perform; produce) nothing!"**

But we should call to mind the quality of the disposition of faith and allegiance

that our author points to in this verse. It is not a mind that is set on the flesh realm, or upon what we think that we deserve for our lives. In John 16:33b Jesus told His followers,

**"... Within the System**

(controlling world of culture, religion, economy and government) **you normally have pressure and stress** (or: continually have squeezing; repeatedly have tribulation and oppression), **but nonetheless, be confident and take courage! I Myself have overcome and conquered the System** (dominating world;

organized arrangement of religion and society) **so that it stands a completed victory!"**

Dan Kaplan added here: "The 'I myself is Christ, and I am in Him standing in a conquered system, and a completed victory."

Also, remember the instructions from Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:22,

**... repeatedly calling [them] alongside to give relief, aid and comfort while encouraging [them] to continue abiding and remaining within the midst of the faith (or: trust; confidence; loyalty; reliance;**

conviction; assurance), and [saying] that, 'It continues binding and necessary for us to enter into the reign of God (or: God's kingdom; the sovereign activities which are God) through the midst of many pressures, squeezings, tribulations, afflictions and oppressions.'

To this Dan adds, "**Faith**, trust, confidence, loyalty, reliance, conviction, and assurance [all] put me in a place to be able to walk through **the midst of many pressures, squeezings, tribulations, afflictions and**

**oppressions."**

In vs. 26, the term **the anointed one** could here apply to Moses' calling to be Israel's leader in his day. It could also be applied to Israel itself, as being God's chosen bearers of the **faith** and the **promises**. Or, it could refer prophetically to his mission that would foreshadow the work of the Messiah in the future.

**27. In faith, by trust, with confidence and for faithfulness, he left Egypt behind, not fearing the rushing fury (violent breathing, rage and angry passion) of the king, for he was strong and stout as continually seeing the invisible (or: the Unseen One).**

**28. In faith, by trust, with confident loyalty and for trustworthy allegiance, he had performed (or: has created so that it now stands as an institution) the Passover and the pouring of the blood, so that the One presently destroying (the Exterminator of) the first-born of people and animals would (or: could) not touch or come in contact with them.**

**29. In faith, by trust, with confidence and in loyal allegiance, they walked through the Red Sea as through dry land – [whereas] the Egyptians, upon taking a trial of (or: making an attempt at) which, were gulped (or: swallowed) down.**

These verses refer to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Only God's **faith, trust and confidence** would give Moses the ability to withstand Pharaoh. His **faithfulness** which came from his relationship to Yahweh is described here as being a **faith** that could see the **invisible** realm or the unseen God. This was the prophetic shadow of Jesus doing what He saw the Father doing. His obedience in performing **the Passover** is prophetic of the obedience of Jesus in **being** the Passover. His **loyal allegiance** to God is seen in the prophetic baptism of Israel in the Red Sea, which speaks to our being baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3). As with them, so with us:

this death of our Leader freed us from our enemies.

In this passage we see Moses as a type of Christ. It certainly was not Israel's faith that is being pointed out, but the faith that God's Word to Moses had instilled in him. Israel walked through the Red Sea because of the faith that had been given to their leader. In like manner, we leave a figurative Egypt behind, see Jesus as our Passover, and follow Him through what seemed to be impassible situations. This memory from Israel's history is a witness to build our trust in God. Our Leader has brought us deliverance from inner slavery (slaveries of all sorts: to an alienated

self; to addictions; to religions; etc.) and He continues leading us as He brings our inner being into the Rest (which is a place in His presence) of the Promised Land (the covenant community).

As with Moses (vs. 25, above) there may be outward pressures and ill-treatment, but Jesus has given us inward Peace (which is Himself) – as we see in John 14:27,

**"I am continuously sending off (releasing away; hurling off) peace to (or: for; in) you people. My peace I am constantly giving to you (or: in you folks). I, Myself, am not giving [it] to you the way (or:**

according as) **the System** (the world of religion, politics and culture) **continually gives [it]**. **Do not let your heart be constantly shaken, disturbed or agitated, neither let it be habitually timid** (shrinking, as with palpitations; responding cowardly)." [compare Deut. 31:8; Josh. 1:9]

The peace that the System gives is still slavery to the force of their laws (be they political, religious, or otherwise). The *Pax Romana* of the Roman Empire was a peace that was enforced by the sword. The peace offered by religions is merely a delusion that is maintained by

enforced adherence to the dogmas of each particular "box." True rest and peace are only found through union with Christ.

**30. In faith, by confidence, and with trust mixed with loyal allegiance, the wall of Jericho suddenly fell, after being encircled upon and surrounded [for] seven days.**

**31. In faith, by confidence, with trust and for loyal allegiance, Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed or lost with those being unpersuaded (or: incompilant; [p46 reads: those not having faith, trust or loyalty]), having welcomingly received and embraced the scouts (or: spies) with peace.**

Israel's story continues as Joshua leads them into the Promised Land. **Faith, confidence, trust and loyal allegiance** continue as the central ingredients of this historic tapestry which reaches now into our present, since we were grafted into Israel's olive tree – Rom. 11:15f, where Paul tells us in vs. 20 that we "**stand in faith** (or: by trust; with confidence)." Our author's mentioning the fact that Rahab was a prostitute shows the grace that comes through faith, independent of our moral condition. Her faith was based upon the news of what Yahweh had done: He had "dried up the water of the Red Sea for [them] when [they] came out of Egypt." She got word of "what

[they] did unto the two kings of the Amorites that [were] on the other side of Jordan..." (Josh. 2:10). So she told the scouts "I know that Yahweh has given you people the land..." (vs. 9). Her faith came from hearing (Rom. 10:17). And we see here that with this faith in Yahweh came the **peace** with which she **welcomingly received** the Israelites who she knew would overthrow her city and its kingdom. When you see God in the work of even an enemy, you can have peace, and even welcome its coming. Some folks have tried to extract a "spiritual method" of overcoming some "spiritual enemy" from Israel having marched around the walls of Jericho for

**"seven days."** It is possible that the number seven speaks of their entering into God's rest (Gen. 2:2) and ceasing from the work of marching on the seventh day. This would thus tie in to our author's reference to rest in 3:11, 38; and in 4:1, 3, 5, 10 and 11. But I suggest that here our author is simply citing the specific incident from Israel's story. The message of this verse is consistent with the message of this whole chapter: it is the place of **faith, confidence, trust and allegiance** in the life of the covenant communities.

**32. And so, what am I yet presently saying? For the time shall fail me, while progressively leading throughout**

**and relating concerning Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and the prophets,**

**33. who through faith, trust and confident loyalty conquered (violently struggled and fought-down) kingdoms, worked a fair and equitable dealing (justice in covenant participation of the Way pointed out), hit right on target with regard to (thus: experienced and obtained) promises, fenced in (blocked; closed up) mouths of lions;**

**34. extinguished [the] power (quenched [the] ability) of fire, escaped mouths (= edge) of [the] sword; were empowered (enabled), moving away from a [state of] of weakness (or**

infirmity); **were made to be** (were caused to become) **strong ones in the midst of war** (or: combat; battle); **they caused battle lines of foreigners to bend** (or: caused encampments of aliens to bow down; wheeled [the] ranks belonging to [the] armies of others); Here he highlights first famous people of their history, then overcoming acts and miraculous feats – all, we are told, done "**through faith, trust and confident loyalty.**"

The stories of Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah are found in the book of Judges. The exploits of David begin in 1 Sam. Moses **conquered the kingdoms** of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og,

king of Bashan (Nu. 21:21-35). The reference to **lions' mouths** speaks of Daniel (Dan. 6:1-29). "**Extinguished [the] power of fire**" would recall the three Hebrew young men in Dan. 3:1-30. Those who **escaped the mouths of [the] sword** could refer to Elijah (1 Ki. 19) and Elisha (2 Ki. 6:31ff). All of these are stories of Yahweh's deliverance, and we are told here that all of them came about **through faith, trust and confident loyalty**: a witness for all generations.

**35. women took with the hand their dead folks from out of a resurrection** (or: wives received their dead ones out of the midst of a rising-again). **Yet**

**others were beaten to death with rods (or: drummed upon), not receiving (or: accepting; taking) toward (or: with a view to) themselves (= refusing) the releasing away (liberation; setting free) procured by payment of a ransom, so that they may hit the target of (or: attain) a superior (stronger and better) resurrection.**

This first clause is a reference to 1 Ki. 17:17-24 (Elijah's ministry) and 2 Ki. 4:17-37 (Elisha's ministry). A.M. Stibbs notes "that in Scripture the recorded raisings from the dead are mostly for women; *cf* Lu. 7:11-17; John 11:1-46" (ibid. p 1213).

The second part of this verse points to

faith and trust within situations where God did not bring victory. David Stern comments,

"From the Apocrypha we learn how in the days of the Maccabees, the 90-year-old *Torah*-teacher El'azar willingly chose to die *'al kiddush haShem* ('to sanctify God's name'...), rather than eat pork and appear publicly to have forsaken Judaism – he was among those **stretched on the rack and beaten to death, refusing to be ransomed, so that they would gain a better resurrection** (2 Maccabees 6:18-31)" – *ibid.* p

We, of course, know of what Jesus went through, and it was His **payment of a ransom and hitting the target** that brought to all mankind "**a superior resurrection.**"

So what is this superior resurrection? It was something better than just being raised up back into a normal life, as through the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, cited above. Jesus said to Martha,

**"I am the Resurrection** (or: the standing back up again; the Arising) **and the Life. The one progressively believing and habitually putting trust into Me, even if he may die-off** (or:

die-away), **will live** (or: will be alive; will continue living)!" – John 11:25.

Also we find Jesus responding to a question from the Sadducees about the resurrection in Lu. 20. There He contrasts that present age to the next age which He was in the process of inaugurating. Consider His explanation:

**34. So Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age (= those now living and having the qualities and characteristics of this present time and arrangement) are normally marrying and being given in marriage.**

**35. "Yet those folks being considered worthy (of complete equal value) of that Age – even to hit the target of the resurrection, the one out from among [the] dead folks – are neither normally marrying nor are being habitually given in marriage,**

**36. "for you see, neither are they any longer able to die off, for they exist being (or: are) the equivalence of agents (or: identical to and the same thing as messengers) and they are God's sons (= the offsprings of God) – being sons of the**

**resurrection** (= the offsprings of, and from, the resurrection; or: = those having the qualities and characteristic of the resurrection).

**37. "Yet that the dead people are habitually (or: repeatedly; or: continuously) being raised up, even Moses divulged (or: discloses) at the thornbush, as he continues terming (or: speaking of) [the] Lord [= Yahweh] 'the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'** [Ex. 3:6]

**38. "Yet He is not a God of dead folks, but to the contrary,**

**of continuously living ones –  
for you see, in Him (and: with  
Him; and: by Him; and: to Him)  
all people are continuously  
living."**

If we realize that Jesus was speaking of what Paul refers to as the "new creation," and is elsewhere referred to in terms of the Jews' expectation of the coming Messiah, then we can conclude that what Jesus calls "**that Age**" – and note the limiting adjective "**that**" – is the new arrangement (or: covenant) that would be inaugurated upon His being raised from the dead.

Now when this new creation came, the outward man did not change – any more

than you did when you became a Christian. In this new arrangement there is neither male nor female, nor slave nor free – as Paul described it (Gal. 3:28). The only marriage in this new economy is the marriage of Christ to His body (Eph. 5:23-32). The kingdom of God is the kingdom of the heavens – it exists in the realm of spirit, even within us. In this realm and in this new existence we cannot die. We have been raised up to be seated with Him in the heavenly realm (Eph. 2:6).

Furthermore, we become like the rest of His agents (not "angels" – that is a transliteration of the Greek *angelos*, but this word means an "agent" or a

"messenger," or both). Notice what Heb. 1:7 tell us,

**"He is the One making His agents (messengers; folks with the message) spirits (or: Breath-effects), and His public servants a flame of fire."** [Ps. 104:4]

Did you catch that? He makes His "agents [to be] spirits." And that happens by being joined to the Lord and becoming "one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The age of the Messiah is the age of the Spirit indwelling humanity. It is the age of the covenant communities that were created by the coming of the Spirit. This is the dealing of God with humanity

through having them be "in Christ."  
Now note the next clause of vs. 36,  
**"they are God's sons** (= the offsprings  
of God)." Well, now that's us – right  
now – isn't it? Yes, we who are led by  
the Spirit are God's sons (Rom. 8:14).  
Then Jesus further qualifies this by  
saying **"being sons of the resurrection**  
(= the offsprings of, and from, the  
resurrection; or: = those having the  
qualities and characteristic of the  
resurrection)." What resurrection?  
Christ's resurrection. Recall Jesus'  
words in John 11:25-26,

**"Jesus said to her, 'I am the  
Resurrection** (or: the standing  
back up again; the Arising) **and**

**the Life. The one progressively believing and habitually putting trust into Me, even if he may die-off (or: die-away), will live (or: will be alive; will continue living)!**

**And further, everyone (or: all mankind) presently (or: continuing in) living and trusting (or: progressively believing; regularly exercising faith) into Me can by no means (or: may under no circumstances) die-off (or: die-away), on into the Age. Are you presently believing,**

**trusting and having convinced  
faith of this?"**

Now look at the tense of the verb "**being raised up**" in the first clause of vs. 37, here in Lu. 20. It is the present tense, and speaks here of "**habitual**" action. Jesus was speaking in terms of the new age already being in effect (for He was the One who brought the kingdom, the new age, and told folks that it was close to them – at hand) and as a SIGN of this on the natural plain He raised folks from the dead (in the natural realm). But in the spirit, God (expressed in this vs. as what scholars call "the divine passive," in "**being raised up**") is habitually raising folks up into this new age.

In the latter half of this vs. Jesus reaches back to a statement by Moses (i.e., by the Torah, the OT) and uses it as being prophetic of the time of Christ (as in many other instances throughout the OT – *cf* Lu. 24:27). Because of this new age, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are spoken of as "**continuously living ones**" (vs. 38, above).

Now consider the last statement in Lu 20:38, above,

**"for you see, in Him (and: with Him; and: by Him; and: to Him) all people are continuously living."**

I will not comment on this statement; just let it sink in and ponder it.

You see, we are His agents and messengers (*angelos*) here and now, and I suspect that we will be the same in the next life. Consider Rev. 22:9 and what that agent said to John,

**"See! No! I am your fellow-slave, even of (belonging to; from among) your brothers – of (or: belonging to and from among) the prophets and of those continuously keeping and observing the words of this scroll. Worship God!"**

All this describes the "**superior resurrection.**" It is the life in the Age of the Messiah. It is being

**"... jointly roused and raised**

(or: suddenly awakened and raised) [us] up, and caused [us] to sit (or: seats [us]) together within the things situated upon [thus, above] the heavens" (Eph. 2:6).

36. **But different ones took a trial** (or: received a test) **of mockings** (scoffings), **and of scourgings, and further, of bonds and imprisonment** (= put in chains and thrown in jail).

37. **They were stoned, they were cut in two with a saw, they were put to the proof** (tried; tested), **they passed away in a slaughter** (or: by murder) **with sword, they went around** (wandered) **in sheepskins, in goat skins, continuously**

**being behind** (being in want; being in the rear), **being constantly pressed** (squeezed; afflicted), **habitually being held in the bad** (being maltreated; having it bad) –

**38. of whom the System** (the ordered arrangement; the world or culture, secular society, religions and government) **was not worthy** (was not of equal value) – **being continually deceived** (led astray; caused to wander) **in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth** (or: ground). Jesus made reference to such as these in Matt. 23:35-37. "Being **sawed in two** was certainly a known form of torturing people to death (2 Sam. 12:31)" – Stern,

ibid. p 714. The prophet Uriah is one example of being murdered with a sword (Jer. 26:20-23). The last half of vs. 37 could well be a description of Elijah, Elisha, John the baptizer (Matt. 3:4), as well as "the pious Jews who fled from the persecution of Antiochus IV in the time of the Maccabees (1 Mac. 2:38)" (ibid.).

Our author says that "**the System was not worthy**" of all those folks. The **System** (*kosmos*) was whatever "ordered arrangement of culture, society, religion or government" was in control in those various times and places. As Jesus pointed out in the Matt. 23 reference, above, often this system was

the leadership of their own people.

In vs. 38 I rendered *planomenoi* first as **deceived** since this is a frequent use of this word in the NT, and because the systems of this world commonly use deception in order to control the people. The leaders often "led [them] astray," for which Yahweh brought judgment to the whole nation. But those specifically referred to in the last half of vs. 37 were **"caused to wander in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the land."** They were outcasts and misfits.

**39. And yet all these folks, being given testimony (being attested by witnesses) through their faith, trust, confidence**

**and loyal allegiance, did not at any point bring to themselves (or: acquire) God's Promise (the promise of and from God; the Promise, which is God),**

**40. He Himself foreseeing (looking ahead of time and planning) something superior (stronger and better) concerning us, so that they would not be made perfect (brought to the destined goal; made complete; finished; made mature) apart from us.**

Here our author scores another main point of his argument: despite their faith, trust, confidence and loyal allegiance, they were a part of the old arrangement: the new covenant with the new creation had not yet come into being. So they did

not usher in God's **Promise** – the Promise from God and which is God Himself dwelling within humanity by His Spirit. The NIV, NASB, NRSV, Stern, Nyland, NWT, KJV, The New American Bible, Goodspeed, Wuest – as examples of some common versions – all mistranslate *tou theou* (a genitive) at the end of vs. 39, instead placing it at the beginning of vs. 40 as though it read *ho theos* (a nominative – which would make it the subject of vs. 40). But the correct rendering (also found in Barclay, the Concordant Literal NT and The Kingdom Interlinear Translation) has "of God (etc.)" modifying the word **promise**. This was "**God's promise**"

(genitive of possession), "the promise of and from God" (genitive of reference and origin) and "the Promise which IS God" (genitive of apposition, or definition).

All along God Himself was "**foreseeing** (looking ahead of time and planning) **something superior** (stronger and better) **concerning us.**" The Promise was the Messiah who brought in the better covenant, a better priesthood (Melchizedek), and a new creation (Gal. 6:15) which included a new humanity (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) – a **superior resurrection** (vs. 35, above). It also took away the old which was the strength of sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

Furthermore, this **something superior** brought **them** to their destined goal along with **us!** Now not only are Jew and Gentile "**one new humanity**" (Eph. 2:15), those of the past are no longer "**apart from us**" – perhaps that to which Paul was referring in Eph. 3:15,

**"every family** (lineage; kindred; descent; paternal group) **within heaven and upon earth** (or: in [the] sky or atmosphere, and on [the] land)."

I have put the first three verses of chapter 12 with the end of chapter 11, seeing a better break in thought starting with vs. 4, below. So continuing with what the author has just said:

1. **Consequently and for this very reason, then, we also, continuously having such a big cloud of witnesses** (spectators; folks bearing testimony; people with evidence) **environing us** (lying around for us and [they] themselves surrounding and encompassing us), **after at once putting off from ourselves all bulk and encumbrance** (every weight; all that is prominent; or: getting rid of every arrow point within us) **and the easily-environing** (skillfully-surrounding; well-placed encircling) **failure** (sin; error; mistake; shooting off-target; missing of the point), **we can and should through persistent remaining-under**

(or: relentless patient endurance and giving of support) **keep on running the racecourse continuously lying before us** (or: lying in the forefront within us; or: lying ahead, among us),

**2. turning [our] eyes away from other things and fixing them** (or: looking away) **into Jesus, the Inaugurator** (First Leader; Prime Author) **and Perfecter** (Finisher; the Bringer-to-maturity and fruition; He who purposes and accomplishes the destiny) **of the faith, trust, confidence and loyal allegiance, Who, instead of and in place of the joy** (or: in the position on the opposite side from the happiness) **continuously lying before Him** (or:

lying in the forefront within Him; lying ahead for Him), **remained under a cross – despising shame** (or: thinking nothing of [the] disgrace) – **and has sat down and now continues seated, remaining in the right [hand] of** (or: = in union with the place of receiving at; = at the place of power and honor, which is) **God's throne.**

The cloud of spectators that are witnessing our lives is not "**apart from us,**" but rather is a part of the kingdom of the heavens, and,

**"the reign of the heavens**  
(the expression and effect of kingdom rule which has its source in the atmospheres; the

activity of exercising the sovereignty which exists being the heavens; the reigning [of the King] which pertains to the heavens; the kingdom which belongs to and comes from the atmosphere; the influence of the sovereignty which is the heavens) **has approached and is now near at hand and is close enough to touch** (= has arrived and is now accessible)!" – Matt. 3:2.

We should realize that the cloud of His presence was a manifestation of the kingdom of the atmospheres (heavens). The figure of this was repeatedly

recorded in the OT. It was graphically displayed in Ex. 13:21-22,

"Now Yahweh was going before them – by day – in a pillar (or: column) of cloud to lead and guide them [along] the way, and by night in a pillar (or: column) of fire to give them light – that they might journey day and night. The column of cloud by day and the column of fire by night did not remove from the presence of the people" (Rotherham & CVOT).

We see God's sovereign activity in the cloud in Ex. 14:19-20,

"And hence a messenger of the

[One], Elohim, who was going before the camp of Israel, journeyed and went behind them. So also the column of cloud journeyed from before them and stood behind them.

Thus, it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel" (CVOT & Rotherham).

In Num. 9:15 we read that "on the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle..." Many other references can be cited (e.g., in Nu. ch's. 9, 10, 12, 14 & 16 and numerous places in Ex.) where a cloud was associated with the creation of Israel as a nation, figuring God's presence with them – here

on earth. In Ex. 34:4-5, when Moses took the second set of stone tablets up into Mount Sinai, "Yahweh descended in the cloud..."

Thus, we should understand that in Scripture a cloud represents the presence of God with His people. Here we see that this cloud is composed of spectators, folks bearing testimony and people with evidence. Vss. 22 & 23, below, describe this counterpart to the story of Israel at Mt. Sinai as "**Mount Zion... a city... ten-thousands** (myriads) **of agents and messengers... an assembly of an entire people** (or: a called-out and gathered community)..." In Rev. 14:1 we see the apocalyptic

picture of "... a little Lamb standing upon Mount Zion" together with a figurative number that speaks to the whole of Israel, all "**having His Name, and His Father's Name written upon their foreheads.**" Each of these symbolic references gives us a different picture of the same reality: the kingdom of God; the called-out communities; the corporate Christ; God's people – "**forth from Where** (or: out of the midst of Whom) **every family** (lineage; kindred; descent; paternal group) **within heaven and upon earth** (or: in [the] sky or atmosphere, and on [the] land) **is one after another being named** (or: spoken of, or to, by name; or: designated)" –

Eph. 3:15. The family members within the heavens are one body with the family members upon earth.

With this in mind, and with the list of testimonies from the previous chapter, appropriate action on our part is in order:

- 1) first, **put off from ourselves all bulk and encumbrance**, or:
  - a) **every weight** – whatever is weighing us down or whatever we may be carrying
  - b) **all that is prominent** – whatever stands out in our lives that is not part of our course
  - c) **every arrow point within us** – areas of our lives where our

shield (faith) was not up.

The first rendering of *ogkos*, **bulk and encumbrance**, gives the main picture for preparing to run a race. The other options give other metaphorical situations that might hinder us in our efforts. The meaning of **arrow point** calls to mind the metaphor of the soldier's gear in Eph. 6:16.

On the subject of **every weight**, recall what Jesus said of Himself, "**My load** (the burden that is Me and which pertains to Me) **continues being light** (not heavy)," – Matt. 11:30, and in contrast,

**"The scribes** (scholars; theologians; experts in the Law

[Torah]) **sit upon Moses' seat** .... **they habitually tie up and bind heavy loads** (or: burdensome cargos), **and then constantly place [these] as an addition upon the shoulders of people...**" (23:2-4).

It was the Levites that were to bear the "burdens" of the tabernacle and its services (Nu. 4:15, 19, 24, 27, 31, etc.) – not the whole people. Along this line, Dan Kaplan suggests that the **weight** that our author refers to is the weight of the Law. One of the words through Isaiah was "To let loose the harnessings of the yoke-bar" (Isa. 58:6, CVOT) – the yoke-bar being a figure for the Law. Jesus

said that His "**crossbeam and yoke is useful and kindly obliging**" (Matt. 11:30). Christ has freed us from the heavy weight of the Law (Gal. 5:1). Or, as Paul put it,

**"my brothers** (= fellow covenant-believers), **you folks also were made dead to the Law** (or: were put to death by the Law [=Torah] and with the Law), **through the body of the Christ.**" (Rom. 7:4)

2) next we should put off "**the easily-environing** (skillfully-surrounding; well-placed encircling) **failure** (sin; error; mistake; shooting off-target; missing of the point)." What

would this be? I suspect that the author purposely did not give specifics because this would be different for each individual. For some of us it is what folks would call a character flaw – one of mine is procrastination, and this can often get me off-target for what Father has given me to do. A **well-placed and encircling failure** may have been the thing that Paul "was given,"

**"... something with [its] point in [my] flesh is given in me (or: an impaling-stake for the human nature was given for me; or: a thorn to the natural realm, and a splinter by alienated humanity, was assigned to me): an agent**

**of** (or: a messenger from) **the adversary, to the end that he** (or: it) **could** (or: should; would) **repeatedly beat me in the face** (or: slap me on the ear) **with his** (or: its) **fist."** (2 Cor. 12:7b)

This was a gift that God gave him "so that I could not be progressively exalted (or: would not continue being overly lifted up [in myself or by others])" – 7a. The answer given by the Lord to Paul in whatever that situation was can also be applied to whatever "skillfully-surrounding error" that may be environing us. The Lord replied to Paul, in vs. 9, "**My grace is**

**continuously sufficient in you** (or: My joyous favor is constantly adequate to ward [it] off for you)..." Our method for **putting off** anything from ourselves is His Spirit working in our lives through grace.

Now with the foregoing in mind, "**we can and should keep on running the racecourse continuously lying before us** (or: lying in the forefront within us; or: lying ahead, among us)." I purposely left out the prepositional phrase that informs us as to how we run this racecourse (a sports metaphor), in order to emphasize the point: "**through persistent remaining-under** (or: relentless patient endurance and giving

of support)." The paradox of this metaphor is that we are not trying to get ahead of anyone, or beat them out of their winning the prize. The author is using this **racecourse** metaphor to emphasize focus, commitment and total energy output in our endeavors for the progressive spreading of God's existential reign within people's lives. The way we do this is to be a paraclete to them with **persistent remaining-under** with them in their ordeals. "Relentless patient endurance and giving of support" is the role of the servant that Jesus called us to perform – just as He did. Through using the role of a household servant, Jesus figuratively

told his disciples to be servants of one another, saying, "**you men also are constantly indebted** (obliged; continuously owe it) **to be habitually washing one another's feet**" (John 13:14). This means we must stay with them and serve them in a manner that is **persistently remaining-under** with them in their needs.

But while enduring and giving support, we keep the course in view, "**turning [our] eyes away from other things and fixing them** (or: looking away) **into Jesus**" who, as well as being in and with us and in those we are serving (Matt. 25:40), is also our Forerunner, walking the Path ahead of us. We should

thus remember that as we are "looking away" from the ordeal, we are also **fixing our eyes into Jesus**, as we look into the faces of those we are serving. He is the Spirit that leads us and the One whom we follow – making us God's sons (Rom. 8:14). Yes, Jesus is "**the Inaugurator** (First Leader; Prime Author) **and Perfecter** (Finisher; the Bringer-to-maturity and fruition; He who purposes and accomplishes the destiny) **of the faith, trust, confidence and loyal allegiance**" – He is the Alpha and the Omega of God's plan and purpose of the ages (Rev. 1:11; Eph. 3:11). He brings everyone to their purposed destiny. We may need to rethink our

understanding of the next clause in vs. 2. Following the subject "**Who**" – i.e., Jesus – is the preposition *anti*. Consider what this is saying: "**Who, instead of and in place of the joy** (or: in the position on the opposite side from the happiness) **continuously lying before Him** (or: lying in the forefront within Him; lying ahead for Him)..." *Anti* means: instead of; in place of; in the position on the opposite side from. He did something that was **instead of the joy and in place of happiness**. What joy and happiness was that? It was what all of His followers wanted of, for and from Him: to take the throne of David and fulfill the prophecies in the natural,

political way. It would have been the joy of calling 10,000 agents to eject the priests, the Sanhedrin and the Romans and make Jerusalem the capital of the world. Many of His followers still wish for this, even today. They are like Peter, **"not in the habit of setting [their] mind on or having the attitude pertaining to the things of God, but instead, [continually having opinions which align with] the things of humans"** (Matt. 16:23). Instead of doing as the flesh desired, He **"remained under a cross – despising shame** (or: thinking nothing of [the] disgrace)."

Keep in mind that He belonged to an honor/shame-based society. He thought

nothing of the disgrace of being killed as a criminal in a shameful manner.

**Instead**, He did what our author was encouraging his listeners to do: He **remained under** the Path of the **cross**.

And we are called to do the same. Read what Jesus continued to say in vss. 24-26, which followed his rebuttal to Peter in Matt. 23.

As we look into the faces of those to whom we are giving aid, comfort, encouragement and admonition, we should be able to see Him "**seated, remaining in the right [hand] of** (or: = in union with the place of receiving at; = at the place of power and honor, which is) **God's throne,**" within His home.

**3. For consider attentively again** (or: logically reckon back for yourselves; gather it up in yourselves concerning) **the One having remained under while undergoing** (or: having patiently endured while giving support in) **such contradiction** (the anti-word; the message which is contrary to reason; speaking in opposition, against, or instead of) – **[which was directed] into Himself** [other MSS: {permeating} into the midst of themselves] **by those missing the mark** (the sinners; those making a mistake, committing error, missing the point) – **to the end that you may not tire with exertion** (or: labor to weariness), **being continuously**

**dissolved** (be enfeebled and exhausted; caused to fall apart) **in your inner selves** (or: by your souls; = in your lives).

He wants his listeners to "logically reckon back for" themselves; to "gather it up" in themselves and **consider attentively again** what Jesus did and what He went through. He again stresses "**the One having remained under while undergoing** (or: having patiently endured while giving support in)." It was the religious leaders of Judaism that brought the **contradiction** and **anti-word**, constantly "speaking in opposition" to Jesus. Their words were directed **into Him**, while all along

**"missing the mark (or: the point)"** in what they did. As we keep Him in mind, and what He went through, we are not to **"tire with [our] exertion."** This last clause is a purpose clause (beginning with *hina*), and the final present participle can be rendered in more than one way, yielding different meanings. So we need to keep the preceding admonition in mind as we consider what the writer was meaning in the last clause.

The CLNT renders this: "lest you should be faltering, fainting in your souls."

Nyland gives: "so that you won't become worn down and fall apart in your lives."

The NRSV has: "so that you may not

grow weary or lose heart." The NIV is similar. All these have a similar meaning, but how does remembering that Jesus **remained under** to the point of death keep us from faltering, fainting, becoming worn down and falling apart, growing weary or losing heart? It seems to me that all of Christ's teaching for His disciples, and thus for the called-out covenant communities, pointed to following Him to the complete expending of our lives and souls in our **persistently remaining under** in our service to others.

From this, it seems to me that we are to keep His example in mind **to the end that we would NOT tire with our**

**exertion** – as we are **being continuously dissolved in our inner selves**. It comes down to putting others ahead of ourselves – which is the essence of love.

If we render the last phrase "by your souls" or "in your lives" (here we have a dative without an expressed preposition in the Greek text), it points to our souls being the instrument of our being **dissolved**, or as "our lives" being the sphere of our dissolution. This picture calls to mind what Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:11,

**"For we, ourselves – the continuously living ones – are ever being repeatedly handed**

**over into death** (or: = continuously delivered into life-threatening experiences) – **because of Jesus – to the end that the life, also, of Jesus** (or: so that also the life which comes from and is Jesus; or: so that Jesus' life) **can** (may; could; would) **be set in clear light and manifested – within our mortal flesh!"**

And then in Gal. 2:20 he gives us this picture of the follower of Jesus who has Christ in mind,

**"I was crucified together with Christ [= the Messiah], and thus it remains** (or: I have been

jointly put on the execution stake in [the] Anointed One, and continue in this state), **yet I continue living!** [It is] **no longer I, but it is Christ continuously living and alive within me!** (or: No longer an "I" – now Christ constantly lives in the midst of, and in union with, me). **Now that which I, at the present moment, continue living within flesh** (= a physical body), **I am constantly living within faith, trust and confidence – in and by that [faith] which is the Son of God** (or: in union with the trust and

confidence that is from God's Son [with other MSS: in the confidence belonging to God and Christ]), **the One loving me and giving Himself over to another for the sake of me** (or: even transmitting Himself, over my [situation and condition]; or: also passing Himself along for me)."

After reviewing my comments here, my friend Dan Kaplan pointed to the prophecy in Isa. 53, in regard to what the Messiah would be like and what He would go thorough. From vs. 2ff,

"... no shapeliness nor honor....  
despised and shunned of men, a

Man of pain and knowing illness... despised, and we judged Him of no account... has borne our illnesses and our pains.... we accounted Him assaulted, smitten of Elohim... wounded... crushed... The discipline of our well-being was on Him, and with His welts comes healing for us [via His cross].... Yet Yahweh Himself causes the depravity of us all to come upon Him. Hard pressed is He... humbled.... He is severed from the land of the living; because of the transgressions of My people, He

is led to death.... Yahweh desires to crush Him, and He causes Him to be wounded.... From the toil of His soul He shall see light, and He shall be satisfied by His knowledge; My righteous Servant shall justify many, and with their depravities He Himself shall be burdened.... He empties out His soul to death.... bears sin of many, and for transgressors shall He make intercession" (CVOT; brackets mine).

Yes, we should **fix our eyes into Jesus**, our Forerunner and Prime Leader. So I think that our author has in mind that

we look to Jesus for strength to continue giving support, so that we will not tire out as our lives become dissolved into His body. This is an extreme picture, but I think that this is the true call to discipleship, and what our author meant.

## Chapter 12

4. **You folks do not yet resist** (or: did not take a stand down against; or: put in place opposition) **as far as blood** (= to the point of bloodshed; or, as a figure: = to the depth of your soul-life), **toward constantly struggling against** (or: repeatedly contending and fighting in opposition to) **the failure** (the sin; the error; the miss of the target; missing the point).

I rendered the time-absent, fact tense (the aorist) of the first verb as both a simple present, and a simple past. So we can read this as "they did not," or as "they do not." I have given two potential

paraphrases: one literal; one figurative. The following verses speak of education, discipline and child-rearing, so I suggest that he is speaking figuratively here. If we keep in mind the last clause of vs. 3, above, the context informs us that this is not a transition to a new topic, but another layer that is involved in **"that you may not tire with exertion** (or: labor to weariness), **being continuously dissolved** (be enfeebled and exhausted; caused to fall apart) **in your inner selves"** (vs. 3) within the **"persistent remaining-under"** (vs. 1). As we continue being a paraclete to others, we are being **"progressively educated, disciplined and child-**

**trained"** (vs. 6-8, below). Stibbs, however, sees this as saying "... that their sufferings are so far light compared with those of Jesus; faithfulness has not yet cost any of them his life" (ibid. p 1213a).

**5. And further, you have entirely forgotten** (or: been oblivious of) **the calling-near** (the relief, aid, comfort and encouragement) **which keeps on speaking-through** (discoursing; reasoning through and conversing; laying out the issue in every direction) **to you as to sons:**

**"My son, do not be neglecting** (giving little care to) **the Lord's discipline** (education; child-

training), **neither be exhausted** (dissolved; = fall apart) **while being continually scrutinized or convicted** (exposed and put to the test; or: reproved) **by (or: under) Him,**

**6. for whom the Lord [= Yahweh] is loving, He is continuously and progressively educating (or: disciplining; child-training), and He is periodically scourging every son whom He is taking alongside with His hands (accepting; receiving)." [Prov. 3:11-12]**

Quoting this proverb in connection with **the calling-near** (the call to be a

paraclete to folks, which means bringing aid, comfort and encouragement to them) calls up the Hebrew culture (exhibited in the Proverbs) and anchors his argument in their own roots. He now uses a family metaphor and shows them that what he has been talking about in the previous verses is integral to being a son of God. Their present ordeals are proof of their sonship and of God's Fatherly reign within and among them. This entire new creation is a Family matter. Jesus is **"the Firstborn among, within the center of, and in union with many brothers** (= a vast family of believers)" – Rom. 8:29. They are called with the same calling as the Son of God – just as Jesus said in

John 20:21,

**"Correspondingly (or:  
According; On the same level;  
In the same sphere; In line with)  
as the Father has sent Me  
forth with a mission and as an  
Emissary (Representative), I  
Myself also am progressively  
(or: repeatedly; or: one after  
another) sending (dispatching)  
you folks."**

The same verb *ekluo* (dissolve; exhaust; fall apart) is used in both vs. 3 and vs. 5 (the Proverbs quote). This word, together with the word "**scourging**" in vs. 6, suggests that Yahweh's **discipline** (child-training and education) can be

both demanding, and at times severe. This element of our following Christ calls to mind the words of Jesus in Matt. 16:

**24. At that point Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone continues intending (purposing; willing; wanting) to come on behind Me, let him at once deny, reject and disown himself, and then in one move lift up his execution stake (cross), and after that proceed to be by habit continuously following after Me!**

**25. "You see, whoever may intend (or: should purpose;**

might set his will; happens to want) **to keep his soul-life safe** (to rescue himself; to preserve the interior life that he is living) **will loose-it-away and destroy it. Yet whoever can loose-away and even destroy his soul-life** (the interior self) **on My account, he will be finding it!**

**26. "For what will a person** (or: mankind) **be benefited or in what will he** (or: they) **be helped or augmented if he can** (or: should) **advantageously procure [for himself/themselves] and gain**

**the whole ordered system of society: government, economy, culture, religion – even the whole universe, yet would be undergoing the loss of, receive damage to, or be made to forfeit his soul-life (his interior self [in its reality])? Or what will a person (or: mankind) give, as a price paid to change his (or: its) soul back (or: to effect the interior transformation of himself/itself, back again to make himself/itself other than he/it is)?**

Now let us consider the description of

the feet of **"the One continuously walking about within the midst of the seven golden lampstands"** (i.e., the **called-out communities**, Rev. 1:20; 2:1): **"His feet [are] like white brass (or: bronze; fine copper) as having been set on fire in a furnace"** (Rev. 1:15; 2:18). So THIS is how He walks among us. This description of the feet is a figure for judgment. In Rev. 2:5 He warns Ephesus,

**"I am continuously (repeatedly; habitually) coming to you [as a group], and I will remove (or: move) your lampstand out of its place, if ever you [as a group] may not change your**

**way of thinking** (your mind-set)."

See the warnings and admonitions to the other churches in this letter in 2:10, 2:14-16, 2:20-23, 3:3, 3:11, 3:16-18.

Then in 3:19 He reminds them,

**"Whosoever, if I may be having affection for them (regard them as fond friends), I constantly put to the proof (or: expose; reprove) and I continuously educate (discipline; give child-instruction). Therefore be hot (zealous) and change your mind (your way of thinking; your attitude and frame of mind)!"**

We can look back to Israel's history and the prophets for another look at Yahweh's dealing with His people, in Mal. 3:

1. Behold Me sending My messenger, and he will surface the way before Me. And suddenly, the Lord Whom you are seeking shall come to His Temple, and the Messenger of the covenant in Whom you are delighting. Behold, He comes! says Yahweh of hosts.

2. Yet who will endure the day of His coming? And who will stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like

the soap of launderers.

3. And He will sit like a refiner and a cleanser of silver. And He will cleanse the sons of Levi [the tribe of the priesthood], and refine them like gold and like silver... (CVOT; brackets mine)

This, of course was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah, and then the judging that occurred upon the temple and Jerusalem in AD 70. But the NT references cited above reveal that our author's quote from the book of Proverbs, along with this promise in the book of Malachi, are typical of how our Father child-trains and educates us here

and now – and He usually uses the everyday lives and situations in societies to do this (as can be observed in His dealings with Israel in the OT writings). And then there is the instruction in 1 Pet. 4:

**12. Beloved ones, do not repeatedly feel like strangers to the burning (= the action of the Fire) within and among you folks, which is habitually happening to you with a view toward your being put to the test (or: which is repeatedly coming into being in the face of a proving trial for you; which is progressively birthing itself to**

an examination in you), as though a strange or foreign thing [or: occurrence] is repeatedly walking with you folks.

13. But on the contrary, keep on rejoicing and being glad to the extent or degree that you folks are continually participating with a common share in the effects of the experiences and the results of the sufferings of the Christ, to the end that, while continuously exulting and celebrating exceedingly, you folks can (or: should; would)

**also rejoice within the unveiling of His glory** (or: in union with the disclosure of His reputation; or: in the midst of the praise-inducing manifestation which is Him)!

**7. [So] be constantly enduring** (or: You folks are continuing to remain supportively under) **with a view to education, discipline and child-training: as to sons is God Himself continuously bringing [it] to you. For who is a son** (or: what son is there) **whom a father is not disciplining, educating and training?**

**8. But if you are without education, discipline and training, of which all**

**have become partakers** (common participants; partners), **accordingly you are really illegitimates** (= rabbinic term *mamzer*: child of a prohibited marriage [Lev. 18], or of uncertain fatherhood) **and not sons.**

Note that the education is tied to "**constantly enduring**" and giving support. The verb in the first clause of vs. 7 is either imperative (bold rendering) or indicative (parenthetical translation). He states again the connection between sonship and undergoing education and training that we see in the Prov. 3 quote. He indicates that this is perfectly normal in a good family. If this child-training is missing,

then there is a question of one's being a true son, an offspring of the Father.

Recall what Jesus said to the religious leaders:

**"You folks, in particular, are (exist and have your being) from out of, and have your source in, the ancestor who cast [an object] through [someone] (or: the father, the devil; or: the devil father; or: the father – the one thrusting [words or issues] through [folks/groups] and dividing them)" – John 8:44.**

This was not an ontological statement, but a metaphorical characterization of

the qualities of their inner beings: estranged natures. As Jesus told Nicodemus, they needed to be born again (John 3:3ff).

We should not miss the clause in the middle of vs. 7, "... **is God Himself continuously bringing [it] to you.**" This calls to mind the response of Job to his wife,

"Indeed, should we receive good from the One, Elohim, and should we not receive evil?"  
(Job 2:10)

Farrar Fenton's translation of this verse gives us a practical, everyday understanding of the semantic range of the Hebrew word for "evil," *ra*:

"We accepted comfort from God, so should we not also accept discomfort?"

The NIV renders *ra* here as "trouble." Rotherham's version gives "misfortune." The things that happened to Job give us the best understanding for what he called *ra* in his situation. He experienced loss of goods and property, loss of family, illness in his body and, later, condemnation from his friends. And all this was God putting Job to a test of allegiance.

**9. Then again, we indeed used to have instructors** (educators; teachers of boys; discipliners) – **the fathers of our flesh** (= human parents) – **and we continued**

**being repeatedly turned among [them]** (or: turned within and caused to reflect; = we listened to them and obeyed). **To a much greater extent, shall we not be continually placed under and humbly arranged and aligned by the Father of the spirits** (or: the Progenitor of breath-effects and Mentor of attitudes)? **And then we shall proceed living** (or: progressively live)!

The author now uses analogy from normal family situations of their day and culture. The parents directed and controlled them, and they "listened and obeyed." The verb of the second clause is a present passive that has both an outer and an inner meaning: both **being**

**repeatedly turned among** the older folks of the extended families, or **being turned within and caused to reflect** on what they were being taught by the adults.

The second half of this verse presents a logical conclusion: is it not reasonable to expect our heavenly Father to place us **under His discipline** and **align** us to His will **to a much greater extent**? Some take the phrase "**Father of the spirits**" as an ontological statement of who we are in the essence of our beings. Stibbs sees this as "a reference to God as the Creator of the human spirit; contrast 'fathers of our flesh' (AV, RV)" (ibid. p 1214). Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say

the same as Stibbs but add, "Generation by men is carnal, by God is spiritual' [Bengel]. As 'Father of spirits,' He is both the Originator, and the Providential and Gracious Sustainer, at once of animal and spiritual life. Cf 'and LIVE', viz., spiritually; also vs. 10, 'that we might be partakers of His holiness' (2 Pet.1:4)" (ibid. p 1438).

However, the author's line of argument has used the family analogies to differentiate between legitimate sons in a figurative sense, in contrast to those who are not – like the religious leaders that Jesus confronted in John, above. So here, a better understanding might be reading the phrase as "**Mentor of**

**attitudes."** Much of our education and discipline by our Father involves our attitudes in life. He is the Father of the spirits that have been enlivened by union with His Spirit, and thus now **live** in Christ from the effect of His Breath. But in rabbinic fashion, let us go to another level of understanding. In vs. 22-24 we have apocalyptic imagery, and in vs. 23 we have a phrase that can be interpreted in more than one way, as indicated by the bold rendering, and then the parenthetical expansion:

**"even among** (or: to; with)  
**spirits of just folks** (or: breath-effects from those who are fair and equitable and in right

relationship within the Way pointed out)."

The bold rendering would speak to the spiritual gathering and assembly of those of the called-out communities – and can be seen as ontological, referring to the **"folks."** But the expanded rendering could be figuratively describing the very atmosphere and environment that is being produced by these folks: a spirit of peace; a spirit of joy; a spirit of love; a spirit of mercy and grace; etc.

Another picture of spirits in an apocalyptic setting is seen in the vision given to John in Rev. 4:5,

**"Furthermore, [there were] seven shining ones (or: lamps;**

lights; torches) **of fire, which are the Seven Spirits of God** (or: God's seven Breath-effects), **being continuously caused to burn before the throne."**

God is the Father of these Spirits, too. The imagery of Rev. 4 is the tabernacle, so these lamps may well have reference to the lampstand in the holy place (*cf* 9:2, above). Looking back to Israel's story, in 1 Sam. 16:14 we find an illuminating statement,

"As for the spirit of Yahweh, it had withdrawn from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh frightened him."

The following verse there (15) tells us that Saul's courtiers noticed this and advised him to find a harp player, so that "Whenever it occurs that an evil spirit from Elohim comes over you, then he will play... and give you rest" (16). This is an example of all things being from God, as Paul said in Rom. 11:36, and elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16).

**10. You see, on the one hand, they were instructing** (educating; disciplining; child-training) **and continued thus toward a few days** (= for a little while), **according to and in line with that [which] normally was seeming [right] to them** (or: was being in line with the opinion [held] by them).

**Yet on the other hand, upon this [instruction, arrangement and alignment] He is continuously bringing [things; situations] together (progressively collecting unto profitability) – unto this: to mutually partake of His set-apartness (or: to take by the hands together, share and mutually receive from the holiness and sacredness which is Him).**

Our parents were progressively instructing and disciplining us during our youth. But **upon this** ordeal and "**being continuously dissolved**" (vs. 3), God "**is continuously bringing [everything] together for [everyone's] profitability.**" Paul said this in Rom.

8:28,

**"Now [look], we have seen,  
and thus know and are aware,  
that TO THOSE habitually or  
progressively loving God – to  
the folks being called and  
invited according to [the]  
purpose**

(or: for, in and with the people  
progressively experiencing love  
for God – in, with, by and for  
the people being invited down  
from an advanced placing,  
congruent with a design and  
corresponding to a before-  
placing and a prior setting forth)  
– **He is constantly working all**

**things together into good and is progressively working all humanity together into that which is advantageous, worthy of admiration, noble and of excellent qualities.**

[with other MSS: Yet we know that God is continuously joining everything together (or: working together with everything) into goodness by those continuously loving God...]."

The first rendering of Paul in this verse – that I emphasized in all 'caps' – means

that to our perspective and point of view, God is **"constantly working all things together into good."** The word **all** (*panta*) is both neuter (things) and masculine (people), so I expanded **all** in this last clause to read, **"is progressively working all humanity together into that which is advantageous, worthy of admiration, noble and of excellent qualities."** As my friend J. Preston Eby often says in his writings, "Aren't you glad!" The other optional renderings of this verse are also worth pondering.

This progressive collecting and gathering for mutual profitability leads **"unto this: to mutually partake of His**

**set-apartness.**" Note the corporate ingredient here. Another way of rendering this is: "to take by the hands **together**, **share** and **mutually** receive from the holiness and sacredness which is Him." As you can see, I rendered the genitive personal pronoun "Him" (*autou*) first as possessive (**His**) and then as apposition (which is Him). I gave **set-apartness** first as an objective genitive with **His**, then as an ablative (from the holiness and sacredness). "The **discipline** of God, our **spiritual Father**, produces **holiness** (see v. 14) and **righteousness** (5:13; 10:38; 11:4, 7, 33)" – Stern, *ibid.* p 716. But this holiness (literally: **set-apartness**)

means that like the tabernacle, we are set apart for God's purpose, which is to serve the people. It is not to make us better than others or in a class above them. Keep in mind Jesus' illustration of washing the disciples' feet: being a servant.

In discussing the corporate aspect in this discipline-holiness connection with my wife, Lynda, she pointed out that Israel was "set-apart" from Egypt as a corporate body, when Moses led them into the wilderness. Israel, collectively, was God's son (Ex. 4:22) and Yahweh's testing them in the wilderness was His treating them as sons, setting them apart to make them a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

In Deut. 8:2 we read,

"... the LORD your God has made you travel in the wilderness these past forty years, that He might test you by hardships to learn what was in you hearts..."

Then in 8:5 it continues,

"Bear in mind that the LORD your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son"  
(Tanakh).

Note that this word was coming to the whole nation of Israel. As Lynda stated, this was a corporate dealing. In the same way, the recipients of this letter would hear this message coming to them as a

body.

**11. Now on the one hand, all discipline (instruction; child-training; education) with a view to (or: face to face with) what is presently at hand, does not at the time seem to be joyous or fun, but to the contrary [is] painful and full of sorrow and grief; however afterwards (or: subsequently), to, for, in and by those having been gymnastically trained (exercised without clothing; = working-out while stripped of self-works) through it, it is constantly and progressively yielding fruit which has the character and qualities of peace and harmony – which equates to fair and equitable dealings in rightwised**

**relationships which are in line with the Way pointed out, and justice** (also: = from covenant inclusion and participation).

The author now presents the second result of our present discipline and instruction: **"fruit which has the character and qualities of peace and harmony."** Peace and harmony are the expanded rendering of *eirenikon* – an adjective that modifies **fruit**, and thus I gave the rendering **"which has the character and qualities of peace..."**

This is a quality of God's kingdom (Rom. 14:17). The next word (*dikaio<sup>u</sup>nes*) is in apposition, so I rendered it, **"which equates to fair and**

**equitable dealings in rightwised relationships which are in line with the Way pointed out, and justice** (also: = from covenant inclusion and participation)." This word also just happens to be another characteristic of God's kingdom (Rom. 14:17). These qualities for the called-out communities are the results of His sovereign activities (= reign; kingdom) within the covenant groups, and they come by way of His **discipline, instruction, education and child-training** that comes through the persecution, ordeals and mutual, supportive interaction in response to the experiences that are "**painful and full of sorrow and grief.**" Everyone goes

through these, but when we are following the lead of our Instructor (or, abiding in the Vine), we bear His fruit.

**12. Because of which [education],**

**"straighten up (or: build anew and restore) those hands hanging down helplessly, and those knees having been paralyzed or loosened at the sides," [Isa. 35:3]**

**13. and then, "make straight and upraised wheel-tracks for your feet," [Prov. 4:26]**  
**so that what is crippled in the feet (lame; limping; deprived of foot) may not be turned or twisted out (or: lest it be**

wrenched out of place or be dislocated), **but rather can and would be healed.**

Now our author reaches back to the Prophets and the Wisdom Literature of Israel to establish his point that we are to help people (**straighten up... hands... and... knees**) and make the living situations better (**make straight and upraised wheel-tracts**) so that the **crippled** who walk the path will not be injured, "**but rather can and would be healed.**" This can be applied to all areas of people's needs: physical, mental/emotional, spiritual. This brings to mind John the baptizer's quote of Isa. 40:3, "**Straighten the way of [the]**

**Lord** (the Lord's road; the path pertaining to [the] Lord [= Yahweh or Christ, the Messiah])" – John 1:23. The Lord's Road/Path/Way is in people. It has a metaphorical application of "straightening our relationships and dealings with others," but, as here, it can have a very practical application of setting things right in our communities or in the lives of those who are hurting or handicapped. The admonitions are the same that he has said again and again: be involved in your environment and be a paraclete to people – help them. This is the "**justice and rightwised relationships**" to which he was referring.

There is a second application: the paths of religions need to be "**made straight and upraised**" into the Truth and Reality of the Anointed One. They have left folks with helpless hands (unable to do the good works for which we were created in Christ to do – Eph. 2:10) and paralyzed knees (unable to walk the Path of the Christ). Their rutted roads brought no healings.

My friend Dan Kaplan has presented some insights on the metaphors of "hands, knees and feet" that were used in the quotes, above:

The incident described in Lu. 5:18-26 involved a paralyzed man whose friends lowered him

on a stretcher through a hole they had made in the roof of a home. Jesus saw the faith of these friends and said to the paralytic, "**Your sins have been divorced from you and sent away for you.**" In the discussion which followed, Jesus proceeded to heal the man's legs, knees and feet (whatever had been paralyzed) and told him to pick up his stretcher and go (= walk) home. In this act – and by having asked which was easier (vs. 23) – Jesus equated forgiveness of sins to making the man's **paralyzed** legs

**straightened up** (built anew and restored). Forgiving his sins was making his path straight. And all of this was because Jesus observed the faith of the man's friends. This was a corporate event.

In Ezk. ch. 1, the likeness of the "heavenly man" (vs. 5) of Ezekiel's vision is described as having straight feet (vs. 7) and "hands of a man" (vs. 8). These four "living ones" did not turn when they went, but "went every man (*ish*) straight forward" (vs. 9, 12). Then in vs. 20 we read, "Wherever the Spirit impelled

them to go, they went..." This apocalyptic vision presents human features and attributes that portray the Messiah, an anointed and Spirit-led son of God that walks a straight Path. The hands speak of ministry to the body (symbolized by the laying on of hands). They are hands that are stretched out to help and to receive others (pictured by the hands of Jesus: stretched out on the cross) – not hands **hanging down helplessly**. "His hands heal" (Job. 5:18). "The hand is the only member of the body that can touch every

other member of the body" – Dan. Functioning knees allow us to bend in service to others. The hands and the feet of Christ were pierced (Ps. 22:16). In consecrating the priests (Lev. 8:24), blood was put on the right ear (**right** hearing), the right thumb (**right** action and doing) and the right big toe (a **right** walk or way of living).

These two paragraphs which paraphrase Dan's thoughts give us a spring-board for contemplation of the types and figures that foreshadow Christ and His body in the OT, and of Jesus' actions.

**14. You folks be continuously pursuing**

**peace and harmony** [= shalom] **with all mankind** (or: with everyone) – **as well as the process and resultant state of being different and set-apart** (or: sacredness; the sanctification; or: = the situation of being set aside for God's use), **apart from which not even one person will proceed in seeing** (or: continue perceiving) **the Lord** [= Yahweh or Christ] –

Again we see corporate instruction to the community. Obviously individual members would be included, but as with Yahweh's instructions to Israel (and, in general, His historical decisions in regard to them) the corporate is the first focus of the instructions. Jesus gave us

His peace (John 14:27), and now His followers are instructed to impart this peace to the world about them. The idea of **harmony** implies interaction and concord – not division and discord. Cf Rom. 12:18.

The "**process and resultant state of being different and set-apart**"

(*hagiasmos*) expresses the two-fold meaning of this word. The admonition to "**continuously pursue**" this reminds us of Paul's expressed desire in Phil. 3:12,

**"consistently pursuing** (running swiftly in order to catch), **since I would** (or: if I could) **take down by the hand** (seize; forcefully grasp and gain control

over) **even [that] upon which I also was (or: am) taken down by hand** (seized; forcefully grasped and taken control of) **by and under [the control of] Christ Jesus."**

Being **set-apart** was pictured by the tabernacle, which was a tent that was set-apart for Yahweh to inhabit. The priests were **set-apart** to serve the people in their worship of Yahweh. Israel was a **set-apart** nation to be an example and a light to the nations. The called-out covenant communities are **set-apart** from the religious, cultural, economic, moral, ethical and political influences among which they live, so as

to be totally under the influence of God's sovereign reign, activities, purposes and very essence. God is **seen** (or: perceived) through those who bear His image, and these folks are His **set-apart** temple that comprises His **set-apart** communities. Yet without the Spirit of God unveiling their eyes to see Him in us or in others, those outside the community will only see our humanity, as did the immature kids in the story of Matt. 25:44, where they said to Him, "When did we see You...?" Without participating in these **set-apart** communities people are unable to see **the Lord**. Without being blessed by being **set-apart** to be His students, the

disciples would have been unable to see Him for who He really was – just as those outside His chosen group were not given eyes to see Him or His reign among them (Matt. 13:11-17; 11:25; 16:17; 1 Cor. 2:10). He termed these unseen aspects, **"the secrets of the reign of the heavens"** (Matt. 13:11).

"These unseen elements of His sovereign activities are **'like leaven (or: yeast)... which a woman... hides within three large measures of wheat flour, until [the] whole [batch] is leavened...'** (Matt. 13:33) – that is, until 'all of humanity' is filled with the life of His kingdom." –

Lynda Mitchell (my paraphrase)

The word **pursue** (*diokō*) used here and in Phil. 3:12 is also used by Peter,

**"... let him seek and try to find peace and harmony; let him also run after it and pursue it"** (1 Pet. 3:11, quoting Ps. 34:14).

Paul used it in 1 Thes. 5:15, **"continue to always pursue** (follow rapidly; run swiftly to acquire; chase after) **the good** (the excellent; the virtuous) **unto [the benefit of] each other as well as unto all people."** Then again in 1 Tim. 6:11, **"... continuously pursue** (or: rapidly follow, press forward and chase) **fair and equitable dealings in right relationships**

**in the Way pointed out**

(rightwisenedness; justice; = loyal covenantal living)."

In 1 Cor. 14:1 he instructed, "**You folks make haste to progressively run after and continuously pursue the Love!**" He gave the admonition in Rom. 12:13,

**"[Be] folks habitually pursuing** (rapidly following; eagerly pressing toward) **the love of foreigners** (or: Follow the course of hospitality by fondness expressed in kindness to strangers)."

Now to show a background for the application of this word to a historical context, Paul says in Rom. 9:30-31,

**"That [the] nations** (ethnic multitudes; non-Israelites; Gentiles) – **the ones *not* constantly pursuing** (pressing forward rapidly after) **rightwisedness** (right and fair relationship with equitable dealings in accord to the Way pointed out; a turning in the right direction on the Path) – **overtake, seize and take-down this rightwisedness as a possession...** However Israel, **habitually pursuing a Law and custom pertaining to rightwisedness** (a [Torah] which offers right relationship,

has to do with equity and comes from [covenant]) **did not precede into Law** (did not outstrip [others] into [the] Law and custom; did not reach ahead of other folks to what [Torah] offers)."

The idea behind these writers' use of this word is that there are always occasions, situations and goals that lie ahead of us as we engage the path of this life – and we are admonished to eagerly strive for the excellence that this Path (Way) offers us. Paul used this word in an athletic metaphor in Phil. 3:14,

**"I am continuously pressing forward, pursuing down**

**toward** [the; or: an] **object in view** (a mark on which the eye is fixed): **into the awarded contest prize of God's** (or: the award which is God's) **invitation to an above place** (or: an upward calling having the source from, with qualities and characteristics of, God) **within the midst of and in union with Christ Jesus."**

But there is another use of this word that has a negative application, and it is used more often in this way than in the positive: that of being pursued. Paul says in 2 Tim. 3:12,

**"And indeed (or: And so) all**

**those habitually resolving**  
(intending; willing) **to be**  
**continuously living in a**  
**reverent, devout and pious**  
**manner with virtuous conduct**  
**from ease and goodness within**  
**Christ Jesus will be repeatedly**  
**pursued, persecuted and**  
**harassed."**

He also referred to the Judaizers:

**" As many as continually want**  
(intend; will; purpose) **to make**  
**a good impression** (a pleasing  
appearance; a fair face, front or  
facade) **within flesh** [i.e., in a  
flesh system or religion], **these**  
**are habitually urging, or trying**

**to compel or force, you folks**  
(or: making you feel obliged) **to**  
**proceed to be circumcised –**  
**only so that they may not be**  
**continually pursued and**  
**persecuted for (or: in) the**  
**cross of Christ Jesus** (or: by  
the execution stake that pertains  
to the Anointed Jesus)" – Gal.  
6:12.

They did not want to reap the  
consequences of following the Messiah  
into the better covenant.

A pertinent witness from the Greek OT  
(LXX) to its positive use in the NT is  
Hab. 2:2,

"... Write [the] vision – even

clearly and plainly into a tablet  
– so that the reader can and  
would **pursue** them."

Paul spoke of the "**Secret** (or: sacred mystery)" that "**is set in clear light in His set-apart folks** (or: caused to be seen by His saints)." It is,

**"the riches of the glory of this Secret** (or: the wealth which has its source in this sacred mystery's manifestation which calls forth praise) **within the multitudes** (among the nations; in the Gentiles; **IN UNION WITH** the swarms of ethnic groups)."

Then he went on to explain,

**"which is (or: exists being)  
Christ within you folks, the  
expectation of and from the  
glory**

(or: which is [the] Anointed in union with you people: the hope of the manifestation which calls forth praise; or: which is [the] Anointing within the midst of you folks – the expectation which is the glory)" – Col. 1:26-27.

What a picture Paul presents here; what a glorious realization once all have the eyes to see it. Once Christ has purified us by His blood, then the promise made by Jesus in Matt. 5:8 will come to pass,

**"Those who are clean in the heart [are] happy and blessed, because they, themselves, will progressively see God!**

(or: = The folks that have had the core of their beings made clean [are] happy people, in that they will continue to see God [in everything]!)"

But apart from being joined to the covenant community of resurrection life, no one can proceed to see God – they are still dead, within the old creation.

**15. while overseeing** (looking diligently and carefully watching upon and seeing to it) **[that] no one be lacking** (be falling short; be living behind or in the

rear; = misses out), [by wandering] away from God's grace and joyous favor; [that] not any "root of bitterness" [Deut. 29:18], progressively sprouting upward, would be crowding in to cause disturbance like the spirit of a mob, and then, through means of it, many folks may be stained (polluted; defiled; = the whole community could be contaminated).

This verse is a continuation of 14a. They were (and we are) to be constantly pursuing peace "**while overseeing**" situations and conditions around them. The peace and **harmony** came from "looking diligently and carefully

watching upon and seeing to it **[that] no one be lacking.**" The picture is of supportive community interaction, or as Paul put it,

**"Let no one be habitually seeking the [interest, advantage, profit, welfare or edification] of himself, but to the contrary, the [interest, advantage, profit, welfare and edification] of the other (or: different) person"** (1 Cor. 10:24).

Paul left the object of the **habitual seeking** unstated, so I have made some suggestions which I inserted in brackets. In our verse 15, here, the parenthetical

options for rendering the verb give us a larger picture to consider. Other members of our community may be "falling short – **away from God's joyous favor,**" or they may be "living behind or in the rear – **away from God's grace.**" Now this does not imply that God's grace and favor are not here and available for them, but that they may be wandering away from the body of Christ that continuously provides tangible expressions of His grace and favor. Barclay suggests that this clause might be paraphrased "*failing to keep up with the grace of God,*" and then remarks, "The early Greek commentator Theophylact interprets this in terms of a

journey of a band of travelers who every now and again check up, 'Has anyone fallen out? Has anyone been left behind while the others have pressed on?'"

(ibid. p 182, emphasis original).

Looking ahead to the coming of the Messiah, the prophet Micah foretold,

"In that day, averring is Yahweh, I shall **gather** her who is limping, and I shall **convene** her who is expelled, and her to whom I have brought evil"

(CVOT), or as Moffatt has it, "... I will **collect the stragglers**, I will gather the outcast whom I once afflicted" (4:6).

The thinking and wisdom of the

surrounding culture, the lure of past associations and traditions, or the deception from false teachers, may influence their outlook so as to cause them to step off the Path of Christ.

Fractures may appear in the community as they did in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11-13).

The clever reasoning of the Judaizers could draw them away for grace (Gal. 5:4b). This **overseeing**, however, should not take the form of control. We must always keep in mind the admonition that Paul proclaims in Gal. 5:1,

**"For the [aforementioned] freedom, Christ immediately set us free (or: [The] Anointed**

One at once frees us in, to, for  
and with freedom)! **Keep on  
standing firm, therefore, and  
do not again be habitually held  
within a yoke of slavery** (or: a  
cross- lever [of a pair of scales]  
whose sphere is bondage)  
(or: Continuously stand firm,  
then, in the freedom [to which  
the] Anointing sets us free, and  
let not yourselves be  
progressively confined again by  
a yoke pertaining to servitude)!"

The resurrection of institutional religion  
with its hierarchies of control quickly  
returned the called-out communities into  
a bondage that ushered in the Dark Ages

– the structures of which remain with us to this day.

Disagreements over doctrine, or over communal equity, or leadership within the groups may cause hurt feelings or anger, and then a **"root of bitterness progressively sprouting upward, would be crowding in to cause disturbance like the spirit of a mob, and then, through means of it, many folks may be stained** (polluted; defiled; = the whole community could be contaminated)." Just as mature love casts out fear, bitterness will crowd out love. If this sprout is allowed to grow and bear seed, soon the entire field of the local community will look like the field

in ch. 6:8, and the Fire of God's dealings will have to come (*cf* 12:29, below).

16. **[See to it that] no one [is] a fornicator** (one given to sexual immorality or who in some way prostitutes himself for gain; or: = an idol worshiper) **or a profane person** (one void of religious feeling; one accessible to all and who habitually treads across thresholds; unconsecrated; = the opposite of a set-apart person), **as Esau, who in place of** (or: in exchange for) **one feeding** (a meal) **gave away his own birthright** (the rights of the firstborn).

Nyland renders  *pornos* (**fornicator**) "an idol worshipper," and considering the

flow of the context I tend to agree that this is likely what the author was referencing. The prophets in the OT referred to Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh (i.e., their worship of Baal, etc.) as "adultery," since they were in a metaphorical relationship with Him as being His wife. Cf Isa. 1:21; Jer. 5:7; Hos.; Rev. 17:5, 6.

The next noun, *bebelos* (**profane person**, etc.), also speaks to the context of one's conduct in relation to the community and God's reign. The parenthetical expansion gives the semantic range of meaning. Barclay says, "It was used for ground that was *profane* in contradistinction to ground

that was *consecrated*. *Bebelos* was used for the person who was *uninitiated* and *uninterested*, in contradistinction to the man who was *devout*" (ibid. p183, emphasis his). It was the opposite to being **set-apart** – to which the author referred in vs. 14, above.

The example from Israel's story which the author chooses for a **profane** person is **Esau**, Jacob's brother. He combines the food incident in Gen. 25:28-34 with the story of Isaac granting of the birthright blessing in Gen. 27:1-39. His point is that exchanging the birthright (which meant leadership of the tribe) for a meal demonstrates that his heart was not consecrated to the purposes of

Yahweh – he placed no value in the birthright. Later, he wanted the material blessings that came with it, but in their culture once the blessing was spoken it was settled.

**17. For you know that even afterwards, continuously purposing (intending; wanting; willing) to inherit the blessing (to enjoy the allotment of the words of goodness and well-being), he was disapproved and rejected, for he did not find a place of a change of mind [in the situation] – even though thoroughly seeking it out with tears.**

This part of the story is found in Gen. 27:33-41. When we visit this record, we find that Esau was not seeking to change

his own mind so as to align with Yahweh's purposes, but rather, he was attempting to change Isaac's mind about the birthright **blessing**. He now wanted the effects of the blessing, not the heart of a person devoted to Yahweh. Such a person is a **profane** person. But we should recall that this was Yahweh's plan, all along.

The son of the Promise (Isaac) did not marry Rebecca until he was 40 (a symbolic number that signifies "testing"). Rebecca was sterile (barren) for nineteen years and Isaac entreated Yahweh about it, and she conceived twins. During her pregnancy, the sons struggled with each other in the womb so

she inquired about it with Yahweh, and Yahweh told her that, "Two nations are in your womb; two separate peoples shall issue from your body. One people shall be mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23, Tanakh). Jacob's deception of Isaac was obedience to his mother, thus honoring her, and she volunteered to receive his curse (27:13). The result was the fulfillment of Yahweh's Word to her. Tradition marked Esau as the firstborn, but God supplanted the tradition. They called the younger one Jacob because at some point "his hand took hold of Esau's heel" during the process of his being born. Figuratively,

Jacob laid hold of the path of the firstborn, the path of the prince of the tribe. Later, God would correct the mistake of his naming and name him Israel (Prince with or for God), according to his destiny – Gen. 32:28 (*Cf* Hos. 12:3). As types, Israel would be a type of people that were set-apart and consecrated to God's plan; Esau would be a type of the profane (the rest of the world) – until the coming of the Messiah and the new creation in which the two become one. What was once called profane is now sacred. We read in Acts 10:15,

**"You are not to continue making, or considering,**

**common [the] things which  
God cleansed (or: cleanses)  
and made (or: makes) clean!"**

**18. Now you see, you folks have not  
approached to (or: come toward so as  
to be now arrived at) something  
tangible (or: [D and later MSS read: a  
mountain] being habitually handled or  
normally touched), and something  
burning (or: having been burned by  
fire), and to a thick, dark storm-cloud,  
and to murky, gloomy darkness (or: the  
realm of nether gloom; the dark,  
shadowy quarter of dimness and  
obscurity), and to a whirlwind (tempest;  
hurricane),**

The first clause is critical for a correct

understanding of God's reign and kingdom. It is not **something tangible**. We have not arrived at a physical location or a physical manifestation. We should not look for a cloud filling the rooms of our gatherings (e.g., 1 Ki. 8:10). This is not to say that God is in any way limited in how He might choose to manifest Himself, but it is not the focus of our lives. The glory is Christ within and among us.

**19. and to a blare of a trumpet, and to a sound of gush-effects** (or: a sound of the results of a flow; or: a voice of spoken words; a sound of declarations) – **of which those hearing [it] asked to the side that there be no word added**

**for them** (or: of which, the folks listening refused and begged for release, to [the result that] no message be put toward them).

**20. For they were not bearing** (or: = carrying [through with]) **that [which was] being presently distinguished** (set and arranged throughout as strict orders): **"And if a little animal may touch** (come in contact with) **the mountain it shall be repeatedly pelted with stones** (or: stoned)." [Ex. 19:12-13]

**21. And so fearful was the thing being seen, Moses said,**

**"I am terrified** (out of myself with fear) **and trembling**

**within."** [Deut. 9:19]

His perfect love has cast out all fear (1 John 4:18). Chapter 10:22 informs us, **"we can be continuously and progressively approaching with a true heart in fullness of faith** (or: in faith's being brought to the full)." Jesus said, **"So everyone come here, toward Me! – all those constantly weary and exhausted from toil and labor, as well as folks having been caused to carry a load, and continuing burdened down – and I, Myself, will refresh you and cause you folks to rest."** (Matt. 11:28)

The toil and labor was from trying to keep the Law; the load and the burden were the added rules that the Pharisees and scribes had put upon the people (Matt. 23:2-7). We read of the "rest" in ch. 4:1 ff.

Our author has been building his contrast of the old to the new, by accessing once more the story of Israel as Mt. Sinai, describing aspects of the scene there – which was the creation of Israel as a nation – an organized society.

**22. But to the contrary, you folks have approached so that you are now at Mount Zion – even in a city of a continuously living God; in "Jerusalem upon heaven"**

(or: in a Jerusalem pertaining to and having the character and qualities of a superior, or added, heaven and atmosphere; or: in Jerusalem [situated] upon, and comparable to, the atmosphere)  
– **also among ten-thousands** (or: myriads) **of agents and messengers**

(people with a/the message):

The author frankly states this as a fact, using the perfect tense to show that the action happened in the past and now exists as a finished result. We are **now at Mount Zion**. We no longer operate from Mt Sinai. Mt. Sinai (figure of the Law) was "**picked up and cast** (thrown)

**into the midst of the sea"** (Mark 11:23). In Gal. 4:21-31, Paul allegorically associates Hagar, the **slave-girl**, with Sinai which habitually gives birth to slavery. He ends his argument with a quote of Gen. 21:10, **"Cast out the slave-girl [= the Law] and her son [the slavery that the Law produces]."**

John saw the Law/Sinai as **"something like a great mountain, continuously being burned in fire, was thrown into the sea"** (Rev. 8:8; *cf* vs. 18, above). We are now at a new mountain, and we live in **God's city** – in fact we are God's city. We see this city described in the apocalyptic vision given to John in Rev.

21. Paul referred to it as "**the Jerusalem above... who is our mother**" (Gal. 4:26). This is where we are and who we are.

"In this one, long, marvelous, bold sentence, the writer of Hebrews takes the reader all the way back to the origins of human civilization – the shedding of the blood of Abel [vs. 24, below] – and he says, 'Now everything has changed!'.... *Now* we have at last found the city Abraham was looking for [11:10, above]! *Now* there is a new way of structuring human civilization! Jesus has built a new city!.... dedicated with... his own blood." (Brian Zahnd, *Beauty Will Save the World*, Charisma House,

2012, p 114, emphasis original, brackets mine)

The parenthetical expansions regarding Jerusalem, above, give some optional pictures of our situation:

1) it pertains to and has the character and qualities of *ep-ouranios*: a superior, or added, heaven or atmosphere. The added atmosphere is the Spirit of Christ; the superior heaven is the new temple (His body) – or the reign of God – in which we manifest Him and His actions.

2) "Jerusalem [situated] upon, and comparable to, the atmosphere" pictures God's people controlling their surrounding atmosphere and being comparable to the clouds which bring

the blessings of God's "rain" upon the land.

We are **"also among ten-thousands of agents and messengers"** – or, we are associated with myriads of people that have a message, or The Message (the Word of the crucified Messiah and the risen Lord). These folks can be alive now on earth with us, or surrounding us like the clouds, in the realm of spirit (12:1) – those of the past, with their messages. This is apocalyptic – or some might say eschatological – symbolism that the author is using to describe the called-out covenant communities. The description continues in the following verses, with identity markers that we

shall examine.

23. **[that is] in (or: to) an assembly of an entire people** (or: an assembly of all; a universal convocation) **and in (or: to) a summoning forth** (or: a called-out and gathered community) **of firstborn folks having been copied** (from-written, as from a pattern; or: enrolled; registered) **within [the; or: various] atmospheres** (or: heavens), **and in (or: to; with) God, a Judge** (an Evaluator and Decider) **of all mankind, even among** (or: to; with) **spirits of just folks** (or: breath-effects from those who are fair and equitable and in right relationship within the Way pointed out) **having been brought to the destined goal** (perfected; finished;

matured; made complete),

**24. and in (or: to) Jesus, a Medium (or: an agency; an intervening substance; a middle state; one in a middle position; a go-between; an Umpire; a Mediator) of a new and fresh (young; recently-born) arrangement (covenant; settlement; a deposit which moves throughout in every direction; a placing through the midst; a will and testament), and to and in blood of sprinkling, and to One continuously speaking something superior to (or: stronger and better than) Abel.**

Verse 23 uses a term (*pan-eguris*) that describes the joining of Jew and Gentile, "to the end that He may frame (create; found and settle from a state of wildness

and disorder) **The Two** [i.e., Jew and Gentile] **into One New** [p46 & others: common] **Humanity within the midst of, and in union with, Himself, continuously making** (progressively creating) **Peace and Harmony** (= shalom)" – Eph. 2:15. And this is part of the **peace and harmony** that we are to **be continuously pursuing** (vs. 14, above).

The next term is *ekklesia* in the dative: **in a summoning forth**, or, to a called-out and gathered community. This corporate group is composed **of firstborn folks**, i.e., people that are a part of the corporate Messiah, who is the Firstborn (the Anointed Israel, who's

Head is Jesus).

These are "**folks having been copied** (etc.)." Although Paul uses a different word, the same picture is drawn in Rom. 8:29,

**"because those whom He foreknew** (whom He knows from previous intimate experience), **He also marked out beforehand** (determined, defined and designed in advance) **[as] copies** (joint-forms) **of the image** (material likeness; portrait; mirrored image) **of His Son** (or: He previously divided, separated and bounded conformed patterns

from the image of His Son) **into the [situation for] Him to be** (or: to continually exist being) **the Firstborn among, within the center of, and in union with many brothers** (= a vast family of believers)!"

The word **having been copied** is a perfect passive participle of *apographo*. It can also be rendered "from-written, as from a pattern," or, "enrolled; registered." These last meanings can refer to being entered into the list of the residents of the City. Notice that they are **copied**, or from-written **within [the], or [various], atmospheres/heavens**. In other words, "heaven" is the origin of

their design and the shape that they have been given. It also describes the character and essence of their beings. The next phrase "**and in (or: to; with) God, a Judge (an Evaluator and Decider) of all mankind,**" is the next category **in Whom, to Whom, or with Whom** these Hebrew Christians (the recipients) "**have approached [and] are now at.**" We have approached in the sphere, realm and spirit of God; we have also come to Him and with Him (*cf* Acts 17:27, 28). He continuously evaluates everyone and then makes constant decisions about them. This is because He is a **Judge**, and what God is, He continuously does. The idea of a final

judgment at the end of history is a myth, unsupported by Scripture. Even the figurative "great white throne" judgment in John's apocalyptic vision is not termed a "final judgment." This is what God does. All you have to do is to read the Old Testament Scriptures and you find Yahweh habitually making decisions about people, nations, the earth, births, deaths, good, evil, joy, sorrow. He is completely integrated into the life of the earth and the life of humanity. Deism is utter blindness. To us that have eyes to see,

**"He is constantly working all things together into good and is progressively working all**

**humanity together into that which is advantageous, worthy of admiration, noble and of excellent qualities"** (Rom. 8:28b).

Not only are they in God's city, in an assembly of an entire people, in a called-out community, in God, but now they are "**even among** (or: to; with) **spirits of just folks** (or: breath-effects from those who are fair and equitable and in right relationship within the Way pointed out) **having been brought to the destined goal** (perfected; finished; matured; made complete)." I discussed this under the topic of the **Father of spirits** in vs. 9, above. But the context

here suggests that the author is giving just another description of the same group – "**every family** (lineage; kindred; descent; paternal group) **within heaven and upon earth** (or: in [the] sky or atmosphere, and on [the] land)" – Eph. 3:15. These are folks that have been brought to their **destined goal**: to be in Christ. In this sense, this is a realized eschatological existence: they are here; they are finished and made complete in Him. Because of being branches in the Vine, they are finished, perfect and matured enough to produce His fruit (John 15). It is a corporate reality of the Christ. Even children (of which the kingdom is made) are able to produce

His fruit because the Victor, the perfect expression of the Anointing, is resident within them and they are in union with Him.

Not only this, they "**have approached... in Jesus, a Medium of a new and fresh arrangement.**" He is the medium through which, and in which, they **approached**. They have drawn near through being **in** Him. It is a **fresh, new** (*neos*) **arrangement**. It has never been before. It is not a renewal of the old – a "renewal" would keep the old as viable and make it continue existing in place. Jesus **mediates** His life to us through His Spirit – the effect of His Breath (John 20:22). He is also "an agency; an

intervening substance; a middle state; one in a middle position; a go-between; an Umpire; a Mediator" of a "recently-born covenant; a settlement deposit which moves throughout in every direction; a placing through the midst; a will and testament." Each of these words holds a different nuance or meaning. My bold rendering holds what I see as being the central idea. But the Spirit can shed more light into our understanding as we meditate upon these other options.

The next phrase, "**to and in blood of sprinkling,**" takes us back to the Day of Atonement in ch. 9, and to 10:22, which speaks of the same context. It refers to the blood of His cross, and to His

sprinkling His life on our hearts. So here we have another witness of the context of verses 23 & 24: the creation of the body of Christ and His called-out covenant communities. It is a first century historical context that brought into being the new creation. This sacrifice speaks **something** [that is] **superior to Abel**, who made the first recorded blood sacrifice (Gen. 4:4), to which Yahweh gave heed. Abel began the type of the blood sacrifice system, demonstrating it to be superior to the offering of fruits and vegetables (*cf* 11:4, above: "**In faith Abel offered to God much more of a sacrifice than Cain**"). But the ending of the blood sacrifices,

once and for all, spoke into being a **superior** arrangement than that which had been in place for humans from Abel to Christ. Christ's blood stands "stronger and better," by comparison, when placed alongside (*para*) the blood presented by Abel's offering from his flocks. Here Brian Zahnd adds a good insight,

"The blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Instead of crying out for vengeance, the blood of Jesus cries, 'Father, forgive them!' Instead of the curse of shameful guilt, ever-escalating vengeance and continual violence, the blood of Jesus brings the

blessing of forgiveness,  
reconciliation and peace. The  
blood of Jesus is the triumph of  
love.... the city of God is not  
built by a murder; it is built by a  
martyr..." (ibid. p 115)

**25. Continue looking, and see! You folks should not at any point ask to the side for yourselves (or: beg for release; decline; refuse; or: = turn your back on) the One continuously speaking (or: the Speaker)! For since (or: if) those asking aside for themselves (begging off; refusing; or = turning their backs) did not by flight escape (or: flee out from) the one constantly managing (conducting business and instructing)**

**upon earth (or: [the] land), much more we [will not escape], that is those habitually turning ourselves away from the One from [the] atmospheres and heavens,**

David Stern refers to the author's reasoning here as "a form of argument known in rabbinic literature as *kal v'chomer* ('light and heavy'), corresponding to what philosophers call *a fortiori* reasoning: If A is true, then, *a fortiori* (Latin, 'with [even] greater strength'), B must also be true" (ibid. p 32). We saw this same kind of reasoning in 9:14 and 10:29, above. Stern has noted twenty-one times where this type of argument was used in the NT.

The historical incident referred to here may have been when the people "stood far off" from Sinai, and told Moses, "... do not let God speak with us," Ex. 20:18-19, or, the time when the search party reported on the situation of Canaan, and ten of them said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are," Nu. 13:31, or Korah's rebellion, recorded in Nu. 16.

The author's point is that we should not try to get out of whatever testing Father brings to us, but should follow our Example and say, "Not my will but Yours be done." Seeking His aid, protection or intervention are all well

and good, but not **asking to the side for [ourselves]**, so as to beg for release, decline or refuse to remain under or to do His bidding. We must always remember that Jesus is Lord, and view our situations as being His slaves (as does Paul: Rom. 1:1). We should keep in mind that He brings disciplines to His sons (vss. 5-11, above).

**26. Whose voice shook the land (or: earth) at that time. Yet now it has been promised (or: He has promised for Himself), saying,**

**"Still once [more; or: for all] I am shaking not only the land (or: earth), but also the heaven (or: atmosphere; sky)." [Hag.**

2:6]

27. **Now the "Still once [more; or: for all]" constantly points to and makes clearly visible the transposition (transference; changeover; change of setting or place) of the things being repeatedly shaken, to the end that the things not being repeatedly (or: continuously) shaken may remain.**

The first sentence of vs. 26 speaks of the incident when Israel came to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:18-19). The verb in the second sentence can be either passive, or middle; thus the two renderings. The prophecy from Haggai spoke of a future **shaking**, which would happen with the coming of the Messiah and the disruption

of the Jewish culture and Law. As vs. 27 states, that prophecy **constantly points to and makes clearly visible the transposition** – the "transference, the changeover and the change of setting or place." The new creation/new covenant with the new priesthood, new temple, and one new humanity (which removed the dividing wall between the Jew and the Gentile – Eph. 2:11-22) was the actualization and embodiment of this **transposition**. The old was **repeatedly shaken**, and after AD 70 only that of the Spirit remained (John 4:23-24).

28. **Therefore** (or: Because of which), **continuously taking to our sides** (or: progressively receiving alongside) **an**

**unshaken Reign** (or: Kingdom; Sovereign influence), **we are constantly holding** (or: progressively having; [other MSS: can be now having]) **grace and joyous favor, through which we are** [other MSS: can be] **continually serving, well-pleasingly, in God** (or: for God; by God; to God), **with modesty** (an unseen behavior and manner) **in taking hold easily of goodness and well-being, as well as discretion and awe as to what is proper,**

29. **for you see, "even our God [is] a continuously all-consuming Fire** (or: our God [is] also a progressively fully-devouring fire)." [Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Isa. 33:14]

Verse 28 indicates that this was a then-present activity: a "**continuously taking to our sides** (or: progressively receiving alongside) **an unshaken Reign** (or: Kingdom; Sovereign influence)." It was because of this that they were (and now we are) "**constantly holding** (or: progressively having) **grace and joyous favor, through which we may be continually serving, well-pleasingly, in God** (or: for God; by God; to God)." This is the reality of the present covenant communities of the called-out folks. Because Jesus is now in fact Lord of heaven and earth, we can "take to our sides and receive" all the benefits and realities of His present **unshaken**

**Reign.** His Reign/Kingdom was not shaken, but the heavens (figure of those in the place of leadership in Israel – the priests and scribes, along with the Sanhedrin) and the earth/land (figure of the common people) were shaken by the coming of the Messiah, and then the judgment that followed, culminating in AD 70. It is within His Sovereign influence that we "progressively have and hold" His **grace and joyous favor** – which enables us to be **continually serving – well pleasingly** – those among whom we live and those who are within our circle of influence. We can do this "by God" (i.e., by His power and ability), and "to God" since He is within

those whom we are serving, and "for God" as we spread His faith-imparting message – because we are **in God**, as our "eyes-opened existence" makes us aware that "**within Him we live, are moved and exist**" (Acts. 17:28).

The MSS vary in the next phrase which is a conflation of MSS which read *aidous*, "**with modesty** (an unseen behavior and manner)," along with MSS that read *eulabeias* and *deous* expanded as, "**in taking hold easily of goodness and well-being, as well as discretion and awe as to what is proper.**" This phrase qualifies the **serving** of the previous clause – meaning that we are to serve folks in this manner and with these

qualities. Chapter 13, below, will give a more comprehensive view of what this service should look like.

Verse 29 is a continuation of his argument, giving an OT reference as the basis for the concluding admonition of vs. 28. This quote of Deut. 4:25 is a reference to vs. 18, above, and calls to mind 6:8 and 10:31, which we have already discussed. This same figurative language is used in Deut. 9:3 where Yahweh promised to be a "consuming fire" that will go before Israel when they cross the Jordan River. This meant that He would destroy their enemies. Ps. 97:3 gave this same figure, "A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies

round about." Yahweh was like a devouring fire on top of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:17). Ps. 50:3 had told these folks that when God came, "a fire shall devour before Him..." Isa. 66:15 prophesied, "Yahweh will come with fire..." This was nothing new to the Hebrews that received this letter. The consuming fire is seen in His testing of people's works in 1 Cor. 3:13-17. In fact Paul tells us there (vs. 15) that,

**"[that person] himself will be saved (rescued and delivered; healed and restored to health; returned to his original state and condition), and as in this way – through Fire!"**

We see God described as Fire and Deity in the judgments of behavior and works in Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:12-14. Rom. 11:36 instructs us that everything returns back "into God." As we observed in 6:8, this is a description of God's cleansing work, and the presence of His Fire in our lives also transforms us. The education and discipline discussed in vss. 5-11, above, Peter calls "a trial of [their] faith" in 1 Pet. 1:7 and "fiery trials" that are to be expected (1 Pet. 4:12). "A fiery trial reduces the life, but releases energy toward God" (from the notes of Hortense Anderson Mitchell). Isa. 33:14 asks, "Who among us shall sojourn through devouring fire... through

eonian glowings?" Then vs. 15 answers, "He who walks in righteousness and speaks upright words, who rejects gain from extortions..." (CVOT). This was an admonition to rightwised living with fairness and equity: it applied to this life. Jesus told us that, "**Indeed, everyone** (all humanity) **will be salted** (seasoned and preserved) **in** (with; by) **fire!**" (Mark 9:49).

## Chapter 13

"As he comes to the close of the letter, the writer to the Hebrews turns to practical things. Here [in vss. 1-6] he outlines five essential qualities of the Christian life" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 190; brackets mine).

1. **Let brotherly affection** (= fondness for the Family; = friendly devotion to fellow believers) **continuously remain!** While this verse admonishes affection to the members of the covenant community, the next verse encourages love and acceptance to those who are outside the community – the strangers and foreigners. That this reminder is

necessary echoes the call for them to proceed on to maturity and the goal of unambiguous love for others that we found in 6:1, above.

**2. Be continuously unforgetful (or: = un-neglecting) of fondness and affection to strangers and foreigners (or: Don't forget hospitality and friendliness to unexpected guests)! For you see, through this, some folks were unaware (oblivious; unconscious) of at some point receiving agents (or: messengers) as guests.**

When persecution abounds, it may be easy to neglect hospitality – especially to outsiders. The root meaning of this word *philo-xenia* is **fondness and**

**affection to strangers and foreigners.**

In everyday experiences it can also mean friendliness in the situation of unexpected guests. But the broader context of "friendliness to **foreigners**" speaks to the tendency of groups to be open to their own, but closed to those of a different race, country, religion, political group, etc. The love of Christ calls us to be hospitable to those who are new to us and who may be different from us. But more than what we today consider as "hospitality," which can still keep folks at "arms' length," is the core idea of this word: show them **fondness and affection** – treat them as friends. In the culture of the time and region in

which the recipients of this letter lived, this word meant to take care of the needs of such folks.

One reason that the author gives for this admonition is the occasion of "**receiving agents** (or: messengers) **as guests.**" He may well have been referencing the story in Gen. 18 of Abraham and Sarah providing for their visitors (called *ish*: "men," in vs. 2; called "agents/messengers" in 19:1). Or, he may have had in mind the visit of the agent to Manoah and his wife (the parents of Samson) in Judges 13:3-23. But there is also the likelihood that he may have been referring to ongoing occasions within the scattered

communities. These may have been agents from the realm of the spirit (e.g., the one that released Peter from jail – Acts. 12:7ff), or the folks with the message (i.e., the messengers) that had been sent out by the Holy Spirit into the Empire, to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. We meet agents and messengers of God's reign – also known as "itinerant ministers" – on a regular basis.

**3. Be habitually reminding yourselves of those in bondage (or: bound ones; prisoners), as having been and now remaining bound together with [them]. [Take thought] of those maltreated (or: those continually being held by the**

bad or in the worthless), **as being yourselves also within a body** (or: as it were even being the same – in union with [that] body).

Barclay characterizes this verse as "*sympathy for those in trouble*" and quotes "Aristides the heathen orator" (presumably, Aelius Aristides, AD 117-181) as saying of the Christians, "If they hear that any one of their number is imprisoned or in distress for the sake of their Christ's name, they all render aid in his necessity and, if he can be redeemed, they set him free" (ibid. p 192, italics original). So it would seem that our author's admonition was heeded by generations that followed. This also

echoes Matt. 25:36.

However, just as *philo-xenia* is not specified as applying just to followers of Jesus, this verse can be seen as speaking of solidarity with anyone who is **in bondage** (be it internal or external), and with all who are prisoners. Taking thought "**of those maltreated as yourselves also within a body**" can refer to empathy for them, or as the parenthetical expansion reads, "as it were even being the same – in union with [that] body," i.e., as being one with that person. This is love extended.

**4. Marriage [is] precious** (of great value and honor) **in the midst of all folks** (or: among all peoples), **and the**

**conjugal bed [is] unstained and undefiled; yet God is continuously judging** (or: repeatedly separating and making a decision about) **fornicators** (or: male prostitutes; or: men who have sexual intercourse with a prostitute) **and adulterers.**

Barclay characterizes this verse as speaking of "*purity*." Our author is referencing common cultural values ("among all peoples") as the contrast to improper sexual behavior. Notice that "**God is continuously judging.**" Moffatt renders the last phrase, "the vicious and adulterous." Nyland suggests that "**fornicators**" here refers to acts condemned by the Law, e.g. the list in

Lev. 18, and may have included acts associated with idolatry among the Canaanites (ibid. p 45). Others see this word as defined in the parenthetical expansion, above. See the discussion of  *pornos*  in 12:16. This word is in the lists of prohibitions in Acts 21:25, 1 Cor. 5:9-11, Eph. 5:5 and 1 Tim. 1:10. The association of  *pornos*  with idol worship in Rev. 2:14 (referencing Balaam – Nu. 25:1; 31:16) and Rev. 2:20 (referencing Jezebel – 1 Ki. 16:31) strengthens the understanding of this warning as primarily having a religious significance.

Another interpretation of this verse may be that the author is speaking both to

physical relationships and at the same time to the polarized practices of the various groups of Gnostics. Some promoted asceticism (to which the first part of the verse would apply) and others promoted licentiousness (to which the second half of the verse would apply).

5. **[Have] behavior** (the turn, mode or manner of living) **[that is] without love of silver** (= fondness for money), **constantly contenting ourselves** (sufficing; warding-off for ourselves) **in and by the things being continuously present** (being at the side), **for He Himself has said,**

**"I can (or: could; would) by no**

**means let you go** (or: let up on you; send you back; release my grip on you), **neither by any means may** (or: could; would) **I leave you down within** (= forsake or fail you)," [Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5]

Notice that the first admonition is directed toward **behavior**, or manner of living. A paraphrase could be: "Do not live your life for money, but rather, live your life with a generous attitude, being liberal in your financial dealings with others." This may also imply having a habit of giving. Jesus sent out his disciples with these instructions, **"You folks receive** (or:

received) **freely** (as a gift; = without cost), [so] **give freely** (as a gift; = without charge). **You should not be procuring or acquiring gold, nor yet silver, nor even copper into your belts or girdle purses"** (Matt. 10:8-9).

Matt. 6:19-34 gives a good expansion of the overall thought of this verse. Paul expressed it this way,

**"Do not be habitually worried, anxious or overly concerned about anything.... I learned and so know to be self-sufficient** (to be contented by warding-off my own [needs]; or:

to have independent provisions)  
**within whatever circumstances  
or situations [that] I am...  
within everything and within  
the midst of all things (or:  
among all people), both to be  
(or: [how] to be) habitually  
feeding until satisfied, and to  
be (or: as well as [how] to be)  
habitually hungry; both to be  
(or: [how] to be) constantly  
and excessively abounding  
(continuously surrounded by  
more than enough), and to be  
(or: as well as [how] to be)  
repeatedly in need (or:  
lacking)." (Phil. 4: 6, 11, 12)**

This thought is also presented in 1 Tim. 6:6-10,

**"Now the Reverence** (or: devoutness and standing in awe of the ease and well-being associated with God; virtuous conduct for goodness, that is in true relation to God) **is a great providing of supply** (or: means of acquiring; furnishing and supplying to one's self; or: capital) **along with a contented self-sufficiency from independent means....**

**So, continuously holding** (or: having) **nourishments** (foods; sustenance) **and effects of**

**coverings** (clothing or shelter)  
**we will be defended, made a  
match for, and warded off by  
these things** (or: we shall be  
contentedly satisfied with and  
sufficed in these things)....  
**for a root of all the bad things**  
(the worthless qualities; the  
injurious situations; the poor  
craftsmanship; the ugly  
personalities; the malicious  
desires) **is the fondness of  
silver** (= love of money; =  
covetousness)..." Cf vss. 17-19  
of this same passage.

**6. so that we, being constantly  
cheerfully courageous, [are able] to be**

**habitually saying,**

**"The Lord [= Yahweh] [is] a Helper (One who runs to the aid of those who cry for help) for, to and with me, and I shall not fear (be afraid). What shall a human do to me (make for me; accomplish in me; perform for me)?"** [Ps. 118:6]

Confidence in the Lord is also expressed in Ps. 27:1. Such confidence is a source for being **cheerfully courageous** within all the situations of our lives. Note the "way of life" that is indicated here: **"habitually saying, "The Lord [= Yahweh] [is] my Helper (One who runs to the aid of those who cry for help)..."**

With this habitual practice, "It is therefore possible to face life with cheerfulness, *i.e. confidently* (vs. 6), and openly to confess that, with the Lord at one's side, there is nothing to fear and no one who can harm us" (Stibbs, *ibid.* p 1216). The word **Helper** is best understood in the parenthetical definition. This is an amazing picture of our God. The personal pronoun "**me**" is in the dative case (not the possessive genitive, which would read "my" – He does not "belong" to us). But He is a **Helper** "for us" and "to us." He is the Paraclete. But another picture emerges here with the dative of association indicated by the preposition "**with.**" This

portrays Him as One who runs **with us**, as we run to the aid of those who cry for help.

The personal pronoun "**me**" in the dative is again seen in the last statement. With the amplified meanings of *poieo*, we get the expanded applications of the final Greek phrase. Without the negative affirmation "**I shall not fear**," the thought "**do to me**" expresses fear of actions against us, while "make for me" expresses a fear of trusting in other people; "accomplish in me" can express doubt about trusting others to train or educate us, while "perform for me" could express lack of confidence in others' abilities to do what we have

asked of them. At the same time, because of not fearing, the final question can be seen as surveying the array of positive possibilities that come to mind: what can others do for me? what can the input of others do in me? what can my co-workers perform for me? With the Lord as our **Helper**, the possibilities are endless.

**7. You folks be habitually mindful of those belonging to, and from, you folks – of those habitually leading the way: whoever has spoken or now speaks God's word (or: the message which is God and has God's character) to and among you – continually gazing upward upon (or: reviewing and making**

close observation of) **the walking-out of [their] behavior** (or: conduct), **whose faith, trust and loyalty be constantly imitating.**

The imperative to **be mindful** carries both a corporate and an individual responsibility. We must "fill in the blanks" in regard to what the writer meant, but prayer, gratitude and material support would certainly fill those blanks. Notice that these speakers and teachers were a part of the group, and were perhaps a "group" themselves, since the author uses the plural. From the phrasing of the Greek, some of these may have gone out of the community as missionaries. These folks **led the way.**

They led by their **behavior and conduct**. They led by their **faith, trust and loyalty**. They were worthy of **imitation**. Paul said, "**Progressively come to be** (or: Keep on becoming) **my imitators** (ones who copy or mimic me)" – 1 Cor. 4:16; but in 11:1 he qualified this: "... **correspondingly as I, myself, also [am] of Christ** (or: of [the] Anointing)." The KJV unfortunately rendered the verb as "Be ye **followers** of me..." This is a mistranslation. We are to imitate Paul in the way that he followed Jesus. But we follow Jesus, or are led of the Spirit; we do not follow a person. Those who had **spoken God's word** had been **habitually leading the way** by **HOW** they

themselves were loyal to Christ and to His body, and **HOW** they trusted the Lord, and **HOW** they had faith in God, and **HOW** they figuratively washed the feet of others (= served them) – John 13:14-15. They also led by speaking the message from God, and this message was Jesus Christ. The message always pointed to the Shepherd of the sheep (vs. 20, below).

The verb *hegeomai* means "**to lead the way**," or "to take the lead [as on a Path]." In this verse, its form is a **plural** (i.e., more than one!) present participle. The common translations render this phrase "your leaders," but the noun (a guide; one who leads the way –

*hegemon*) is not used here. Keep in mind that the gatherings were "house gatherings" of an association of students of Jesus Christ – a covenant community.

**8. Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and on into the ages,**

(or: Jesus [is and continues being] Christ [= the Messiah] – the Man Himself {or: the Very One}: yesterday as well as today, and even into the midst of the ages,)

This statement is one of the most profound statements of the NT, and one of the most important in regard to the Anointed One: the Christ, the Messiah. But rather than seeing this verse as a

"stand-alone" aphorism, I have connected it with the thoughts expressed in vs. 9, below, inserting the word "[so]" (as does the NEB & NLT). You will notice that there is no expressed verb in this verse, so the copula "[is]" is traditionally inserted after the word Christ. In the parenthetical expansion I have offered the option of placing this inserted verb between the words Jesus and Christ, and expanding it as a present tense of the Greek, as it would have been if the writer had expressed it here. With this reading, the author is telling them that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Very One, and they should not look for another. Jesus, the Man Himself, is

the One of whom this letter is speaking – the One that has brought the Superior arrangement to mankind.

The phrase "**the same**" is *ho autos*.

Optional renderings are: the Very One; the Man (from the masculine *ho*)

Himself. These three options give us the semantic range of this phrase, with the latter two expressing the intensive and emphatic force of *autos*. But most scholars favor "**the same**." The meaning normally derived from this is that Jesus Christ does not change, but remains "**the same**." So it follows that as he was as the historical Jesus (the Anointed Savior), and as He is as the risen Christ (the Anointed Savior and Deliverer), so

He will be (the Anointed Savior) "**on into the ages.**" This implies that He will be saving people and delivering them throughout all the coming ages. So while folks who took "the mark of the beast" are being examined and tested (having the "touchstone applied to them") in the Fire of the Lamb's Deity – "**on into the ages of the ages**" (Rev. 14:10-11) – the Lamb of God will continue taking away the sin of this aggregate of humanity (John 1:29). [The remaining as a Savior provides for the time spoken of by Paul in Rom. 11:23,

**"Now they also, if they should not persistently remain in the lack of faith and trust (or:**

unbelief) **THEY will be grafted in, for God is able** (capable; is constantly powerful) **to graft them back in again!"** – and keep in mind Paul's conclusion in vs. 26.]

The central message of the book of Revelation is the reign of the Lamb, and His ultimate victory over all. The final outcome will be as described in the vision of Rev. 5:13,

**"And all creation** (or: every creature) **which exists within the sky** (or: atmosphere; heaven), **and on the earth, even down under the earth** (or: ground; soil), **as well as**

**which is upon the sea – even  
all things (the whole;  
everything) within them – I  
heard repeatedly saying,**

**'The blessing and the  
honor and the glory  
(good reputation) and  
the strength (might)  
[are] in (by; for; to;  
with) the One  
continuously sitting  
upon the throne, and in  
(by; to; for) the little  
Lamb, on into the ages  
of the ages.'**"

The first half of this verse displays a first century understanding of the totality

of creation, and all who inhabit this three-tiered universe. This is a visionary snap-shot both of what now is, and of what every creature's destiny will be in the ages to come.

Our verse here, 13:8 above, with its **"yesterday and today and on into the ages,"** calls to mind Rev. 1:8,

**"I am continuously (or: repeatedly) the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord [= Christ or Yahweh] God, 'the One continuously being, even the One Who was and continued being, and the One presently and continuously (or: progressively) coming and**

**going, the Almighty."**

(or: The Owner is laying out these thoughts: "I Myself exist being the Alpha and the Omega – the continuously existing God, even the One Who continued existing [as] Being, as well as the One habitually being on the go and repeatedly moving about – the All-Strong.")

**9. [so] do not be carried aside** (or: swept away) **by various and strange** (or: with many-colored [as in tapestries], intricate and foreign) **teachings. You see, [it is] beautiful** (fine; ideal; admirably proportionate) **for the heart** (= core of our being) **to**

**be continuously made firm with a fixed footing by Grace, whose source is joy and which comes with favor – not by (or: in; with) foods (= rules and regulations pertaining to eating or what is edible), in which those [thus] walking about (= occupying themselves) were not increased (or: = which have not helped or benefited those who follow this way of life).**

The first clause is very similar to Eph. 4:14 and it is the logical conclusion of vs. 8. Because of Whom He is and because He remains **the same**, don't be swept off your course by new, exotic or secret teachings – no matter how wonderful they may sound.

The next statement points the listener to the gospel of grace. Rather than being **carried aside**, it is "**beautiful** (fine; ideal; admirably proportionate) **for the heart** (= core of our being) **to be continuously made firm with a fixed footing by Grace, whose source is joy and which comes with favor.**" Pause and consider what our writer has just said: the core of our being (our mind and affections) is to constantly be made firm, with a fixed footing. How? By the power and influence of the **Grace** that Jesus brought.

He is again setting up another argument for the new, over against the dark backdrop of the old. John instructs us

that the Law – with its dietary rules and sacrifices – was given by Moses, "**yet grace and truth are birthed** (or: joyous favor and reality came to be) **through Jesus Christ**" (John 1:17). Our very stability in Christ has its **source** in **joy**, and "**comes with favor.**" This expanded rendering derives from the fact that *charis* (grace; favor) and *chara* (joy) are both cognates of the same verb *chairō* (to be full of joy; to be joyful; to rejoice). His grace and favor are flavored with joy. Isa. 12:2-3 proclaims,

"For You, LORD, are my vigour  
and song, Ever-living! And You  
are a Saviour to me!"

So draw water with joy from the

Wells of Salvation!" (Fenton)

It was prophesied in Isa. 55:12, "For with rejoicing shall you go forth, and in peace shall you be escorted" (CVOT), and then in 61:7, "... and age-lasting rejoicing shall become theirs."

He next brings the contrast of ritual religion, citing **foods** as the figure for the whole system (and setting up the conclusion of the argument in the context of the Day of Atonement, once again) through which "**those [thus] walking about** (= occupying themselves) **were not increased** (or: = which have not helped or benefited those who follow this way of life)."

10. **We continue having an altar from**

**out of which those who continue habitually serving in the Tabernacle (= those involved with the whole ceremonial economy) do not have authority (or: right; privilege) to eat.** We have a different altar than that from which those under the old covenant were able to eat. We partake of Jesus Christ (John 6:53-58), being joined to the Vine (John 15:1ff) – two different but complementary metaphors. We derive our life from Him. Those who remain unconvinced about Jesus being the Messiah are unable to eat His bread and His wine due to their lack of faith and their inability to believe – **"for until this very day the same head-covering**

(veil) **continues remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **upon the reading of the old covenant** (arrangement; thorough placement) – **it** [i.e., the reading of the old, or the old covenant itself] **continues not being uncovered or unveiled"** (2 Cor. 3:14).

Our altar is within the temple of the new covenant: the called-out communities. We eat from the altar that is within each of us as we partake of the Spirit of Christ that is within each member while **"being continuously fitted and framed together** (made a common joint by a word; laid out and closely joined together) **and constantly being knit together and caused to mount up**

**united through every fastening (or: joint) of the supply of rich furnishings (or: through every assimilation of the full supply of funds; through every touch {kindling; setting on fire} of the completely supplied requirements)" – Eph. 4:16.**

**11. For you see, the bodies of those animals, whose blood is still repeatedly being brought [some MSS add: concerning sin] into the set-apart (or: holy) places by means of the chief priest, are habitually being burned down outside of the Camp.**

The setting is the Day of Atonement and his reference here is to Lev. 16:27

**12. Wherefore Jesus also suffered**

(and/or: had experiences of His bodily senses and emotions) **outside of the gate** [*p*46 and others: the Camp], **so that He may set-apart** (or: would make holy and sacred) **the People through His own blood.**

Thus, this was the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement (*cf* the presentations of this in ch. 9, above). This was the final sacrifice of the yearly cycle, and the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as Booths, and as Ingatherings) immediately followed. We saw this last feast begin following the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts. The whole cycle of Israel's yearly cultus was compressed into this one day: the Day of

the Lord in which the Messiah bore the judgment of all mistakes and errors, becoming "sin" for us (2 Cor. 5:21) **"through His own blood"** (*cf* 9:12, above). The blood of His cross fulfilled all of the feasts and all of the sacrifices, and thus put an end to all of them. This act of our new Chief Priest, who is in the line and succession (or, order) of Melchizedek, was the goal to which the Law and the prophets all pointed. This picture of Jesus suffering **"outside of the gate/camp"** speaks of the work of the cross being for all mankind, not just Israel.

**13. Now then, we can keep on coming out** (or: should be progressively going

out) **toward Him – outside of the camp – habitually bearing His reproach** (= the censure and disgrace which He bore; or: the insult which pertains to Him).

This was a call to participate in His sacrifice, and also to leave Judaism (or: religion), and thus to bear the same reproach and insults that He bore; it is also a call to bear away from them the mistakes and failures of other people – John 20:23. We are called to take our stand with Him, as Paul wrote in Rom. 12:1,

**"Consequently, brothers, I am repeatedly calling you folks alongside to exhort, implore and encourage you, through**

**God's compassions to stand your bodies alongside** (or: to set or place your bodies beside) **[the] Well-pleasing, Set-apart** (Holy; Different-from-the-usual), **Living Sacrifice by God** (or: in God; for God; to God; with God), **[this being] your sacred service which pertains to thought, reason and communication** (or: your reasoned and rational service; the logical and Word-based service from you folks)."

We are simply to proclaim our identity with Him and with the sacrifice made by God in Jesus Christ. [note: see the

article "Go Outside the Camp...

Bearing..." at the end of these comments  
on Hebrews]

14. **For you see, we are not continuously holding** (having; possessing) **a remaining** (abiding; permanent) **city here, but rather we are progressively seeking for** (or: continuously searching upon) **the impending one** (the one that is presently about to be [here]).

This statement calls to mind what the author said in 11:8-10, above. Abraham,

"... **sojourned** (resided as an alien in a foreign country; lived alongside as a temporary inhabitant) [**settling**] **into the**

**land of the Promise as not his own (as belonging to another), dwelling in tents... [and] continued taking with the hand from out of (or: reaching in and receiving, then taking away from within) the city continuously having the foundations – whose Craftsman (or: Technician; Artisan) and skilled Worker for the people (or: Producer; Architect) [is] God."**

They did not have a physical city, but were constantly seeking "**the set-apart (or: holy) city, a new Jerusalem, continuously (or: progressively) descending from out of the**

**atmosphere** (or: presently stepping down out of the midst of the sky; or: steadily stepping in accord, forth from heaven), **[coming] from God...**" (Rev. 21:2) That city is the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9b-10ff). It is composed of people, as symbolized by the names of the twelve tribes (vs. 12) written in the twelve gates, and by the names of the twelve folks that were sent forth from the Lamb, written in the twelve foundations (vs. 14).

Also keep in mind 12:22, above, and Gal. 4:26. They were living during the time of the conjunction of two ages: the old was ending, and its final termination would soon be seen in the destruction of

Jerusalem in AD 70. The new has already begun, and they kept on seeking new manifestation of it and new additions to it (as was begun in Acts 2:41). We, today, continue **progressively seeking** folks within whom our Lord and King now resides.

"To the increase of the chieftainship [LXX: *arche*: sovereignty; beginning] and to the well-being, [there] will be no end [LXX: boundary]." – Isa. 9:7 (CVOT)

**15. Through Him, then, we may and should repeatedly** (or: continuously) **offer up a sacrifice of praise in God** (by God; to God; for God; with God)

**through all things** (or: through the midst of all [situations]) – **that is, a fruit of lips continuously saying the same things** (or: speaking alike) **in His Name** (by His Name; confessing to His Name; for the Name which is Him; or: = a product of speech which acknowledges His character, authority and identity). Here we see a life "in spirit and truth" referred to by Jesus in John 4:23-24. Observe that the author moves from speaking of the city to speaking of **Him**. We, the corporate city (among whom there is no separate sanctuary, for we dwell in Him: God is the sanctuary – Rev. 21:22), continuously offer God praise "**through Him**." This is done as

we pass "**through all things...** [and] through the midst of all [situations]." *cf* Rom. 11:36

The ideal that the author presents is "**continuously saying the same things** (or: speaking alike) **in His Name.**" This speaks of unity and agreement. But let us consider the options and the potential interpretive paraphrase of this last phrase, "**in His Name.**" The Name is a figure for the Person. We act from being in Him. But we also act "by Him" – i.e., by His power and ability. Obviously we act "for" our Lord and King, and in our everyday speaking to people, we do it in a manner that is "confessing to His Name." We are His, and we behave like

it. This latter I expressed in the paraphrase, showing that the **fruit of our lips** (or, what we say) is "a product of speech which acknowledges His character, authority and identity."

The next three verses turn to other examples of "praise offerings" and spiritual sacrifices. Barclay observes that "the sacraments" of the church are not mentioned here, and do not seem to have a place in the author's scheme of covenant-community life (*cf.*: *ibid.* p 198).

**16. Now be not forgetful of well-doing** (performing well; producing or constructing goodness; doing good deeds of ease; creating well-being) **and of**

**partnership** (common-being/existence; community; participation; having things in common; fellowship; sharing and contributing), **for by** (or: in) **such sacrifices God is continuously well pleased.**

The sacrifices have been replaced by a way of life that expresses love that is embodied in action. The verb **well-doing** is the common word *poieo* prefixed by the particle *eu-* which gives the descriptive words "well, goodness and ease." What is commonly called "the Gospel" is the word that means "message" (*angelia*) prefixed by this same particle *eu-* which gives us the word "evangel," or literally, the message

of goodness, ease and well-being. We are to be "doing, performing, constructing, producing, creating" the gospel. The evangel is not just a thought, an idea, a belief; it is a community of the Anointed One that lives out the essence of who God is.

Take note of the semantic range of **partnership** (*koinonia*): common-being; common-existence (from the element *on*) – it is this essence that creates both family, and by extension, community. From there we have participation, the having of things in common (whether of goods, situations or experiences), which creates fellowship that is expressed in sharing and contributing to the common

good.

**17. Be constantly persuading yourselves by (or: Be progressively having confidence in and continue being convinced by) those folks normally taking the lead among you folks, and continue humbly yielding under (or: giving way to or making way for) [situations or people] while coming under [His] likeness, for you see, these same folks are habitually awake and vigilant (abstaining from sleep to watch) over (or: on behalf of) your souls (your inner lives; or: the people among you folks), as those who will constantly be rendering a word (an account or an accounting), so that they**

**can** (or: would) **be habitually doing** (or: performing; producing) **this with gracious joy – and not be constantly groaning** (= complaining), **for that [would be] detrimental and unprofitable** (literally: not paying taxes or expenses) **for you!**

The imperative verb in the first clause is either middle or passive. My first renderings are middle from considering that the object of the verb is the same group alluded to in vs. 7, and once again mental action is being addressed. See the discussion in vs. 7 of "**taking the lead.**" The next verb is the present active of *hupeiko* and is used only here in the NT. In secular literature it referred to

yielding under a situation, or withdrawing from a position. The verb is formed from *eikō* (shrink back; make way for; withdraw; retire) prefixed by *hup-* (under). The picture is of humble yielding. But there is no direct object to this verb, so I have suggested "**[situations or people]**" as possible scenarios.

An interesting back story of this verb is that *eikō* is an old form from which was derived *eikōn*, and it is easy to see the similarity of the words. *Eikōn* is our word "likeness; image." With this in mind, recall that Paul instructs us that "**For the [aforementioned] freedom, Christ immediately set us free**" (Gal.

5:1), so subservience into bondage is not in view for the follower of Christ. But what is in view is to become – through the Spirit of Christ – an "image-bearer" of God (Gen. 1:26). So I have conflated the secular meaning of the word with the spiritual end in view: to "**come under [His] likeness,**" which is another sense of this word – for "yielding or giving place to" is what we are called to do as we obey the leading of the Spirit as sons of God. The core of this verb is the image of how the Image-Maker wants us to be, or to do.

The folks that are **normally taking the lead** in following after Christ continue awake, while watching over us, so that

we will be conformed to His image (2 Cor. 3:18). These folks do this "**as those who will be rendering a word** (an account or an accounting)," which means that our Lord and Master expects people who have influence upon others to be reliable and accountable (*cf* Paul's words to those who build upon the foundation of Christ in folks – 1 Cor. 3:9-17), but at the same time "**so that they can** (or: would) **be habitually doing** (or: performing; producing) **this with gracious joy.**" If they performed with **constant groaning** it would be of no help to those who were the recipients of their "good works" of "wood, hay and stubble."

**18. Be continuously thinking, speaking and acting toward having things go well (or: projecting goodness and ease; praying) concerning us, for we have been persuaded that we have a beautiful consciousness (a fine and ideal share in knowledge; or: a sound and noble conscience), setting our will to behave ourselves beautifully (in a good way; ideally; soundly; honorably) in all things and among all people.**

What is commonly translated "praying" is more holistic than is normally taught. The root of the verb is *echō* (to have; to hold; to possess). Prefixed to this is our particle *eu-* (well-being; goodness; ease); prefixed to *eu-* is *pros* (toward;

with a view to). *Echō* is not necessarily just a thinking or speaking verb, but can also be transitive – especially in its sense of "holding." So the verb *proseuchomai* can be an internal or a spoken projection of thoughts and words that impart goodness, ease and well-being to the recipient(s). It can also be an action that we take on behalf of people or situations. Our author speaks in the imperative, instructing them to make this a way of life: do it **continuously** on behalf of the writer and his or her companions (or, local community).

We next have the same verb that we encountered in vs. 17, here in the

passive. The writer and friends "**have been persuaded that they have a beautiful consciousness.**" This would imply that they did not have a consciousness of the ugly, of the base, or of sin. They were thinking on

**"as much as is true** (or: as many things as are genuine and real), **as many as [are] awe-inspiring** (serious; respectable; noble; dignified by holiness), **as much as [is] rightwised** (put right; fair, equitable; just; in right relationship within the Way pointed out), **as many as [are] pure and innocent, as much as [is] affection-inducing**

(friendly; directed toward what is liked; lovable or lovely; agreeable; well-regarded; winsome; engendering fondness; attractive; kindly disposed; loveable), **as many as [are] well-spoken-of** (commendable; reputable; of good report; the effect of fair speaking; renowned), **if [there is] any excellence and nobleness** (virtues of braveness, courage, good character, quality, self-restraint, magnificence, benevolence, reliability)" – Phil. 4:8.

Looking at this noun literally, we find

that they had "a fine and ideal share in knowledge." This would have referred to their knowledge of Christ and of His plan of the ages. Or, it could refer to a knowledge of the secrets of His reign (Matt. 13:11). If they were meaning "a sound and noble conscience," it would speak to the character of Christ within them by the Spirit that had cleansed and renewed them with His image.

The last clause, "**setting our will to behave ourselves beautifully** (in a good way; ideally; soundly; honorably) **in all things and among all people**" reveals that they have been set free from self-centeredness and had been given a heart to live beautifully: in everything and

among everybody. These are the effects of grace. The dative *pasin* (all) is both neuter and masculine, so I rendered it both ways.

**19. Yet I am more exceedingly calling you alongside, urging and encouraging you to do (or: perform) this, to the end that I can (or: would) more quickly be restored (or: returned) to you.**

The "**this**" refers back to the imperative of the first clause of vs. 18. He seeks their solidarity with him in their continued "pros-eu-chomai-ing." He is calling them to his side so that they could be his paraclete by "**doing**" this. His desire was to "**more quickly be restored, or returned**" to them. From

this we can understand that he (or, she) had a prior relationship with them. "His benediction [which follows] is remarkable for its significant details and its comprehensive sweep; again it is quite Pauline in character" (Stibbs, *ibid.* p 1217; brackets mine).

**20. Now may the God who is Peace** (or: who is the origin of and has the character and qualities of harmony [= shalom]), **the One at one point leading our Lord** (Master; Owner) – **Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, the Great One – back up again out from the midst of dead folks,**

The word **Peace** is in the genitive case and I give it first as apposition – giving

a definition of the quality of God. He is not a God of war, but one Who creates shalom: prosperity, wholeness and integrity. He transforms chaos into an adorned order of beauty that is very good. The parenthetical expansion presents two other functions of the genitive whose renderings also make sense of the Greek. Next the author identifies the action of this God: "**the One at one point leading our Lord** (Master; Owner)." The Father first led Him to the cross, and then led Him "**back up again out from the midst of dead folks.**" Here he affirms the resurrection, and makes it clear that this was the work of God.

We see a harking back to a function of the Messiah in relation to His followers (the sheep) as Jesus described Himself in John 10:11,

**"I Myself am the Ideal Shepherd** (the Beautiful Protector and Provider of the sheep). **The Ideal** (Fine; Beautiful) **Shepherd continually places His soul over the sheep** (or: habitually sets [*p*45 & others: gives] His soul-life and His entire being for, and on behalf of the situation of, the sheep)."

In this, He was and is **"the Great One."**  
In John 10:16 Jesus made the prediction

that Paul rehearsed in Eph. 2:13-19.

Jesus said,

**"... they [other MSS: it; there] will become One Flock, One Shepherd."**

**21. at once render you folks thoroughly equipped (fitted; adapted) in the midst of all good and in every virtue, immersed in, and in union with, the blood of a thorough arrangement (or: a covenant; a deposit which moves throughout in every direction; a placing through the midst; or: a will and testament) pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age (or: an eonian – through the ages – settlement), in order to at once do (produce; perform) His**

**will** (the effect of His intent and purpose; the result of His design and pleasure) – **progressively creating** (doing; forming; producing) **within you folks and in union with you people** [other MSS: in us] **the well-pleasing and satisfying [result] in His presence and sight, through Jesus Christ, in Whom** (and: for Whom, by Whom, and to Whom) **[is] the glory** (the reputation and the manifestation which calls forth praise) **on into the ages of the ages. It is so** (Count on it; Amen)!

Verses 20 and 21 are one statement, so we pick up the author's thoughts mid-stream in the first clause of 21. One of the first things to note is the punctiliar

action (**at once**) of the aorist tense, giving a snap-shot picture of the result of this all-at-once action: "**thoroughly equipped.**" The "finished" work of Christ and our being joined to Him (John 15:1ff), as well as being "in Him" (as Paul frequently states), is all the "equipping" that we need. Paul discusses the "grace-effects" (commonly rendered "gifts") in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. There he gives examples of "the body" being fully equipped. The optative mood is expressed by "**may**" in the first phrase of vs. 20, but belongs to our verb here. This verb has the intensifier *kata-* prefixed to it, and thus do we get "**thoroughly** equipped." This

benediction is a blessing, so it takes the form of an optative (**may**) instead of the indicative mood (statement of fact). The sphere of this equipping and fitting is "**in the midst of all good and in every virtue.**" The Life of Christ is the source of goodness and virtue, and it comes into us via His Word and Spirit. When we are "in Christ" we are in all His goodness and virtue. The purpose for this transaction in the Spirit is to enable us to live the life of the Anointing. Some of these Hebrews were still on milk (5:12, 13, above). They needed this blessing in order to come,

"... **into** (or: unto) [**the**]  
**measure of [the] stature** (full

age; prime of life) of the **entire content which comprises the Anointed One**" (Eph. 4:13).

The next phrase is normally found in vs. 20, but it seems best to associate the **"blood of a thorough arrangement"** with the verb **"render... fully equipped"** since He **"sprinkled [our hearts] from a misery-gushed consciousness of what is evil or unserviceable"** (10:22, above). This was the work of our Chief Priest (discussed in 9 and 10, above) – following His resurrection – and not the shedding of His blood on the cross. Thus, I have followed **"in the midst of all good and in every virtue"** with the phrase which gives an explanation of the

sphere of this goodness and virtue: being  
"immersed in, and in union with, the  
**blood of a thorough arrangement."** *cf*  
Matt. 26:28

This new "**arrangement**, covenant,  
settlement which was placed through the  
midst, etc.," pertains to the Age of the  
Messiah and has the qualities of that Age  
(which Jesus inaugurated at the cross).  
This has been the subject of this whole  
letter: the superior covenant in which  
everything is **better!** The parenthetical  
expansion of **arrangement** instructs us  
that it is "a deposit which moves  
throughout in every direction" – both  
within the community and within every  
particle of our being. We could say that

this affects our spiritual "DNA." This word can also be rendered "a placing through the midst." This placing and this deposit is God, and His Word is active and effective within and among us (Phil. 2:13). This is not just a legal transaction. It is a new creation based upon Grace and Love.

He thoroughly equips us **"in order to at once do** (perform; produce) **His will** – which is "the effect of His intent and purpose, and the result of His design and pleasure" (*thele-ma*). What this looks like is the **"progressively creating with them** [a corporate group] **the well-pleasing and satisfying [result] in His presence and sight.**" This result is the

well-pleasing life of Christ lived out through the community. It happens "**through Jesus Christ**" – through the work of His Spirit within and among us. This happens "**in His presence**" – which is right here with us.

The last phrase begins with **Whom** in the dative case. Thus do we have the options, **in Whom**, etc. Notice that again we have no copula and I have inserted "[is]" since this is a fact. The **glory, reputation and manifestation which calls for praise** all exist in Him, for Him, **by Him**, and return to Him. This exists **on into the ages of the ages** – which is a literal rendering – and we can count on it.

**22. Yet I am calling you alongside to aid and encourage** (or: I am performing as a paraclete for) **you, brothers** (= fellow believers; = my family).

**Progressively uphold the word of the encouraging calling-alongside for aid and exhortation** (or: the message which pertains to and has its origin in the Paraclete), **for I also send it to you through a brief letter.**

This letter presents the "**calling**," which is done to "**aid and encourage**" those that he regards as being his family: brothers, from being fellow believers in the Messiah. He refers to this writing as "**a brief letter**," which Barclay reports Moffatt as saying that "you can read it

aloud in less than an hour" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 202). He characterizes it as "**the word of the encouraging calling-alongside for aid and exhortation** (or: the message which pertains to and has its origin in the Paraclete)."

23. **Know** (or: Take note and be personally aware) [**that**] **our brother Timothy, has been released, with whom, if he may more quickly be going** (or: coming), **I will see you.**

24. **Greet and embrace all the folks taking the lead among you, and all the set-apart folks** (the holy ones; the saints). **Those from Italy** (or: The Italians [here]) **are constantly embracing and greeting you folks** (or:

Those [here] are now sending you greetings from Italy).

"These verses lend weight to the theory that Sha'ul [Paul] is the author of Messianic Jews [Hebrews]..." (Stern, *ibid.* p 724; brackets mine). Stern further points out that vs. 23 would indicate that the author was not in prison at that time. Furthermore, this indicates a working relationship between the author and Timothy.

Harvey makes an interesting observation: "Clement of Rome, writing to the church in Corinth in about the year AD 96, quoted the Letter to Hebrews. This makes it seem likely that the letter was written to Christians in Rome; in

which case it would have been natural for the writer, wherever he was, to convey the greetings of Italian friends to their kinsmen" (ibid. p 718). Notice the present tense of the verb in the last clause of vs. 24: "**constantly embracing and greeting.**" The verb strictly means "to embrace," and thus, "to greet." This not only gives us a picture of the custom of the day and culture, but the author is painting a picture of what is happening in the hearts of these Italians. They are mentally embracing these folks as they project their greetings through this letter. Not only that, the author also uses this word, asking the recipients to embrace one another as though it was him doing

the embracing. It is an expression of intimate solidarity.

**25. Grace and joyous favor [are] with all of you!**

This is more than closing of the letter, or a second benediction. It is a statement of the fact that God's Grace – the Superior arrangement – actually exists with all of them, and they live within it, for the Grace of God is the New Being in Jesus Christ: Grace is the new creation!

***ZZZZZZ***

## Go Outside the Camp... Bearing...

John 14:12, **"It is certainly true (Most assuredly; Amen; amen), I am saying to you folks, the one habitually trusting and progressively believing into Me, the works (actions; deeds) which I, Myself, am constantly doing (habitually performing; progressively making, constructing creating, forming) that one also will do (perform; make; create; form), and he will do greater than these, because I, Myself, am progressively journeying (traveling;**

going from this place to another) **toward** (or: facing) **the Father.**"

John 20:

**22. And saying this, He suddenly blows on, and says to, them** (or: He breathes within [them], so as to inflate them [note: same verb as used in Gen. 2:7, LXX], and is saying to them), **"Receive a set-apart spirit!** (or: Get [the] Holy Spirit!; Take the Sacred Breath!; or: Receive a sacred attitude),

**23. "If YOU folks should send away** (dismiss; allow to depart; forgive; pardon; divorce) **the mistakes** (sins; errors; failures) **of certain ones, they have been sent away for them** (or: have been and remain pardoned in them;

have been dismissed or divorced by them). **If you would continue holding fast and controlling** (or: should keep on grasping and exercising strength; or: can restrain, hinder, hold back) **those of certain ones, they have been and continue being held fast and controlled** (seized; grasped; restrained)." – [pause and consider this]

1 Cor. 12:

**25. to the end that there should be no tearing split, causing division, within the body, but rather that the members should constantly show the same care over, and have the same concern about, the welfare of ONE ANOTHER.**

**26. And further, whether one member is continuing to experience the effect of something, or constantly undergoes suffering, ALL the members continually experience the effect or the suffering together with [it]; or if a member is being constantly glorified or is progressively receiving a good reputation, ALL the members are continuously rejoicing together with [it].**

**Heb. 13:**

**8. Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and on into the ages,**

**(or: Jesus [is and continues being] Christ [= the Messiah] – the Man Himself {or: the Very**

One}: yesterday as well as today, and even into the midst of the ages,)

9. **[so] do not be carried aside** (or: swept away) **by various and strange** (or: with many-colored [as in tapestries], intricate and foreign) **teachings. You see, [it is] beautiful** (fine; ideal; admirably proportionate) **for the heart** (= core of our being) **to be continuously made firm with a fixed footing by Grace, whose source is joy and which comes with favor – not by** (or: in; with) **foods** (= rules and regulations pertaining to eating or what is edible), **in which those [thus] walking about** (= occupying

themselves) **were not increased** (or: = which have not helped or benefited those who follow this way of life).

**10. We continue having an altar from out of which those who continue habitually serving in the Tabernacle (= those involved with the whole ceremonial economy) do not have authority** (or: right; privilege) **to eat.**

**11. For you see, the bodies of those animals, whose blood is still repeatedly being brought [some MSS add: concerning sin] into the set-apart (or: holy) places by means of the chief priest, are habitually being burned down outside of the Camp.**

**12. Wherefore Jesus also suffered**

(and/or: had experiences of His bodily senses and emotions) **outside of the gate** [p46 and others: the camp], **so that He may set-apart** (or: make holy and sacred) **the People through His own blood.**

[comment: this was a fulfillment of the Day of Atonement]

**13. Now then, WE can keep on coming out** (or: should be progressively going out) **toward Him – outside of the camp – habitually bearing His reproach** (= the censure and disgrace which He bore; or: the insult which pertains to Him).

This was a call to participate in His sacrifice (i.e., live a cruciform life), and also to leave Judaism (or: the Law; or:

religion), and thus to bear the same reproach and insults that He bore. It is also a call to bear away from people their mistakes and failures – John 20:23, above – to forgive their sins, their deviations and their errors. This is the work of the covenant communities.

Recall Rom. 15:

**1. Now we ourselves, the able ones** (the powerful people), **owe and thus are constantly obliged** (or: are continually indebted) **to pick up and habitually carry** (or: embrace) **the weaknesses** (the areas of being without strength) **of the unable ones** (the powerless or

disabled people; the incapable),  
**and not to constantly be  
pleasing ourselves.**

Does this admonition not fly in the face of our self-centered and "be on top" culture? Does it not speak to our corporate (notice the "we") responsibility? Does it not describe a cruciform life?

**2. Let each one of us be  
habitually pleasing to the near  
one (or: be continuously  
accommodating for [his]  
neighbor or associate),  
[leading] into The Good,  
toward building the House (or:  
unto [his] good, toward**

edification).

This is putting other people before ourselves. Here, Paul addresses the individual within the community, and the purpose of this focus is to "build [God's] House" – the Body of Christ. This expands The Good (Christ) and **"goes on growing and increasing God's growth"** (Col. 2:19).

**3. For Christ also did not please Himself** (or: For even Christ does not make accommodations for Himself), **but rather, just as it has been written, "The insults** (unjustifiable verbal abuses; reproaches) **of those habitually**

**insulting You fell (or: fall) upon Me."** [Ps. 69:10]

We have repeatedly come through seasons of political verbal abuses. As agents of the Messiah, continuing the work that He did – and yet does, through us – can we take all these negative commentaries INTO ourselves and cast them into the lake of holy Fire that dwells in the core of our being (Heb. 12:29) and let it there be consumed out of our environment – instead of passing-on those emails, and thus polluting others?

In closing, let us consider the clause in Heb. 13:9, above, "**to be continuously made firm with a fixed footing by**

**Grace, whose source is joy and which comes with favor..."**

In the phrase, "by Grace, whose source is joy and which comes with favor," I give the association of these words, **grace** and **joy**, for they are of the same word family and are closely associated: CHAIRO (cairw): to rejoice, be glad, be joyful

CHARA (cara): joy, gladness, rejoicing

CHARIS (cariV): grace, joyous favor

CHARIS-MA (carisma): a result or an effect of grace; a benefit; a gift from favor

Joy to the World, His grace has come!  
The result of His grace (CHARIS-MA), can be seen in the following verses:

Rom. 1:11; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6; 1 Cor.  
1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 31; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim.  
1:6

Let us go outside the camp of our  
personal communities, bearing His grace  
and forgiveness to the culture that  
surrounds us. Christ is in His temple. We  
are the light of the world: let us shine!

COMMENTS ON  
GALATIANS

[Ch1](#) [Ch2](#) [Ch3](#) [Ch4](#) [Ch5](#) [Ch6](#)

[THE RICH MAN and](#)

[LAZARUS](#)

[UNDERSTANDING.. 319](#)

[RIGHTEOUSNESS](#)

[\(JUSTICE; FAIRNESS\)](#)

[Galatians in Second Century](#)

[Exegesis](#)

Robinson (ibid.) sets the date of this

letter in late AD 56, but other scholars set the date as AD 52 (based upon the events of Acts 16-18), or even earlier. It is uncertain exactly who the intended first recipients of this letter were. In Paul's time, Galatia was a Roman province which included the area of central Asia Minor that was invaded by the Gauls (the *Galatai*) in the third century BC as well as the southern areas (made a part of the province by the Romans in 25 BC) which included parts of Pisidia and Lycaonia (e.g., Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe). From Paul's detailed references to the OT, we can assume that the group to whom he was writing would have been familiar with it

and with the Jewish religion. Therefore, since 6:13 reveals that these folks were not circumcised, we can assume that they were Gentile followers of Jesus, the Messiah, who had been allowed to attend the local synagogues and hear the Scriptures read, but had stopped short of becoming full proselytes.

The purpose of the letter seems to have been to present a vigorous apologetic to the influence of Judaizers (Jewish Christians who felt that some or all of the old covenant religious practices – symbolized in this letter by the ritual of circumcision – were still binding upon the NT community). Paul urges them not to give up the freedom that they have

received in Christ (5:1-12) by mixing in the bondage that comes with keeping the Law (chs. 3-4). The message is primarily about inclusion in the Messiah's new covenant by faith and trust, not by the practices of the old covenant. A synopsis can be seen in 3:7-9,

**7. Be assured consequently, by your experiential knowledge and insight, (or, as an indicative: Surely you are coming to know) that the folks [springing] forth from out of the midst of faith (or: whose source is trust and confidence), these are Abraham's sons!**

**8. Now the Scripture – seeing before [as a picture] that God is progressively putting the nations in rightwised relationship** (setting the ethnic groups of non-Jews into the Way pointed out and freeing them from guilt) **from out of faith – announced to (or: for) Abraham beforehand the message of goodness, ease and well-being** (or: And further – the Scripture perceiving in advance and making provision that He is presently making the multitudes fair and equitable {or: =

including the Gentiles in the covenant} from trust and conviction as a source – God brought-before in Abraham the glad tidings of goodness {a gospel; an evangel}), **namely that,**

**"All the nations, ethnic groups and multitudes will be inwardly blessed** (will receive the Word of wellness, within; will participate within the Good Word) **in a union with you** (or: within you; in you; or: = in relation to you; or: = as in your case)." [Gen. 12:3; 22:18]

**9. So then, those from out of**

**faith** (or: = folks who are derived from trust and confidence and who come from a place of loyal allegiance) **are being constantly blessed** (repeatedly given the Word of wellness; continuously made to participate in the Good Word) **together with the full-of-faith Abraham** (or: the trusting, believing, convinced and loyal Abraham).

The new creation, the new people of God, has Abraham as its head and father, not Moses. They are **Abraham's sons**. In this presentation, Paul puts Abraham as the type of God, the Father, and Isaac

(Abraham's promised son) as the type of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the prophesied "Seed of Abraham." And now, God's family includes all races and nations.

In the introduction of his commentary on this letter, Donald Guthrie presents an important insight into the central issue,

"So long as all the believers were already circumcised [i.e., the earliest Christians] there was no critical problem [about circumcision]. It did not even dawn on them all at once that Christianity involved a totally different approach to the law. It was possible to continue under

the old legal obligations with the addition of the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. The radical nature of this Christian addition was not at first clear to their minds. It was not until the crisis had developed at Galatia that the serious character of the issue became clear. Paul had established Gentile churches and had himself not insisted on circumcision. It is important to recognize that the first and most important decision over the circumcision issue was taken, not in the Jerusalem church when the matter was discussed

in Council (Acts 15), but in the mind of Paul" (*The New Century Bible Commentary, Galatians*, Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publ. Co., 1973, p 12, brackets mine).

It was the recovery of the basic message of Galatians that spawned the Reformation. It deeply influenced Martin Luther. Unfortunately, by this time covenant inclusion was seen as an individual "act of faith," rather than the inclusive faith of Jesus, and His faithfulness to the Father on the cross. "Salvation" became an individual attainment rather than a historic act of God in delivering the collective. The

Reformation did not go far enough. The Judaizers won, within institutional Christianity. And so, Paul's message that is presented here needs to once again be "discovered." He put it succinctly in 2:16,

**16. having seen and thus knowing that humanity (or: mankind; or: a person) is not normally being put in right relationship**

(made fair and equitable; made free from guilt and set into the Way pointed out; rightwised and made to be a just one; = being

presently brought into  
covenant)

**from out of works of Law** (or:  
forth from a law's deeds or  
actions from custom), **but**  
**instead through Jesus Christ's**  
**faith** (or: faith that belongs to  
and originates in Christ Jesus),  
**and we ourselves trusted and**  
**believed into Christ Jesus, to**  
**the end that we would be put**  
**in right relationship**

(made to be just, fair  
and equitable; be  
released from guilt; be  
rightwised and placed  
into the Way pointed

out; also = be made a  
member of the  
covenant)

**from out of the midst of  
Christ's faith, as a source and  
sphere** (or: forth from trust and  
conviction, which are Christ), –  
**NOT from out of the midst of  
works of Law, as a source and  
sphere, because from out of  
the midst of works of Law**

(or: forth from a law's  
deeds or actions  
corresponding to  
custom; or: out of works  
which comprise [the]  
Law) "**no flesh** (=

person or human) **at all**  
**will be put in**  
**right relationship**

(made to be just, fair  
and equitable; be freed  
from guilt; be  
rightwised or turned in  
the right direction from  
being placed into the  
Way pointed out; = put  
in covenant)." [Ps.  
143:2]

Christ's faith had a corporate effect upon  
humanity. With the resurrection of Jesus,  
everything changed:

**"the original things** (the  
beginning [situations]; the

archaic and primitive  
[arrangements]) **passed by** (or:  
went to the side). **Consider!**  
**New things have come into  
existence** (have been birthed;  
or: It has become new things; or:  
He has been birthed and now  
exists being ones of a different  
kind, character and quality)" – 2  
Cor. 5:17b.

Or, as Paul says in Eph. 2:15,  
"**rendering useless** (nullifying;  
rendering down in accord with  
inactivity and unemployment)  
**the Law** (or: the custom; = the  
Torah) **of the implanted goal**  
(impartation of the finished

product within; inward  
directive) **consisting in decrees**  
(or: prescribed ordinances), **to**  
**the end that He may frame**  
(create; found and settle from a  
state of wildness and disorder)  
**The Two into One New** [p46 &  
others: common] **Humanity**  
**within the midst of, and in**  
**union with, Himself,**  
**continuously making**  
(progressively creating) **Peace**  
**and Harmony (= shalom)."**

The effect of this upon individuals  
comes,

**"each person within the effect**  
**of his or her own class or**

**division** (or: result of an ordered rank; effect of place or appointed position [in line]; result of the arranged [time] or order of succession)" – 1 Cor. 15:23.

In *Conflict & Community in Corinth, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Ben Witherington III makes a comparison of 2 Cor. chs. 10-13 with this letter which is instructive to our present investigation:

"Note how in Galatians 5-6 the syntax becomes more abrupt, the style becomes more violent, and *pathos* is in greater evidence than in Galatians 1-4. This

parallel is especially important since Galatians is an example of forensic rhetoric" (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995, p 338, n 32; emphasis original).

Keeping in mind the kind of letter that is before us should guide our understanding of the logic behind Paul's strategy as he presents his case to the believers in Galatia. He wants these folks to remain free in the freedom that Christ has brought (5:1 ff), and not to return to the slavery that comes with keeping the Law (i.e., the old covenant).

## Chapter 1

**1. Paul, one sent as a representative (emissary; envoy) – not with a commission from people, nor through a human, but rather through Jesus Christ, as well as Father God (or: through Jesus, [the] Anointed One, and God [the] Father), the One arousing and raising Him forth from out of the midst of dead folks –**

Paul makes it clear that he is neither an envoy from the called-out community in Jerusalem, nor a representative of any ethnic group, nor a disciple of just some "man," but rather, **"one sent as a representative... through Jesus**

**Christ"** with a commission from Him, as well as from God. Jesus and the Father are the source and the authority for what he teaches. It is Them that he represents, and for Whom he was sent as an emissary.

**2. and all the brothers** (= fellow believers) **together with me, to the called-out folks** (or: to the called-out communities and gatherings; to the summoned-forth congregations of people) **of [the province of] Galatia:** Nonetheless, Paul expresses his solidarity with fellow believers, and says here that what he will be writing comes with the agreement of the local group from where he sends this letter.

The plural noun *ekklesias* can be read "**called-out folks**," addressing the scattered multitude of individual believers in the various towns of the province, or it can be read as addressing the various covenant communities, collectively, within these towns. In reading the letter it would seem that he was writing to one particular congregation, but from his words here it is clear that his words were meant for all those within the entire province of Galatia, so he probably meant for this to be a circular letter that was to be copied and sent throughout the area.

3. **In, for and with you folks [are]** (or: To you people [be]) **grace and joyous**

**favor, as well as peace (= shalom),  
from God, our Father and Owner,  
Jesus Christ** (or: from our Father God,  
even [the] Lord, Jesus Christ; or: from  
God our Father, and [the] Master, Jesus  
[the] Anointed)

**4. – the One at one point giving  
Himself, over [the situation of]** (or: on  
behalf of; for the sake of; [p46, Aleph\*,  
A, D & other MSS read: concerning])  
**our failures** (situations and occasions of  
falling short or to the side of the target;  
deviations; mistakes; errors; sins) **so  
that He could carry us out from the  
midst of the present misery-gushing  
and worthless age**  
(or: bear us forth from the indefinite

period of time – characterized by toil,  
grievous plights and bad situations –  
having taken a stand in [our] midst; or:  
extricate us from the space of time  
having been inserted and now standing  
in union with base qualities),  
**corresponding to** (or: down from; in  
accord with; in line with; in the sphere  
and to the level of) **the effect of the  
will** (or: intent; purpose; design) **of our  
God and Father,**

**5. in Whom [is] the glory** (or: by Whom  
[is] the manifestation which calls forth  
praise; for Whom [is] the reputation;  
with Whom [comes] an appearance  
which creates and effects opinions in  
regard to the whole of human

experience) **on into the indefinite times of the ages** (or: into the [crowning and most significant] eons of the eons). **It is so!** (Count on it; Amen!)

Verse 3 either makes a statement of fact, or it is an impartation of "**grace and joyous favor**" to the recipients of this letter – a word of greeting which bears a blessing. The plural "**you folks**" is in the dative case, and since no preposition has been expressed, I have given the potential functions of this case which make sense of Paul's words. Because of the Christ event and the giving of God's Spirit, all humanity lives in the sphere of God's grace/favor and peace. It has come for them, and it abides with them.

God, "**our Father and Owner**," is the source of this goodness which came through Jesus. The positioning of "**our**" in this phrase, the absence of the definite article with the genitive nouns, and the translating of *kai* as either "**and**" or "even," all allow for the variances of rendering which I have presented of **God, Father, Owner/Lord/Master, and Jesus Christ/Anointed**. Our theology of God and Jesus will in the end guide which rendering we prefer. May His "Spirit" (not expressed in Paul's "formula," here) illumine us.

"**[T]he One at one point giving Himself**" (vs. 4) refers to the historical work of Jesus, the Messiah, as He

submitted to the death on the cross "**over [the situation of] our failures** (etc.)."

Let us note the corporate message in Paul's repeated use of plural pronouns in these verses: "you folks, our God, our failures, carry us out." He addresses them as a group again in vs. 6, "**you folks... calling you people.**" When Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt, He addressed their corporate situation and delivered them as a group. That was the significance of Passover: a lamb for a house; God's Lamb was for His house (humanity) – and to Paul it was revealed that this house included the Gentiles, as we see in Eph. 2:15, above.

Our being carried out is "**from the midst**

of the present misery-gushing and worthless age," or "from the indefinite period of time [i.e., the age of the Law]" that was characterized by "toil, grievous plights and bad situations." It took its stand in their midst – in the history of Israel. It has been inserted **"to the end that the effect of the fall to the side (or: so that the result of the offense and the stumbling aside) would increase to be more than enough (should greatly abound and become more intense)"** – Rom. 5:20 – "in accord with" God's intent and purpose. Paul was writing during the overlap of the ages, when the Jews and some Christians were still "standing in union with base qualities"

because of their adherence to the Law of the old arrangement. But our "extrication" was also **"corresponding to the effect of the will and design of our Father."** The prophesied time had arrived; His reign and kingdom had drawn near; the Promise had been given. "For Paul, the effect of Christ's self-sacrifice for our sins was not merely to cancel the effect of past misdoings, but to open up a new kind of existence: the new age looked forward to by Jewish thinkers had already begun..." (Harvey, *ibid.* p 601). The old age/arrangement was **"worthless"** because it **"continues not even once able** (or: still never has power) **at any point to perfect** (bring to

the goal and destiny, finish, complete or mature) **those folks repeatedly coming near** (approaching) **by offering the** [other MSS: their] **same sacrifices every year...**" (Heb. 10:1). We should note that this deliverance and salvation is not from some mythical "hell," but from the lost condition under the Law. These two verses encapsulate the message of goodness, ease and well-being (the "gospel"). He has reiterated the message of the coming of Christ to these folks at the very beginning of his letter. This brings from him the doxology that we read in vs. 5. The "**glory**" is **in, for, with and by "our God and Father,"** and this "manifestation which calls forth

praise" (i.e., Christ), continues "**the same**" (Heb. 13:8) "**on into the indefinite times of the ages** (or: into the [crowning and most significant] eons of the eons)." In reference to this last phrase, Guthrie remarks that it "expresses an undefinably extensive duration of time" (ibid. p 61). Paul's rhetoric sets a glorious background from which to contrast the dark charge against them in the following verses.

**6. I am constantly amazed** (or: I continue filled with wonder) **that you folks are so quickly being progressively transplanted** (or, as a middle voice: are thus now quickly transferring yourselves or changing your

stand) **from the One** (or: that [message]) **calling you people, within Christ's grace** (or: in [the] favor of the Anointed One), **on into a different sort of "message of goodness"** (unto a different evangel, "good news," or gospel; = into an imitation and alternative message of goodness, ease or well-being) – **which is NOT "another" one of the same kind** (= not just another version)!

"The letter has to deal with a crisis, and comes straight to the point" (Harvey, *ibid.*). They had been "**transplanted**" away from Christ. This is the opposite of "abiding in" the Vine (John 15:1 ff). No wonder Paul refers to this as a message

of "**a different sort**" – it transfers them away from "**Christ's grace**" and puts religious works and ceremonies in His place. The mixing of the Law and the old covenant's religious paradigm into the message of goodness, ease and well-being creates a different picture "**which is NOT 'another' one of the same kind** (= not just another version)!" As he shows in the following chapters, what these "**certain folks**" (vs. 7) were attempting to do was to rob them of their freedom and return them into bondage.

**7. But instead that there are certain folks – the ones constantly agitating** (stirring up; disturbing) **you folks – even repeatedly wanting** (or:

intending) **to alter and distort** (turn so as to change; pervert) **Christ's message of goodness, ease and well-being** (or: the good news which is the Anointed One; or: the evangel about and from the [Messiah]).

Here the scene calls to mind the situation that Judah addresses, "**some people came in unobserved, from the side... people continuously changing the grace and favor of God...**" (Judah 4). There it was "**licentiousness, as well as repeatedly denying and disowning our only Sovereign and Lord** (or: Supreme Ruler and Owner), **Jesus Christ** [= Messiah];" here it is legalists who are attempting to mix the old covenant with

the new. Both types of situations **"alter and distort Christ's message of goodness, ease and well-being."**

**8. However, even if we – or an agent from the atmosphere or sky (or: a messenger from out of the midst of heaven)! – should ever bring or announce something as "good news" (as the message of goodness; as being the evangel or gospel) to you folks which is to the side of that which we announce (or: is parallel to what we announced) to you folks in the message of goodness, ease and well-being, let it be placed on the altar before the Lord (set up as a result of a divine offering [i.e., to see if it is "accepted" by God, or**

"rejected," as Cain's was]; or, possibly: cursed).

Paul addresses the potential of deceptive visionary experiences – things that have plagued the called-out communities for centuries, and even to this day. But he even includes himself and his associates ("we") in this warning against an altered or distorted teaching about the Christ event, its effectiveness and the good news that was given to and through him. The issue upon which he focuses is circumcision, but in 5:3 he instructs them that this issue involves "**the whole Law.**" In 5:2 & 4 he shows that this "**yoke of slavery** (or: a cross-lever [of a pair of scales] whose sphere is

bondage)" – 5:1b – effects them to the extent that "**Christ will benefit [them] nothing** (will be of use to [them] [for] not one thing)," and that those who turn to the Law as a part of their relationship to God, and to others, will experience a fall "**from out of the grace and favor!**" Here, he makes reference to that "**which is to the side of that which we announce**, or is [even] parallel to what we announced" to them. Nothing should be added that would even be "beside" or "parallel" to the message that was originally brought to them. If anything of this nature would be proclaimed or taught to them, "**let it be placed on the altar before the Lord.**"

Here I have turned to the original meaning of the word *anathema*. This was a technical term for any sacrificial cultus. The Greek elements mean "to set, place or put [something] up," and the idea was to put it on an altar as an offering to God. Because what was put on an altar was something that had been killed, the word came to have an associated meaning of being "dedicated, or, cursed." But to render the word in this latter sense is foreign to the theology of Paul, the messenger of grace.

The verb of the last clause is simply the third person singular, imperative of the verb "to be." Since there is no expressed object of the verb, we must supply one

from the context: her, him or it. Most translators have taken the antecedent of this verb to be the "we or an agent" in the first clause. But a closer antecedent, and of much greater importance, is the potentially false teaching – and this is the issue of this whole letter. The called-out congregations have a long history of teachings being brought in that are "to the side" of the revelation which was given to Paul. It is these variant teachings that need to be taken to the Lord, placed upon the figurative "altar" within the midst of the assembly (His temple, the place of the altar), and within the midst of each person's heart, so that the Spirit of God can make the

decision about it – whether it is acceptable to Him or not.

The first offerings that are described in Scripture were those of Cain and Able in Gen. 4:3ff and the issue came to be which one was acceptable to Yahweh, and which one was not. Cain was not rejected by God; the issue was what he presented to God. When the Judaizers were bringing circumcision (a figure in this letter of the whole Law) to be the identity marker for the newly created covenant communities, it cut directly against the path of faith/trust that was the heart of the good news of God's grace, and covenant-inclusion that was based upon the faith and faithfulness of the

Messiah.

Saying that the person should be "accursed," or rejected – either by the assembly or by God – misses the point of the greater issue: the deceptive teaching which could far outlast the existence of the one who brought it. So I have taken the deceptive and false evangel to be the antecedent of the final verb, and have chosen the word "it" as its object.

**9. So as we have said before (or: = above [in vs. 8]), and I am right now presently saying again, if anyone is habitually announcing (proclaiming) as "good news" that which is to the side of that which you receive (or: took to**

your side), **let it be placed on the altar before God** (set up as a result of a divine offering [to see if it's acceptable]; or, possibly: cursed).

His restatement is rhetorical emphasis: he wants his point to sink in deeply.

There is "a Way pointed out" that is the Path (Christ in us; we in Christ) of the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It was expressed by Jesus as union with Him and with the Father in John 17:21, 23,

**"that all mankind may (or: everyone would) continuously exist being one, correspondingly as You, O Father [other MSS: Father], [are] within the midst of Me,**

**and I [am] within the midst of  
You – so that they, themselves,  
may and would also  
continuously exist being within  
the midst of Us.... I within the  
midst of and in union with  
them and You within the midst  
of and in union with Me, to the  
end that they may (or: could;  
would) continuously exist  
being folks having been  
perfected (brought to the  
destined goal; finished;  
completed; matured and  
purposed) into one..."**

This is a state of existence in Christ, not  
a religion or a system of ritual

requirements. It is a life of "spirit and truth" or "attitude and reality" (John 4:23-24). Paul was given a revelation of this new life which he expresses in his letters to the new covenant communities. In 2 Cor. 5:17 & 19 he says,

**17. Consequently, since someone [is] within Christ** (or: if anyone [is] in union with [the] Anointed One), **[there is] a new creation** (or: [it is] a framing and founding of a different kind; [he or she is] an act of creation having a fresh character and a new quality): **the original things** (the beginning [situations]; the archaic and

primitive [arrangements])  
**passed by** (or: went to the side).  
**Consider! New things have**  
**come into existence** (have been  
birthed; or: It has become new  
things; or: He has been birthed  
and now exists being ones of a  
different kind, character and  
quality). [note: *cf* Rev. 21:5]....  
**19. as that God was existing**  
**within Christ** (God was and  
continued being in union with  
[the] Anointed One)  
**progressively and completely**  
**transforming [the] aggregate**  
**of humanity** (or: world) **to be**  
**other [than it is]**

(or: progressively bringing [the] ordered System into another level or state; repeatedly changing [the] universe to correspond with other [conditions; perceptions]); progressively altering [the] ordered arrangement of culture, religions, economy and government to be in line with another one; habitually and progressively changing

[the] secular realm [of  
humanity] from enmity  
to friendship;  
reconciling [the] world  
[of mankind]) **in  
Himself, to Himself,  
for**

**Himself and by Himself, not  
accounting to them** (not putting  
to their account; not logically  
considering for them; not  
reasoning in them) **the results  
and effects of their falls to the  
side** (their trespasses and  
offences), **even placing within  
us the Word** (the Idea; the  
Reason; the message) **of the**

**corresponding transformation to otherness** (or: the full alteration; the change from enmity to friendship; the conciliation).

A return to any part of the old religion of the Jews would be to negate all that he has said in these two verses.

**10. Come now, am I at the present moment habitually appealing to humans, or God?** (or: am I right now constantly trying to convince and persuade mankind, or God ?) **Or, am I repeatedly seeking to keep on pleasing and accommodating people (humans)? If I had been still continuing to please and accommodate people**

(mankind), **I would not have been being Christ's slave.**

In the past, as Saul, he had been active in pleasing the leadership of the Jews in Jerusalem. He was a zealot for the Law. But he now continues this no longer. Not only that, he is not trying to accommodate either the Judaizers or the covenant communities in Galatia. He is now a "**Christ's slave**" (*cf* Rom. 1:1).

11. **You see, [other MSS: Now] I am habitually making it intimately known to you folks by experience, brothers: that the message of goodness and well-being – the one being announced and proclaimed as "good" news by (or: under) me – is not down from or**

**according to a person** (or: is not corresponding to something human; is not on the level of or in the sphere of humanity),

**12. for I myself neither received it to my side from a human** (or: from beside a person), **nor was I taught [it], but to the contrary, [it came] through an unveiling of Jesus Christ** (or: through an uncovering pertaining to Jesus [the Messiah]; through a revelation from Jesus Christ; by means of a disclosure which is [the] Anointed Jesus).

Here Paul establishes the source and authority of the "**message of goodness and well-being**" – it is **Jesus Christ**, not a human (not even Moses). In the

following excerpts, Lawrence Garcia gives us an instructive insight into the place and purpose of Paul (and thus, for all Christ's followers) in the good news of the Christ:

"Paul understood himself to be central to the Gentile mission itself, that is, he *embodied it*. God can be said to have determined to have revealed Jesus his Son *in* Paul and his mission to the Gentiles, after having sent his Son to the cross. This is why Paul can remind the Galatians that they once welcomed him as 'Christ himself' (Gal. 4:15), or that

because Paul proclaims 'the word of God in its fullness' that he is 'completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col. 1:27-27)....

Paul views his particular commissioning as part of God's two-stage apocalyptic act of redemption to fulfill his promises to Abraham....

"Israel's God has acted unexpectedly in history to ratify the covenant made with Abraham; he has done this through the faithful death of Jesus the Messiah outside of

Israel's breach of the Law-covenant; the vindicated Messiah has designated [Paul] as his emissary to the Gentile world so that the promise of Abraham might finally be realized in all of its fullness; and [the Galatians] have a role to play by being a base of support as [he] move[d] from the East over to Spain in the West. Will [they] take up [their] role? Justification in this scenario is really about participation in the gathering together of Abraham's long promised worldwide family

materializing around Paul's apostolic ministry. The people who believe Paul's kerygma, as father Abraham believed God's promise, are forgiven, justified, granted the Spirit, liberated from sin's vice-grip, and promised final glorification, if they indeed suffer with Christ in faithful obedience. They must follow Paul as he follows Christ." (from a blog on [academiachurch.com](http://academiachurch.com), "As Jesus to Israel, So Paul to the Gentiles; God's Two-Staged Apocalyptic Drama," 7/13/12; emphasis original; brackets

mine)

Paul's good news came "**through an unveiling of Jesus Christ**," and as Lawrence has noted,

Paul says in vs. 16, below, that his calling was "**to unveil His Son** (i.e., Jesus Christ) **within the midst of [him]**." Paul, along with all of the body of Christ, was called to *embody Christ, the message and the mission*.

The genitive case in this last phrase can also be rendered in the following ways:

"through an uncovering pertaining to Jesus [the Messiah]; or: through a revelation from Jesus Christ; or: by means of a disclosure which

is [the] Anointed Jesus."

Each of these options presents us with a beautiful perspective. The "uncovering" of the Truth of the new creation "pertains to Jesus [the Messiah]." With "Jesus Christ" taken as an ablative, this "revelation" came "from" Jesus Christ, Himself; then (as apposition) the "disclosure" to Paul was, in fact, the Anointed Jesus. I have given the four main meanings of the noun *apokalupsis* in this phrase: unveiling; uncovering; revelation; disclosure.

**13. For you hear (or: heard) about my former way of life (one-time conduct and behavior) within the traditional Jewish culture and religion (Judaism),**

**that corresponding to excessive action** (a throwing over and casting beyond) **I was hastening in hostile pursuit, continuing to persecute God's called-out group of people** (the community whose source is God; the ecclesia pertaining to God), **and I kept on trying to lay it waste** (or: continued sacking and devastating it).

There is a rhetorical purpose for Paul giving them this biographical story of his former life as Saul, the Pharisee (*cf* Acts 8:3; 9:1-16). In this and the following verses, through 2:10, he rehearses the setting of the call to his mission, the uniqueness of his being sent to the ethnic multitudes (the Gentiles; the non-Jews)

with the message about and from Jesus Christ, and his relationship to the original disciples and sent-forth messengers. This re-affirms his position, in regard to those in Galatia, and the authority of the arguments that he will be presenting. It also calls to mind his place and involvement with the early activities of the recently birthed body of Christ.

**14. And so I was progressively cutting forward and kept on advancing within Judaism (the culture and religion of the Jews) over and above many contemporaries (folks of the same age) within my race, being inherently more exceedingly zealous pertaining to the traditions of my fathers (or: for the**

things handed over, given alongside or delivered which originated with my ancestors).

This places Paul's former position as that of being one of Judaism's élite, and Luke's records of his activities in the book of Acts show that he was a part of the Jewish leadership. He was immersed in and saturated with the old covenant as expressed in Pharisaic Judaism. He was God's prime candidate to present the contrast of the new against the old.

**15. Yet when God – the One marking off boundaries to separate and sever me from out of my mother's womb (or: cavity; [comment: a figure of the religion of the Jews]), and calling [me] through**

**His grace and favor – thought well** (or: delights and takes pleasure)

He is speaking metaphorically here, for his call did not come when he was a child but as an adult. I suggest that "**my mother's womb**" refers to the mother that he refers to in 4:24b-25, below:

Hagar-mount Sinai-the "present Jerusalem." Note that he states that his call was "**through His grace and favor**," so Paul was immersed into the ongoing activities of the Christ event. That his personal calling was "through" God's grace echoes vs. 6, above, and the Galatians' calling "within" Christ's grace. It was the coming of grace and truth-reality (John 1:17) that spawned

the callings.

Furthermore, we should not miss his point that God's actions in "**marking off boundaries to separate and sever**"

Paul are here described that God "**thought well,**" or, that He "delights and takes pleasure" in taking an enemy of the gospel and transforming him to be the foremost agent of God's message of goodness, ease and well-being – His grace – to the world at large. "The idea behind the expression is of a distinct delimiting of boundaries. No longer was he confined within the limits of Judaism, but he was still confined, nevertheless, to the purposes of God. He never conceived of his ministry as a voluntary

process. He was called to it by God" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 68). God delineated Paul's life – marking off his boundaries – to the extent that for Paul **"to be living [was] Christ, and to be dying [was] gain"** (Phil. 1:21), and he regarded himself as a slave of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1).

16. **to unveil** (reveal; uncover; disclose) **His Son within the midst of me** (or: in union with me), **to the end that I in myself** (or: for myself; by myself; of myself) **would announce and proclaim the message of goodness, [which is] Him, within the ethnic multitudes** (or: may bring and tell the message of ease and well-being: Him [now] among the

nations), **I did not immediately place myself back toward flesh and blood** (= present my cause up for the approval of other people; consult anyone; seek communication or advice from my race, kin or religion),

Paul became a true image-bearer of God, for God's Son was the true image of the Father. Paul was a part of the *eschatos* (last) Adam; the Second Human (1 Cor. 15:45-47). The world could see Christ "**within the midst of [him]**." The preposition (*en*) of this phrase can also be rendered "in union with," so that he is in effect saying that his will and purpose was Christ's will and purpose. He had found "intimate

pleasure and delight in the Lord," and thus his desires had been transformed (Ps. 37:4). Paul had been joined to **His Son**, so that he and Jesus Christ were "**one spirit**" (1 Cor. 6:17).

We should consider this first clause more carefully. **His Son** was already within the midst of Paul – in order for Christ to have been "**unveil**[ed]," uncovered, disclosed and revealed within him. Paul knew by experience what he meant when he said in Rom. 8:

**19. For the looking away and watching with the head stretched forward alertly** (or: peak expectation; premonition; intuitive opinion; or: = the

concentrated and undivided focus) **of the creation is constantly receiving and taking away from out of the unveiling of God's sons**

(or: = the uncovering and revealing of folks who have the character and qualities of God; or: the disclosure pertaining to the sons of God; or: the unveiling and revelation which belongs to God's sons; the disclosure from God's sons).

As Lawrence Garcia stated, above,

Paul's life was now a destiny of *embodying* the Gentile mission and **"proclaim[ing] the message of goodness, [which is] Him, within the ethnic multitudes** (or: may bring and tell the message of ease and well-being: Him [now] among the nations)." And with this Christ-given commission, he had no need to **"immediately place myself back toward flesh and blood** (or: = present my cause up for the approval of other people; consult anyone; seek communication or advice from my race, kin or religion)."

The **"flesh and blood"** can be a symbolic reference to the old covenant and its flesh and blood sacrifices: he was not

going to go "**back toward**" the womb of Judaism from which God had separated him. The verb is "set, place or put" (in the middle voice, thus: "**myself**") with two prepositions stacked as prefixes to it. The first is *pros*, which means: toward; with a view to; or, face-to-face with. The second is *an*, which means: back; again; or, up-before (in this context). In reading this compound verb we start with the verb and work our way out: **place/set/put myself back toward**. In other words, he remained separated from the religion of Judaism.

The parenthetical paraphrase can be another meaning, which would flow into vs. 17. Either interpretation of Paul's

words makes sense. Both express the historical facts of his biography. But by taking this to mean "not returning to Judaism," it could be an example of what he meant by what he said in 1 Cor. 4:16,

**"Progressively come to be (or: Keep on becoming) my imitators (ones who copy or mimic me)."**

Here, this would mean: don't you folks go back to Judaism, either!

Paul later writes, in the third chapter of his second letter to the folks at Corinth,

**2. You yourselves are and continue being our letter – being one having been written**

(inscribed; imprinted; engraved)  
**within your hearts** [other MSS:  
our hearts]; **one progressively  
being experientially known  
and continuously read** (or:  
periodically recognized and  
experienced again) **by all  
people** (mankind) –

**3. because you are and  
continue being those  
continuously set in clear light  
and progressively manifested:  
Christ's letter** (a letter whose  
source is Christ, and which is  
Christ), **being one dispensed in  
attending service by us, being  
one having been written**

(inscribed; imprinted; engraved), **not in black** (= not with ink), **but rather, by** (or: in; with) **God's Spirit: One continuously living** (or: in a Breath-effect which has its origin in God, Who is constantly living); **not in stone tablets** (or: on tablets composed of stone), **but rather within tablets which are hearts made of flesh** (or: on tablets in hearts composed of flesh).

As were these folks, so was Paul himself – including the life that he led – a "letter... being experientially known and continuously read by all mankind."

**17. neither did I go up into Jerusalem, toward those [who were] people sent off (= to face and be with the commissioned representatives) previous to me, but rather, I went off into Arabia, then later I again returned into Damascus.**

Here we either have part two of his being "boundaried off" from his past – including the then-present activities of the called-out community in Jerusalem – or we simply have the historical flow of events in his life since being "apprehended" by God (Phil. 3:12-13). There may well be the possibility, since Paul wanted folks to be as he was, that he is using this historical biography as a

subtle rhetorical device to tell these Galatians that just as he did not, neither should they go back to "**flesh and blood**," which "just incidentally" happened to include circumcision. The subtle message: do not take up that identity marker.

**18. Later on, after three years, I went up into Jerusalem to become acquainted with** (or: to inquire of, examine and get information from) **Cephas** [some MSS: Peter] **while visiting him and relating my story to him, and then stayed on with him for fifteen days.**

**19. Yet a different one of** (or: another one from) **those sent with commissions**

(the envoys; the representatives) **I did not see, except Jacob (= James), the Lord's brother.**

**20. Now what I am presently writing to you folks (or: for you folks), consider! In God's sight, I am not lying!**

The verb of the first clause of 18, *historeo*, means either "**to become acquainted with,**" or, "to learn by inquiry." It is entirely possible – and quite human – for Paul to have gone to Jerusalem for both purposes.

This is a historical narrative and yet, as we see in the book of Acts, it also calls to our minds his participating in parts of the old cultus: association with the vow

of some Jews and entering the temple (Acts 21:21-27), as well as his previous agreeing to the stipulations of the "first Jerusalem council" (Acts 15:20).

Nonetheless, his message embodies a move away from the Jerusalem which "embodied" bondage – 4:21-5:18, below – and led to freedom and liberty (5:1, 13).

**21. Later, I came into the slopes of the regions of Syria and Cilicia,**

**22. yet I was continuing being unknown by personal experience – by face – to the called-out groups (the summoned-forth communities) within Christ, of the Judean area.**

**23. Indeed, they were only hearing**

**from time to time that, "The one once habitually pursuing and persecuting us is now habitually announcing as good news the faith (or: the belief, confident trust and allegiance) which once he kept on laying waste and devastating."**

So Paul's reputation was spreading among the called-out communities, but it is apparent that he did not retrace the area of the ministry of Jesus, nor that of the twelve. Christ had called him for a different purpose: phase two – the good news to the ethnic multitudes (primarily the non-Jews, after his first attempt to proclaim the message to the Jews – Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16). Paul's use of the term

**"the faith (etc.)"** is in reference to the entire Christian movement, not just their beliefs. It involved their allegiance to Jesus, and their trust that He was the Messiah. It was not a crucified Messiah for which the Jews were looking and waiting. And if the Messiah had come, it would mean that He had inaugurated the new age. The Jew's physical application of the OT prophecies, and the resulting eschatology which they had envisioned, did not align with what was being observed in the followers of Jesus (e.g., as recorded in the book of Acts).

**24. And in me [i.e., in my case or situation] they kept on glorifying God** (or: began giving credit to God and

expanding His reputation; or: So they began presuming, imagining and then continued regarding God [as being] within the midst of, and in union with, me).

I have presented three senses of Paul's use of *en*. Because of vs. 23, my first understanding of "**in me**" is indicated by the bracketed insertion: "**[i.e., in my case or situation]**" – that is, all these folks were glorifying God because of what He had done, and was now doing, in Paul and in his life. Paul's testimony and reputation was "giving credit to God and expanding His reputation."

Such a turn-around as was exhibited in the life of Paul caused those who heard

of it to "presume, imagine and then continue to regard" (various meanings of *doxazō*) that "God [was] within the midst (*en*) of Paul" as Christ and the anointing. The third meaning of *en*, "in union with," would be their acknowledgment that God was working through the ministry of Paul – that God was behind what had happened to him and was now occurring through him. In each case, God was receiving glory from people because of what He had done.

"But the real object of his mentioning it here is to demonstrate that even churches as Jewish Christian as the Judean churches could praise God for Paul, and

yet the Judaizers at Galatia were critical of him" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 75). Also, this mention of the Judean communities "**within Christ**" implies a solidarity between them and his mission, and not a division of purpose. Yet his missionary labors were thus obviously independent of them.



## Chapter 2

**1. Later, after a period of fourteen years, I again walked up into Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus, also, along with me.**

**2. Now I walked up (or: made the ascent) [there] corresponding to and as directed by (or: in accord with and in the sphere of; down from and following the bidding of), an unveiling (or: a disclosure; a revelation), and I put up to them (set back again for them; = submitted to them) the message of goodness, ease and well-being, which I am habitually proclaiming as a public message within the multitudes (or:**

among the nations and ethnic groups – non-Jews; Gentiles) – yet **[I did so] privately, to those continuing to be disposed to thinking and imagination** (or: for those supposing to continue with a reputation; or: to ones yet forming opinions), **lest somehow I am progressively rushing forward and running, or had run, into emptiness** (or: for an empty thing; into something without content; = to no purpose; or: = in vain).

As Paul brings his readers up to date on his recent activities, he points out to them that he went again to Jerusalem "following the bidding of (etc.) **an unveiling** (or: a disclosure; a

revelation)." What did Paul mean by this? Did the Lord disclose to him that it was the time to present his commissioning and his message from the Lord to the spiritually minded folks there? He spoke of doing such as this in 1 Cor. 2:13,

**"... we are also habitually speaking – not in words taught by human wisdom (or: not taught within thoughts or ideas whose origin is human wisdom), but rather in ones taught by spirit (or: within ones taught whose source and origin is [the] Spirit – from the effect of a Breath and an Attitude),**

**habitually evaluating, deciding,  
combining or contrasting  
spiritual [matters] together by  
spiritual [means] and with  
qualities inherent in the  
Breath-effect**

(or: constantly matching  
or  
comparing/contrasting  
things pertaining to  
attitude with things in  
spirit/[the] Spirit;  
progressively judging  
collectively spiritual  
folks for spiritual  
[reasons])."

Furthermore, we see that he did this

"**privately**," not to the congregations at large. It had been revealed to him that he should "**put [it] up to them**," or "set [it] back again for them" – from the particle "*an-*" that is prefixed to the verb. With the second reading, it could be that he is submitting it to them a second time.

The present dative participle *dokousin* is active, not passive. This is rendered "the *acknowledged* leaders" in the NRSV; "those who were of *reputation*" in the NASB; "those who *seemed* to be leaders" in the NIV; "those who were *outstanding* men" in the NWT; "those of *recognized* eminence" by Wuest; "those of *repute*" in the CLNT. I *italicized* the words which correspond to *dokousin* in

this sample of versions. These renderings more or less correspond to the meanings of the Greek word, but fail to render that word as an active present participle of *dokeo*. These folks may have had a reputation, yet not have been "leaders." Those who translated the above examples simply presumed that they were the leaders of the called-out community in Jerusalem – and they may have been so – but this word does not say this.

To render this participle as active, I chose the semantic range of "disposition; think; imagination; supposition; reputation; opinion" with the following expanded and amplified result: "**to**

**those continuing to be disposed to thinking and imagination** (or: for those supposing to continue with a reputation; or: to ones yet forming opinions)." My preference leans to the bold rendering, and the last parenthetical option. He wanted to put up to the spiritual folks what it was that he was "**habitually proclaiming as a public message within the multitudes.**" Paul's mission was happening during a period when the new creation was just sprouting, and people were still forming opinions about it – as we see with the first Jerusalem council. He wanted to run what he had been given by those who were the thinkers in Jerusalem – people with imagination –

who could wrap their minds around this new revelation concerning the Gentiles, and come to understand what God had done through the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

If he was not in union with the thought and disposition of the rest of the body of Christ, factions and splits would be inevitable, and his progressive running would have been "**into emptiness** (or: for an empty thing; into something without content; = to no purpose; or: = in vain)." Cf Phil. 2:16 The thrust of the new arrangement (covenant) was to make of the Jew and the Gentile "**one new humanity**" (Eph. 2:15). Although given as a message crafted to the ethnic

multitudes, there is

**"one body and one spirit**  
(attitude and effect of the  
Breath), **according as you folks**  
**were (or: are) also called**  
**within the midst of one**  
**expectation** (or: in union with  
one expectant hope) **of your**  
**calling** (or: invitation), **[with]**  
**one Lord** (or: Owner), **one**  
**faith** (or: loyalty, confidence,  
assurance, and trust; or: one  
belief – Bultmann), **one**  
**submersion and envelopment**  
**which brings absorption and**  
**permeation to the point of**  
**saturation, one God and**

**Father of all humans – the One upon all people and moving through all people, and within the midst of all humanity and in union with all people and all things." (Eph. 4:4-5)**

This is why it was revealed to him to meet privately with the thinkers in Jerusalem who were "still forming [their] opinions." And again, he met with them lest there would be division in the common purpose of God's new creation: one expectation for the one new humanity.

Nonetheless, in this chapter Paul is also – by his own example – saying that his

message (which came by revelation) stood on its own, and not upon the approval of the Jerusalem group. The revelation which had been given to him did not support the status quo that had been based upon the old covenant.

**3. However, not even Titus – the one with me – was compelled or even strongly urged to be circumcised, although being a Greek!**

**4. Yet, through the led-in-at-the-side (or: smuggled-in) false brothers (or: = deceitful or lying fellow believers; or: = imitation members) – folks who entered alongside to spy out (to attentively look down and around, observe and take note of) our freedom which we continuously**

**possess** (constantly have and hold)  
**within Christ Jesus, to the end that**  
**they will utterly enslave us** (or: with a  
purpose that they shall bring us down  
into slavery) –

Here we can see another reason that  
Paul discussed privately the good news  
(the revelation of and from Jesus Christ  
– 1:12, above) which he had received.  
The **false brothers**, or deceitful fellow  
believers, were Judaizers who desired  
to lead this new movement back into the  
old covenant religion. Paul interpreted  
their motives as not only lying,  
deceiving and imitation, but – if they  
could follow through with their goals –  
as those which would end up "**enslaving**

us." Freedom from religion was what Jesus prophesied to the Samaritan woman at the well, in John 4:21-24. The focus of these men – the intent of those who "**entered alongside**," i.e., not by the Door (John 10:1) – was to destroy "**our freedom**." And our freedom was from what? As we will see, below, it was freedom from the Law.

**5. to whom (or: for whom), now, we did (or: do) not for even an hour give place to, make a way for, or simulate by humble alignment, subordination, submission or subjection, so that the reality (the Truth) of the message of goodness may abide throughout (or: thoroughly remain; fully dwell; be**

permanent in continuing) **focused toward, and be face to face with, you folks!**

Paul, Barnabas and Titus all stood firm in the truth of the unveiling that was given to Paul. They would not "**for even an hour give place to, make a way for, or simulate by humble alignment, subordination, submission or subjection**" to these folks. To do so, to bring the Law back into the new arrangement, would corrupt the "**reality and Truth [Christ] of the message.**" By standing firm, they insured that this reality and truth would "**abide throughout** (or: thoroughly remain; fully dwell; be permanent in continuing)" and

be "**focused toward** (and: **be face to face with**)" the ethnic multitudes (the swarms of Gentiles). To mix the old and the new arrangements brings disaster to our freedom (as this unfortunate aspect of the history of the "church" has demonstrated).

**6. Now from those continuing to be disposed to thinking and imagination** (or: from those being supposed to continue with a reputation; or: from the folks yet forming opinions) – **whatever sort of men they formerly** (or: once) **were being matters nothing** (makes no difference; carries nothing through) **to me** (or: for me) [**because**] **God is not in the habit of receiving a person's face**

(= taking people at face value; or: responding to man's outward appearance or presentation). **So you see, those continuing to be disposed to thinking and imagination** (or: those supposing to continue with a reputation; those yet forming opinions) **of themselves put nothing new forward for me** (or: from themselves placed forward [as a suggestion] nothing back in me; = contributed or added nothing to me). So after meeting with these folks that were discussed in vs. 2, above, Paul found that they had nothing to add to the new things that were unveiled to him. Yet we should not automatically put these other folks – among them Peter,

James (or: Jacob) and John, as he does mention them below as being of this sort (vs. 9) – in a box that has no value to the new thing that God is doing among the non-Jews. Some have done this, relegating everything that Peter, James (Jacob), John, Judah and the author of Hebrews wrote to a sort of secondary call that involved the Jews and their proselytes. I believe such thinking to be a miss of the target of God's unified mission to "one new humanity." Cf Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11. The second stage of God's program of salvation and deliverance, His creation of the Second Humanity, involves all. Some, who in the first century had only possessed a

vision of the coming of the Messiah to Israel, then working through the nation of Israel for the rest of His purposes, needed to adjust their paradigms. But they themselves were still a part of the "one body" that was cited from Eph. 4, above.

**7. But rather, on the contrary, seeing that I had been persuaded by and convinced of** (or: perceiving that I had been entrusted with) **the message of goodness, ease and well-being concerning** (or: with reference to; in consideration of; pertaining to; separated for; belonging to; having characteristics and qualities suited to; for the context of; relative to; as it relates to) **the**

**Uncircumcision** (= those not of the Jewish religion, being from pagan religions or Hellenistic culture), **correspondingly as Peter, concerning** (or: with reference to; in consideration of; pertaining to; separated for; belonging to; having characteristics and qualities suited to; for the context of; relative to; as it relates to) **the Circumcision** (= the Jews, or those of the Jewish religion and culture) – While the immediate mission of these two individuals was to different people-groups, vss. 8-10 speak clearly of the unity of the message and the oneness of the goal. Paul was called as a missionary to the Gentiles (**the**

**Uncircumcision**), and Peter represented those who were mainly called as missionaries to their own people (the Jews; **the Circumcision**). This two-staged mission (using Lawrence Garcia's paradigm) began with the Jews (Rom. 1:16) and then extended to the non-Jews (ethnic multitudes; Gentiles).

"It is to be carefully noted that it is not a question of two different gospels being preached; it is a question of the same gospel being brought to two different spheres by different people specially qualified to do so" (William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series, the Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, Rev. Ed.*, The Westminster Press, 1976,

p 17).

8. for you see, the **One** working within (being active in; operating within; energizing) **Peter** unto a sending for a **mission concerning** (in reference to; or: which is) **the Circumcision**, also by me **inwardly works** (energizes; is inwardly active and operative) **unto the multitudes** (into the midst of the nations – the non-Jewish ethnic groups; the Gentiles) –

Once again, note that it is the same "**One**" who was working in both Peter and Paul within their individual missions. Each group had its own, and different, background. The Jews already had their own "**olive tree**," and they

remained in it through the faith and trust spawned by Christ. The non-Jews were "**grafted-in**" into the very same "**olive tree**." The olive tree was a figure for the supply and the flow of God's anointing (figured by the olive oil) through the history of His dealing with mankind. There were not two separate olive trees in His garden (figured by the cultivated – or, "good" – olive tree in Rom. 11:24), which was the place of His direct communion and presence with humans (*cf* Gen. 3:8). The "wild olive" was grafted into the cultivated olive, and became a part of it. But this grafting-in was not through the old covenant, but through the new. That is why it is called

a new creation – a new forming and founding. The oil of the Spirit flowed through the "good olive tree," not the wild ones. Just as there is only one olive tree in the economy of God, there is only one **"message of goodness, ease and well-being,"** for this Good Message (Good Logos) is Christ, Himself. And He is given to all alike.

**9. then Jacob (or: James), Cephas and John – those continuing to be disposed to thinking and imagination (or: those yet forming opinions) and seeming, by reputation, to be pillars (or: supportive columns [note: a figure of a living temple]) – recognizing (or: coming to know) by intimate experience the**

**grace and favor being given by me (or: to me; in me; for me), gave to me and to Barnabas [the] right [hands] of common partnership, from common participation, in regard to common existence/situation and which signified equal belonging in fellowship, community and sharing, to the end that we [would continue] into the nations (multitudes; ethnic groups; Gentiles; non-Jews) – yet they, into the Circumcision –**

Note here the added metaphor of "pillars" to distinguish these "thinking and imagining" men as leaders within the Jerusalem community. These men "recogniz[ed] by intimate experience

**the grace and favor"** that was given to Paul and Barnabas. This grace was God's grace that has been given to all humanity. These men came to know that the message which Paul and Barnabas were given was the same grace that the Jewish believers had received.

Therefore, these men gave them "[**the**] **right [hands] of common partnership, from common participation, in regard to common existence/situation and which signified equal belonging in fellowship, community and sharing.**"

Drink these words in slowly. Paul and Barnabas were given equal acceptance into the **common partnership** of Jacob, Peter and John. The Greek word is

*koinonia*. The root idea is "**common being and existence**," and it also means "**common situation and partnership; common participation**." The work of the cross has made of all "**one new humanity**." There is no more "us and them" in any sphere of existence.

**10. [the] only [concern being] that we would habitually be mindful of the poor ones (or: should keep on remembering the destitute folks), which very thing, also, I was eager and made every effort to do.**

The Jerusalem community was slow in learning the fullness of God's transforming grace that works within people, anointing them to be Christ in the

earth. Of course Paul was "**eager and made every effort**" to do this – He was filled with the Love which is God!

**11. Now when Cephas came into Antioch, I stood in opposition to him in relation to the appearance of the external situation** (or: I resisted him face to face; or: I stood face to face with him, on his behalf), **because he was continuing in a state of having been discovered to be down [over an issue]** (or: he was now one having condemned himself from a negative experience; or: was being found at fault),

The basis for the three renderings of the second half of the first clause is the semantic ranges of the Greek words. The

verb is *anthistemi*, and means "to stand *anti-*." Thus, it can mean to stand "**in opposition**," and thus, "to resist." Following this understanding, Guthrie states,

"the sole reason for Paul's mentioning this personal confrontation with Peter is to add further support to his previous arguments that he was not called upon to submit his policies to the Jerusalem authorities" (ibid. p 84).

But the preposition *anti* can also mean "in an opposite position," so as to give assistance in a task – such as being on the other side of an object that needs to

be lifted up, and so this position is taken to help a person lift it. *Anti* can also mean "in place of," so this verb could also mean "to stand in another's place or position." From these last two meanings, I gave the third option of the compound verb as: "stood... with him, on his behalf."

*Prosopon* means "face," or by extension, "the appearance of the external." The appearance of the situation regarding Peter withdrawing from the Gentiles during the meals (vs. 12-14, below) caused Paul to stand "**in opposition**" to Peter, or to "resist" him in his behavior. This is how this verse is normally interpreted, and it is a sound

interpretation – based upon these particular renderings of the Greek. However, I want to suggest a different side of Paul in this situation, based upon the third rendering of the verb. Here we see Paul coming to Peter's aid, for he discerns Peter's confusion over the matter, or his weakness, or (as we can see in the last clause of this verse) his depression over the apparent internal conflict. So this first clause can be read to see Paul coming to Peter's aid, to strengthen him – being a paraclete to him. Now isn't this what elsewhere we often see Paul admonishing others to do, and also proclaiming that he is doing in his letters to the called-out? We find

Paul and Barnabas doing this in Acts 14:22, as just one example,

**"progressively establishing (fixing and making to stand) the souls (inner lives) of the disciples (or: students), repeatedly calling [them] alongside to give relief, aid and comfort while encouraging [them] to continue abiding and remaining within the midst of the faith (or: trust; confidence; loyalty; reliance; conviction; assurance), and [saying] that, "It continues binding and necessary for us to enter into the reign of God (or: God's**

kingdom; the sovereign activities which are God) **through the midst of many pressures, squeezings, tribulations, afflictions and oppressions.'**"

The underlined portion is the verb *parakaleo* and means to do what the third rendering of *anthistemi* pictures. It can be seen as a position of intimate support, comfort and giving of strength. Paul could first have been putting himself in Peter's place before presenting the reasoning that follows from vs. 14b to the end of the chapter. Now let us consider the last clause: **"because he was continuing in a state**

**of having been discovered to be down [over an issue]."** After the word **"because,"** the rest of the clause is from the perfect, passive participle of *kata-ginosko*. The root meaning of *ginosko* is: "to know;" "to come to know;" thus, "to discover." The root meaning of *kata* is: "down." So my bold rendering is the literal meaning of the participle. This would fit well with the third option given in the first clause, above, as I explained.

Another option on this participle is, "he was now one having condemned himself from a negative experience." This is a more extended rendering, leaning heavily on the negative extreme of the

semantic range of *kata*. Yet, it conveys a similar picture to my first choice.

The final option, "he was being found at fault." is the farthest removed from the literal rendering, and carries the most negative connotation. It describes the fact, but is this the correct reading of Paul in this situation? The answer is what the Spirit speaks to your heart as you read this. We can often read our own emotions and prejudice into a text such as this. So we can either see Paul acting with compassion, or acting harshly.

**12. for you see, prior to the coming of some from Jacob (or: James), he had been habitually eating together with those of the multitudes (the nations; the**

non-Jewish ethnic groups; the Gentiles). **Yet when they came, he began steadily withdrawing, and continued separating by marking off boundaries for himself, constantly fearing those from among [the] Circumcision** (= the Jewish culture and religion).

Here Paul is describing the issue, and is using it as an illustration of going back to being under the Law. It presents the same issue that being circumcised does, later on in the letter. He has just shown how he, who had been the paramount Pharisee, had not "gone up to Jerusalem" (i.e., aligned his message with Judaism or a Judaized Christianity), and now he points out the pressure of some of those

in Jerusalem who were promoting this very return. It is always easy to succumb to peer-pressure.

Peter's actions were aligned with the "us-and-them" mindset and social world-view inherent in the religion of the Jews – the old covenant.

**13. And so the rest of the Jews also, as a group, came under the decision to separate with (or: to) him, so that even Barnabas was jointly brought along (or: led away together) by their [Law]-based separation (or: their perverse judgment which ended in a base decision; or: = legalistic behavior). That even Barnabas "was jointly brought along" and led away together**

with the others, shows how strong was the influence of the Jews. After all, this new movement had its roots in their history, their Scriptures, and their religion. Before we become too critical of them, we need to consider carefully the cultural implication and the social pressure – for the Jews' religion was a way of life, not something separate as most religions have been. As we review the history of the church, we see that many within Christianity have agreed with the Judaizers: that the Law still applies to us.

**14. But then, when I saw that they did not continue walking straight** (having a straight foot[print]; walking an upright

course) **toward the Truth** (or: face to face with the reality) **of message of goodness and ease, I said to Cephas, in front of everyone** (or: all), **"If you, being inherently a Jew, are now habitually living as the ethnic multitudes** (like the nations; as a Gentile), **and not like a Jew, how is it [that] you are continuing to compel** (to strongly urge) **the multitudes** (the nations; the non-Jewish ethnic groups; the Gentiles) **to be now Judaizing** (progressively living according to Jewish custom and religion)?

Paul observed that these folks were not living in concord to the Truth of what the Messiah had done in including the

Gentiles in the covenant, and that they were deviating away from the "straight foot[print]" nor "walking an upright course" that accords with the Way of Christ and with His faith.

Note that their behavior was "**continuing to compel** (to strongly urge) **the multitudes** (the nations; the non-Jewish ethnic groups; the Gentiles) **to be now Judaizing** (progressively living according to Jewish custom and religion)." Behavior is an epistle read of all humanity. As Paul's behavior portrayed a metaphor for the positive, the behavior of these Jewish believers sent a negative and retrograde message.

15. **We – Jews by (or: in) nature, and**

**not outcasts** (ones who miss the target or deviate from the goal; failures; sinners) **from out of the multitudes** (herds; nations; ethnic groups; Gentiles)

—

**16. having seen and thus knowing that humanity** (or: mankind; or: a person) **is not normally being put in right relationship**

(made fair and equitable; made free from guilt and set into the Way pointed out; rightwised and made to be a just one; = being presently brought into covenant) **from out of works of Law** (or: forth from a law's deeds or actions from custom), **but instead through Jesus Christ's faith** (or: faith that belongs to

and originates in Christ Jesus), **even we ourselves trusted and believed into Christ Jesus, to the end that we would be put in right relationship**

(made to be just, fair and equitable; be released from guilt; be rightwised and placed into the Way pointed out; also = be made a member of the covenant)

**from out of the midst of Christ's faith, as a source and sphere** (or: forth from trust and conviction, which are Christ), – **NOT from out of the midst of works of Law, as a source and sphere, because from out of the midst of works of Law** (or: forth from a law's deeds or actions corresponding to custom; or: out of works which comprise

[the] Law) "**no flesh** (= person or human) **at all will be put in right relationship**

(made to be just, fair and equitable; be freed from guilt; be rightwised or turned in the right direction from being placed into the Way pointed out; = put in covenant)." [Ps. 143:2]

Now Paul lays out one of the main thrusts of this letter. Take note that he uses the verb *dikaioo* "**put in right relationship** (etc., as the parenthetical expansions instruct us about the semantic range of this word)" three times in verse 16. Notice also that in each case the verb is in the passive voice: this is

something that God does to people. He begins vs. 15 with "**We – Jews by nature**" and then in vs. 16 continues, "**even we ourselves**" (the plural personal pronoun is given for emphasis – Paul is still referring to the Jews, or is addressing the Jewish Christians in the communities, or this is still a continuation of Paul's reply to Peter) "**trusted and believed into Christ Jesus.**" Why is he stressing this? He follows this statement with a purpose clause: "**to the END that WE [Jews] would be put in right relationship!**" We should not miss that fact that inclusion in this new covenant comes by entrance "**into Christ Jesus**" through trust and

faith – just as with the case of Abraham. Both Jews and Gentiles must "**enter through the door**" (John 10: 1-9) – this is not just about "Gentile inclusion" in Israel's old covenant. It is a new arrangement – otherwise the Gentiles, as Gentiles, could not be included.

By quoting Ps. 143:2 as his Scriptural foundation, he stresses "**NO FLESH**" – i.e., neither Jews or Gentiles – can be rightwised into the new covenant by actions which correspond to custom (i.e., old traditions) or by works of the old Law, or even by any deeds of any "law." It is only through Jesus Christ's faithfulness on the cross by which the Law's curse was ended – which means

that the old covenant and Law were voided, and thus the bondwoman (4:26) is to be thrown out (4:30)! Christ's faith in us created a new humanity – a new creation – and thus a new arrangement, or covenant.

It is through Christ's work on the cross and through His Spirit's work in humanity that we are put in right relationship with God: i.e., as His wife; as alive to Him; as His sons; as His people; as branches of His Vine (John 15:1 ff); as flesh of His flesh and bones of His bones; as joined to Him and thus one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17), etc. The Law was the realm of "works/deeds/actions." Law has nothing

to do with the inner man of the heart – with love; with faith; with expectant hope; with the fruit of the Spirit (or, the fruit of the new covenant: Christ in us). The old covenant pertained to the outward – it involved one's flesh, not one's spirit. In 2 Cor. 3 Paul contrasts the new covenant with the old:

- 4. Now through the Christ we continuously possess** (or: So, by means of the Anointing we progressively have and hold) **this sort of persuaded trust and faith-based confidence [directed and leading] toward God** (or: face to face with God)
- 5. – not that we are competent**

(adequately enough; sufficiently qualified) **from ourselves to logically evaluate or count anything as it were forth from out of ourselves – but to the contrary, our competency (adequacy; sufficiency; qualification) [is] forth from out of the midst of (having its source in) God,**

**6. Who also adequately qualifies us (or: made us fit, competent and sufficient) [to be] attending servants and dispensers of an arrangement that is new in quality (or: pertaining to a new kind of**

covenant that has a different character and is fresh and effective) – **not of [the] letter** (or: not pertaining to the result of that which is written down; not having its source in the effect of a written text), **but in contrast, of a Breath- effect** (or: pertaining to the result of [the] Spirit; having its source in and being the effect of spirit and attitude), **for the effect of letter habitually kills** (or: the result of writing something into a text repeatedly puts away in death), **yet the Spirit** (or: the spirit; the breath-effect; the

Attitude) **continuously gives life** (or: repeatedly makes alive; progressively forms life; habitually creates life)!

"... Paul is certainly not talking about a spiritual reading of the OT as opposed to a literal or legalistic reading. The issue here is not the OT but the *Old Covenant*, specifically the Mosaic covenant... the Sinai revelation in stone..." (Witherington, *ibid.* p 379). In this same chapter Paul calls the old covenant "**the attending service of the Death** (or: the dispensing of provision from death; the serving of provisions and support, which is the death)" in vs. 7, and "**the attending service and**

**dispensing of the corresponding evaluations and commensurate decisions which follow the pattern (or: separations for condemnation; judgments which are down-decisions against folks)" in vs. 9.**

So here in vss. 15-16 he first reminds Peter, and the others that are there listening, that they **"have seen and thus know"** the reality **"that humanity (or: mankind; or: a person) is not normally being put in right relationship from out of works of Law."** Ponder the fact that Paul says that they as **Jews** have observed this reality and thus know it to be true. Law does not rightwise a person and point her or him in the right

direction. It is **Jesus Christ's faith, trust, loyalty to the Father and His faithfulness** that accomplished this on the cross and then implanted the same within us through the giving of His Spirit to us. It is the work of Christ and the giving of His Spirit that brought the ethnic multitudes (which include these Galatian Gentiles) to inclusion in the covenant – or as Paul put it in Rom. 11:17, it grafted them into the olive tree. Paul sets "**Jesus Christ's faith** (or: faith that belongs to and originates in Christ Jesus)" in contrast to "**works of Law.**" Cf Rom. ch. 3 for his detailed argument on this topic. Note: he does not contrast it to "good works" to which we have

been called and created/produced in Christ in the new creation/new covenant (arrangement) – Eph. 2:10. The contrast is between the faith and work of Christ/the Spirit, and the proposed Judaizing (bringing the Law into the new arrangement/covenant).

**17. Now since (or: if) we, in habitually seeking to be put in right relationship (placed into the Way pointed out; made to be just, fair and turned aright; also = made to be participants in the covenant; or: seeking to be freed from guilt) within Christ (or: in union with [the] Anointed One), were ourselves also found to be failures (ones who miss the target; those who deviate; sinners; outcasts), [is]**

**Christ, consequently, an attending servant of failure** (sin's servant; a dispenser of error; a minister to the missing of the target)? **May it not happen** (or: come to be)!

The "we" here in Paul's argument is still a reference to the Jews, but specifically the Jews who had sought inclusion in the new covenant "**within Christ.**" Paul then states that they "**were [them]selves also found to be failures, outcasts, sinners, etc.**" What did he mean by this? A.E. Harvey suggests, "Popular Jewish theology (as can be seen from many passages in the gospels) regarded the Gentiles as, by definition, 'sinners;' and any Jews who flagrantly transgressed the

law were relegated to the same category.... The same accusation could be made (and presumably was made) against Jews who had become Christians and were now committing such unlawful acts as taking their meals with Gentiles" (ibid. p 605). So if this is the case, in their view, is **"Christ, consequently, an attending servant of failure, sin's servant, a dispenser of error or a minister to the missing of the target?"** Of course not! This rhetorical move by Paul was meant to disarm his opponents who might use such false logic as the rhetorical question exhibits.

Another interpretation of Paul's remarks here may hinge on the understanding of

the term "sinners" as a reference to those who the religious elite considered to be "outcasts" from the true Israel who meticulously kept the Law. Recall the parable given by Jesus in Lu. 18:10-14 – the Pharisee and the publican (tax contractor or profiteer) – and how the former disdained the latter. Jesus described the situation thusly:

**11. "The Pharisee, while standing, began praying these things to himself: 'O God, I continue giving thanks to You that I am not even as the rest of mankind – extortioners, unjust folks, adulterers – or even as this tax collector!'**

12. **"I habitually fast twice a week; I continually tithe (give the tenth of) everything – as much as I continue acquiring.'**

13. **"But the tax collector (or: tribute contractor), standing far off (= remaining at a distance, in the background), continued unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven (or: unto the atmosphere or sky) – and in contrast kept on beating (striking) his chest, repeatedly saying, 'O God, at your mercy seat let me, the failure (the one who has missed the goal; the sinner), be sheltered in**

**propitiation, and may You be favorably inclined to me!"**

**14. "I am now saying to you folks, this man walked down into his home being one having been rightwised (placed in right relationship within the Way pointed out; included in the covenant), rather than that one, because everyone [who is] constantly lifting himself up (exalting himself) will be brought low and humbled. Yet the person habitually humbling himself and placing himself in a low position will be lifted up and exalted."**

Note the Law-keeper: the Pharisee. He was not included in the covenant or rightwised, for he was "**lifting himself up**" by his own adherence to custom (or: Law). But the outcast (a figure for "**the rest of mankind**") by acknowledging his low position and seeking mercy and favor was included in the covenant (placed in the Way pointed out; turned in the right direction) – no covenant markers required! And so here, Paul may be saying that in the eyes of the Jews folks such as himself and other followers of Christ (folks who did not keep the Law [Torah]) were "**found to be failures and outcasts.**" Thus would these Jews consider Christ to be a

servant of error, deviation and sin. But Paul affirms that this is not the case.

**18. For if I should continue building up again** (or: would repeatedly reconstruct) **these things which I loosed down and demolished, I myself continue standing together with a transgressor** (or: I proceed to exhibit myself as one who steps out of the Way and to the side).

Paul's point here is a reference to Peter's declining to continue dining with Gentiles (vs. 11ff, above). Peter had by his prior behavior torn down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile with regard to the old meal codes. Paul is placing himself in Peter's place by saying "**if I should...**" (meaning, "if you,

Peter, should..."), thus not indicting Peter in his illustration. Here, Paul is saying that if he should re-establish the table-fellowship and purity codes of the Law (build again an "us and them" duality for humanity) then he would be transgressing and stepping out of the Way of Christ and to the side of God's Love. He would step outside of the new creation, and back into the old.

**19. You see, I myself through [the] Law died by [the] Law (or: to [the] Law; in [the] Law; with [the] Law), to the end that I could and would live by God, in God, for God, to God and with God!**

He says, "This is the situation: I, through

keeping the Law, **died by [the] Law.**"

This is echoed in Rom. 7:9,

**"Now I [= Adam] was at one time** (or: formerly) **habitually living apart from law** (or: I was once alive, independent from custom and [Torah]); **yet, in connection with the coming of the implanted goal** (of the impartation of the finished product within; of the inward commandment and directive), **the Sin becomes alive again** (or: deviation, failure, error and the missing of the target revived and comes back to life), **but I die** (or: and I died; yet I die)."

And in 1 Cor. 15:56b, "... **the power of the sin [is] the Law.**"

The word **Law** in vs. 19 is in the dative case and there is no expressed preposition in the text. So in the parenthetical expansion I have given three other functions of the dative which can make sense in this verse, but say something a little different.

1) "to [the] Law" means that Paul is saying that he no longer has a relationship with the Law; he is "dead to it." It no longer affects him; he does not respond to it. *Cf* Rom. 6:1-4.

2) "in [the] Law" means that the Law was the realm and sphere where he died "through [the effects of the] Law."

3) "with [the] Law" tells us that Paul died when the Law died – on the cross.

Paul expresses a similar argument in Rom. 7:5-6,

**5. For when we [= Adam/Israel] were existing within the flesh** (or: = in the old alienated Adamic existence, with the flesh sacrifices and markers of the Law), **the effects, impressions, emotions and impulses from the experiences, passions and suffering of the failures** (the sins; the deviations which caused misses of the target) –

**the things through means of the Law [the Torah] – were continually operating** (working within; energizing and effecting) **within our members into the condition to produce fruit by Death** (in death; to death; for Death).

6. **But now** (at the present time), **we [= Israel] are** (or: were instantly) **rendered inactive** (brought down to living without labor, released from employment, made unproductive; discharged) **away from the Law** (= the Torah; [some MSS add: of Death]),

**dying within that in which we were constantly being held down** (held in possession and detained), **so that it is [for] us to be habitually performing as slaves within newness of spirit** (a newness pertaining to spirit and has its source in the Breath-effect; freshness and new quality of attitude) **and not in oldness** (obsolescence; outdatedness) **of letter** (or: not in outwornness of what is written).

Likewise, here, he expresses the purpose described in Rom. 7:6 – **"to the end that I could and would LIVE by God, in God, for God, to God and with**

**God!"** As you see, the word **God** is also in the dative, with no expressed preposition. I think that Paul did this purposely in order to express the fullness of the functions of the dative. The phrase "**newness of spirit** (etc.) in Rom. 7:6 is a way of saying "within a new covenant" – as contrasted to the "**obsoleteness of letter** (read 'old covenant')." "

20. **I was crucified together with Christ** [= the Messiah], **and thus it remains** (or: I have been jointly put on the execution stake in [the] Anointed One, and continue in this state), **yet I continue living!** [It is] **no longer I, but it is Christ continuously living and**

**alive within me!** (or: No longer an "I" – now Christ constantly lives in the midst of, and in union with, me). **Now that which I, at the present moment, continue living within flesh** (= a physical body), **I am constantly living within faith, trust and confidence – in and by that [faith] which is the Son of God** (or: in union with the trust and confidence that is from God's Son [with other MSS: in the confidence belonging to God and Christ]), **the One loving me and giving Himself over to another for the sake of me** (or: even transmitting Himself, over my [situation and condition]; or: also passing Himself along for me).

Paul says that he was crucified together with the Messiah. It was the Law that crucified Christ (John 19:7), and so it was the Law that also crucified Paul. Note the perfect tense of the verb: it happened in the past and the results continue into the present and on into the future. We again find "**Christ**" in the dative case without a preposition in the Greek, so I also rendered this word "in [the] Anointed One." Paul was "in Christ" when Christ was on the cross — even when Paul was an enemy (Rom. 5:10) of the cross, the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul was a part of the first Adam, and upon Christ's resurrection he became a part of the last

(*eschatos*) Adam: spiritual, heavenly and a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:45-49). Another picture presented by the phrase "**within me**" (*en emoi*) is that the Messiah lives on through the life of Paul and His followers.

Paul continues living because Christ continues living – but now they and we are in the new creation. We live in the Life of the age of the Messiah, and we live in this eonian life because "**it is Christ continuously living and alive within [us]!**" In the Christ-life there is no longer an *ego* (an "I"), but "now Christ constantly lives in the midst of, and in union with, me." This was true for Paul, but he was presenting himself as a

representative individual – a living epistle that exhibited the new creation. He represents the Israel that died with Christ, but has now been resurrected with Him, as well. "... the Christian has died to law by being crucified with Christ" (Harvey, *ibid*).

We should not miss the ontological implications for Christ (our Life) living within and in union with each cell of the body (i.e., within each individual – for without the Life, the cell/individual dies), but as Harvey just pointed out, Paul is still crafting an argument by using his life as the example for the life of the corporate body of Christ. We – corporately and individually – are now

Christ's new body: He lives within us by His Spirit. But we are also the Second Humanity of the new covenant. The First Humanity died with Christ on the cross. Like Paul, **"Now that which [we], at the present moment, continue living within flesh (= a physical body), [we are] constantly living within faith, trust and confidence – in and by that [faith] which is the Son of God."** Cf Rom. 4:16.

The optional rendering is also true, "in union with the trust and confidence that is from God's Son." Other MSS read, "in the confidence belonging to God and Christ." The picture is one of corporate solidarity which describes the character

and sphere of the new covenant/arrangement.

Paul gives a beautiful description which defines the Son of God: "**the One loving me and giving Himself over to another for the sake of me** (or: even transmitting Himself, over my [situation and condition]; or: also passing Himself along for me)." This of course is reference to His death on the cross. In Paul (representative of all of Israel) we see again that the Jew required the death of the Messiah in order to be included in the new covenant and to be turned in the right direction (rightwised – Bultmann's preferred rendering of *dikaioσune*).

**21. I make it no habit to displace**

(shove aside; upset; thus: reject; thwart; repudiate; nullify) **God's grace and favor! For if justice, equity and freedom from guilt with right relationship within the Way pointed out (= covenant inclusion) [is] through Law (= by legalism or religious works), then as a consequence Christ died as a mere gratuity (= for nothing; to no purpose).**

Again we see Paul putting his life as a letter to be read, and as the embodiment of the gospel. To take up, or to return to, Law-keeping would be to displace, shove aside, upset and thus reject, thwart, repudiate and nullify **God's grace and favor**. Paul did not do this,

but the dualistic behavior of Peter (vs. 11, above) and of the Judaizers did exactly this. He ends this phase of his arguments with an impassioned assertion:

**"For if justice, equity and freedom from guilt with right relationship within the Way pointed out (= covenant inclusion) [is] through Law (= by legalism or religious works), then as a consequence Christ died as a mere gratuity (= for nothing; to no purpose)."**

This should have struck like a spear-point into the hearts of the Galatians. What could be worse than this? If we

include the Law or Torah-keeping in our life, then "[our] **faith and trust exists being devoid of success and results – [we] are still within the midst of and in union with [our] mistakes, failures and sins!**" (1 Cor. 15:17).

## Chapter 3

**1. O senseless, unreflecting and foolish Galatians! Who suddenly harmed you with malicious words, or bewitched you folks with the evil eye – before whose eyes Jesus Christ was graphically placarded (= as though portrayed in writing before your own eyes) one having been crucified on a stake?**

The rhetorical device that Paul uses in the first clause of his question is the castigation of the opponents and their message. He places them as 1) adversaries who "**harmed [them] with malicious words**" – which may be a

reference to their teachings – and 2) those who deal with witchcraft: **"bewitched you folks with the evil eye."** These are the two main meanings of *baskaino*. Paul is probably using irony here, not meaning it literally except for the first (and oldest) meaning: cause harm with unfavorable words. A paraphrase of "cunningly deceive" is likely to be his meaning, although as a rhetor he may be intentionally exaggerating their situation – as though someone had actually cast a spell on them that they would pay any attention to these folks who would use this kind of pressure to get them conform to Jewish customs.

The last clause refers to the time of the Galatians initially being presented with the message of goodness, ease and well-being which came into being through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He is indicating that the proclamation of the good news was clearly given to them. Ann Nyland suggests that Paul is using a play on words: the "evil eye" and "portrayed before their eyes" (*The Source New Testament*, *ibid.* p 356 n 4). "**Placarded**" refers to the practice of announcing news to the public by means of posting a notice in a common area that would catch their attention. The picture of the true and complete evangel had been clearly written out for them: Christ

(the Messiah) crucified – and nothing more. The death of the Messiah symbolized the death of Israel and of the old covenant. In fact it **signaled** the end of natural Israel and religious Israel (John 4:21). Simeon had prophesied of Jesus that,

**"This One continues lying down into the midst of a fall, and then a standing back up again, of many people within Israel – and into a SIGN being constantly spoken in opposition to, and being repeatedly contradicted!"** (Lu. 2:34).

From his statements about the Law,

above, we now see that he has put the Law in the arena of the occult – something that God condemned under the Law: they are operating apart from God, for God's "camp" has moved on (referencing the wilderness journey of Israel). In fact His present called-out covenant community has figuratively "crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land."

**2. This only am I intending** (wanting; purposing; willing) **to learn from you people: Did you receive the Spirit** (or: get the Breath-effect; take in hand the Attitude) **forth from out of works of Law, or from out of a hearing of, and which is, faith**

(or: from the midst of faith's hearing; or: from a hearing that arises from faith; or: out of a listening which has the qualities and characteristics of trust and confidence)?

So now he calls them to task: How did they "**receive the Spirit** (get the Breath-effect; take in hand the Attitude)"? Did this happen from observing the Law, or did it come to them "**from out of a hearing of, and which is, faith?**" Here I have rendered the noun faith as both a genitive of source, and as apposition. In this latter, the hearing IS the impartation of faith. In the parenthetical expansion I give faith as a genitive of possession, of

source and of quality/character while rendering *pistis* as "trust and confidence." The question is rhetorical, of course. They know the answer, but Paul is calling to their attention the situation of their beginnings as covenant communities. As with the discussion regarding Abraham which follows, below, his point is that through the proclamation of the Christ crucified they had "heard" God and in this manner had received the Spirit as an impartation from the Father – the Spirit of Promise which was the clear identity marker that the new age had come; the Messiah now reigned as Lord. The Day of Pentecost was a clear demonstration (Acts 2).

**3. Are you so senseless, unreflecting and foolish? Being folks making a beginning inwardly by spirit** (or: in breath-effect; by [the] Spirit; with [the] result of [the] Breath) **are you folks now being progressively brought fully to the goal** (being totally finished, perfected and brought to your destiny) **by flesh** (or, as a middle: are you now continuing to accomplish completeness in yourselves in, or with, flesh)?

[note: Paul is using the word “flesh” here as a figure for “works of Law” (vs.2, above), with its circumcision, animal sacrifices, etc.; for other religions it would refer to

“religious works” of those particular systems (including Christianity, in the following centuries)]

In his next rhetorical question I have given three meanings of *anoetos* (from *a-nous*: without a mind or intellect; lack of understanding): **senseless, unreflecting and foolish**. He is not being easy on them, but is piling up amazed wonder at their reception of these Judaizers. Then he asks another probing question: If they had made their beginning "**inwardly by spirit** (or: in breath-effect; by [the] Spirit; with [the] result of the Breath)," are they now going to live their lives under the old

covenant with its outward performances of ritual Law observances? Will this totally finish and perfect them in the maturity of their destiny? Is the old religion the means of **"being progressively brought fully to the goal?"**

The verb *epiteleisthe* is either passive (the bold rendering) or middle (the parenthetical option). The preposition *epi* that is prefixed to the main verb acts as an intensifier, giving the meanings of "fully, or totally." The present tense shows that Paul is referring to their progression through life, or along the Path (in Christ).

God had breathed into them, and they

became living souls of the new creation. Their end cannot come via a flesh-system or a works-religion. Lynda Mitchell called to mind here, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The intent of the new covenant in which Christ is in them and they are in Christ is to bring humanity to the goal: to be true image-bearers of God that accurately reflect His glory of love and grace.

Covenant inclusion is the result and the effect of God's breath into humanity – each one in his own class or order (1 Cor. 15:23). It does not happen because of ANY outward act – neither

circumcision nor baptism. There are no longer any identity markers in the realm of flesh. The identity markers are the fruit that we bear (Lu. 6:44), which is the natural, divine production of the new creation (the Vine) – the Man of the Spirit – the Christ within both the body and the individual.

**4. Did you folks experience or suffer so many things randomly, for no cause or purpose – if in reality [there] even [is] "for no cause," or "by random happenings"?**

This next rhetorical question demonstrates the connection of their experiences and sufferings (persecutions) with the purposes of His

reign and sovereign activities. His image-bearers follow the cruciform Path, carrying their own execution stakes behind Him (Matt. 16:24). One of the purposes of His execution was to tear down the old sacrificial system with its worship and life-way cultus. Paul continued in the progressive process of tearing it down (2:18, above). The church's sacraments are a rebuilding of what was torn down – they are fleshly and religious attempts to bring humans to the goal (Christ) and to include them in the covenant by means of a symbolic ceremony, just as the Jews had done under the old covenant.

The experiences and sufferings of life

are for a cause and have purpose. This is one of the greatest encouragements of this life. **"So then (or: Consequently), the Death is repeatedly operating and inwardly working within us, yet the Life [is constantly operative] within you folks"** (2 Cor. 4:12). There is a connection between the two, for we – the one body – are joined and connected (*cf* 1 Cor. 12:26-27). We show the world His great love by laying down our lives for our friends and neighbors (e.g., the "good Samaritan"). Things do not happen randomly.

**5. The One, therefore, continuously furnishing and supplying to (or: for; in) you folks the Spirit (or: the spirit; the**

breath; or: = attitude and vitality), **and constantly and effectively energizing, being active, working and producing abilities and powers within you people – [is its source] from out of works of Law, or out of a "hearing" whose source is faith,**

(or: The one, then, constantly supplying the Breath-effect for you folks, and repeatedly working powers among you – [does he do it] from out of deeds based on [the] Law [= Torah], or from out of faith's attentive listening,)

**"The One"** here is God. Now note the present tense in the verbs in this verse.

They signify an unbroken connection and relationship between the communities and God. They signify union with God, for the people and the communities are God's house within whom He dwells. In 1 Cor. 6:19 Paul informs the Corinthians,

**"Or, have you folks not seen so as to know that your body is a temple of the set- apart spirit** (or: a sanctuary belonging to the Holy Spirit; a holy place and a holy of holies which pertains to the Sacred Breath; or: that the body, which is you folks, exists being a divine habitation which has the

qualities and characteristics of the Holy Attitude) – **within the midst of you** (or: in union with you folks) – **which you people constantly hold and progressively possess from God?"**

The pronouns "**your**" and "**you**" are plural, while the word "**body**" is singular, here. He is speaking of the corporate body – which has many members (1 Cor. 12:12). God is "**continuously furnishing and supplying to, for and in [the Galatian communities (and ours)] THE SPIRIT**" which gives Life to His called-out folks. The picture here is that of

branches being continuously supplied nourishment for growth through the flow of the sap which comes from the Vine (John 15:1 ff). He is also **"constantly and effectively energizing, being active, working and producing abilities and powers within [them]."** Here we see indwelling, participation and union. This was the state of their spiritual existence, so now he poses another rhetorical question: did this new creation, this new union and relationship, this new realm of being come about **"from out of works of Law, or out of a 'hearing' whose source is faith just as [with] Abraham?"** The answer is obvious: from a hearing that

came from an injection of faith – just as with the case of Abraham, as Paul continues to say in vs. 6.

It is God that is doing the work within and among them, while producing abilities and powers within and among them – why should they need to add ritual or ceremony to this new natural existence in Christ?

Guthrie points out,

"The verb used here is also used by Paul in 2 Cor. 9:10 and Col. 2:19, and the corresponding noun in Eph. 4:16 and Phil. 1:19, in all of which instances there is the idea of abundant supply. In Phil. 1:19, the notion

is applied as here to the Spirit"  
(ibid. p 93)

The second, parenthetical rendering offers some alternate meanings of some of the Greek words and gives *en* as "among," with the plural pronoun "you." This presents a corporate focus of the verse. The Breath-effect is constantly being supplied "for" them and repeatedly works "among" them. The Life that is given with the Breath of God produces abilities and powers within the covenant community. The faith that came through hearing the message from Paul had produced attentive listening, which in turn gave the Spirit's leading (Rom. 8:14) to the group – implanting them

within the new covenant, the olive tree, the Vine.

6. **just as Abraham, "trusts in God (or: believed by God; experienced confidence with God), and he is/was at once logically considered by Him [that he had come] into a right relationship (or: and it was counted for him into a rightwised [covenantal] relationship with freedom from guilt, equity and justice which comprise the Way pointed out)"?** [Gen. 15:6]

Here again, "**God**" is in the dative with no expressed preposition in the text. So we see that "**Abraham [upon hearing God's words] believed BY God, and so trusts in God, and then experienced**

**confidence with God."** "In" expresses the local dative – the location. This means that Abraham was "in the sphere of and was located in" God, which engendered trust in Him. These circumstances (which God initiated and produced) then produced the faithful response TO God that was "**logically considered BY [God]**" as being "a right relationship TO God." Thus it was "counted for him INTO a rightwised [covenantal] relationship... which comprises the Way pointed out (which equals Christ: 'the sphere of God which sustains and supplies the rightwised life' – Lynda Mitchell)."

Faith and trust, in response to God, are

fruit of His Spirit being within humanity. They are called forth when He focuses on us, just as when the sun warms the tree in springtime. When the proper season and fitting situation (the *kairos*) arrive, the tree automatically blossoms due to the flow of the sap in the branches (which sap comes from the Root and Trunk). I recall my mother often saying, "You don't just pin apples to a tree." The sap is analogous to the Spirit (I owe this analogy to my father). We, the branches, produce God's fruit (fruit of the Spirit). His nature abides within us in this new creation. The coming of the Spirit gave life to what was dead; it aroused the seed that was asleep within our earth; it

caused the sap to flow within the plant. The evidence (from the blossoming to the ripe fruit) of faith and trust are counted as a rightwised relationship (one born of covenant union) – they "comprise the Way pointed out which frees us from any sense of guilt and creates in us the presence of fairness, equity and justice." This is *dikaio<sup>s</sup>une* (often called "justification"). This existence is "abiding in the Vine of covenant." You see, Christ IS the new covenant – the new arrangement that God has made.

Paul further develops this understanding of Gen. 15:6 in Romans ch. 4.

**7. Be assured consequently, by your**

**experiential knowledge and insight,**  
(or, as an indicative: Surely you are  
coming to know) **that the folks**  
**[springing] forth from out of the midst**  
**of faith** (or: whose source is trust and  
confidence), **these are Abraham's**  
**sons!**

Thus it is that we can be assured that we  
are in the same category as Abraham –  
we are his sons: those who have the  
qualities and characteristics that were  
recognized in (and "counted" for) him.  
We have sprung "**forth from out of the**  
**midst of faith.**" God's faith, implanted  
within us, gave birth to sons of faith  
(figuratively termed here as sons of  
Abraham).

"Like every Jew, Paul regarded Abraham as the key figure in the history of mankind.... [and] a 'son of Abraham' could mean: an Abraham-like man" (Harvey, *ibid.* p 606).

Now let us consider this verse in the context of Paul's ongoing forensic presentation to the Galatians. In vs. 5 he assures them that the gift of "the Spirit" came to them through the medium of faith (equivalent to the new covenant, in Paul's arguments) – and not through old covenant Law. Vs. 6 ties Abraham's faith, and God's covenant with him, to the means of being included in this covenant of the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6) – which is rightwised

living in God's kingdom. And now in vs. 7 we see that the folks (both Jew and Gentile) whose source is trust and confidence are, in fact, "**Abraham's sons.**" This would mean that they are thus heirs of the promises made to Abraham, which included the nations of the ethnic multitudes being blessed through him and his Seed. The case that Paul is building continues in vs. 8.

**8. Now the Scripture – seeing before [as a picture] that God is progressively putting the nations in rightwised relationship** (setting the ethnic groups of non-Jews into the Way pointed out and freeing them from guilt) **from out of faith – announced to** (or:

for) **Abraham beforehand the message of goodness, ease and well-being**

(or: And further – the Scripture perceiving in advance and making provision that He is presently making the multitudes fair and equitable {or: = including the Gentiles in the covenant} from trust and conviction as a source – God brought-before in Abraham the glad tidings of goodness {a gospel; an evangel}), **namely that,**

**"All the nations, ethnic groups and multitudes will be inwardly blessed (will receive the Word**

of wellness, within; will participate within the Good Word) **in a union with you** (or: within you; in you; or: = in relation to you; or: = as in your case)." [Gen. 12:3; 22:18]

This is a curious picture: **Scripture** (the body of written Logos) both saw and perceived – Scripture is being personified here. In seeing, it also made provision for the work of God: the progressive "**putting**" (which is the "work" of God – He did it in Christ) of "**the nations** (ethnic multitudes; Gentiles) **in rightwised relationship** (= covenant inclusion of the Gentiles in a rightwised relationship to God and to

others). And all this was "**from out of** the faithfulness, trust and **faith**" of Jesus in His work on the cross. It also may have been that Paul had heard the oral tradition of Jesus having said to the Jews, i.e., the religious authorities,

**"Abraham, your father, was exceedingly glad (or: exulted) to the end that he could see My day, and he saw (caught sight of; beheld; observed; perceived) [it] and then was graced (or: favored; or: rejoiced; was made glad)"** – John 8:56.

Scripture announced and brought to Abraham – in the age before the age of

the Law – the very message of goodness, ease and well-being that would be embodied in the Messiah. "This is clearly more than exegesis of the Genesis passage. It is a reappraisal of the original promise in the light of the coming of Christ" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 96). Within Abraham's Seed (the Messiah) **"All the nations, ethnic groups and multitudes will be inwardly blessed** (will receive the Word of wellness, within; will participate within the Good Word) **in union with [Abraham]."** The verb that would normally be rendered "be blessed" has the preposition *en* prefixed to it, thus the added word **"inwardly"** – this is an inward work of

the Spirit. Consider as well the option "will receive the Word of wellness, **within**," or the option "will participate **within** the Good Word." Don't miss the passive voice of this verb: it will happen to them – they have no part in it happening.

So keep in mind the fact that **God** is doing the acting, and He is "presently making the multitudes fair and equitable, and is freeing them from any sense of guilt." "Justification" is God "**putting** (folks) in the Way (Christ) that He has pointed out and turning them in the right direction."

9. **So then, those from out of faith** (or: = folks who are derived from trust and

confidence and who come from a place of loyal allegiance) **are being constantly blessed** (repeatedly given the Word of wellness; continuously made to participate in the Good Word) **together with the full-of-faith Abraham** (or: the trusting, believing, convinced and loyal Abraham).

This "**those**" includes the wild olive branches – the Gentiles, or non-Jews – being grafted into the cultivated olive tree (Rom. 11:17) among the remaining branches that were not broken out (the believing Jews). It is a work of God, not of a human.

Paul uses the normal verb for "**blessed**" here, without the prefix *en*, but from vs.

8 we understand that it is an inward blessing as folks who are derived from Christ's trust, confidence and loyal allegiance receive the Good Word into their hearts. They are engrafted into the olive tree whose roots are Abraham – the one that was filled with faith from God's Word to him. Observe the present tense of the verb: constantly, repeatedly, continuously – and probably progressively – blessed. This verb is also passive: the action is happening to these people.

Again Paul has driven home his point of the blessings of Abraham coming by faith and trust – not by the Law. See the short study on "The Rich Man and

Lazarus" at the end of these comments on Galatians.

**10. You see, however many people continue their existence from the midst of observances and works of Law (= Everyone who lives by deeds and actions based upon the Torah) are continuously under a curse (a negative, down-focused or adversarial prayer; an imprecation), for it has been and now stands written, namely that,**

**"A curse (or: an adversarial prayer; imprecation) [is settled] upon all (or: [is] added to everyone) not constantly remaining within all the things having been and standing**

**written within the scroll of the Law [= Torah], in order to do them."** [Deut. 27:26]

If our existence derives from the old covenant – the Torah, the Law – we continuously exist under a curse, for it stands written in this Deuteronomy text that the folks under the Law must "**do** (practice; perform, produce) **them.**" This statement was inclusive of the whole Law when given by Moses to Israel, and it remained inclusive unto the close of that age – with the coming of the Messiah. Paul quotes the LXX that has the word "**all**" twice, as here. We cannot pick and choose what we think should apply from the Torah. The curse

(adversarial prayer; imprecation) comes from not doing **all** the words that are written "**within the scroll of the Law.**" This means the whole Torah. To bring any part of the Torah into the new covenant is to bring in the curse upon those who are instructed to follow ANY of it. Paul used this same phrase "**works of Law**" in vs. 2 and 5, above, in leading up to this serious announcement in his arguments to the Galatians. Paul is in effect saying that those under the old covenant (and anyone who would insert something from the old into the new) exist under this curse.

I gave a paraphrase of the first clause to aid in understanding what the Greek is

saying. If a person bases their way of living upon what the Torah says, they come under all the curses listed in Deut. 27:14-26 and 28:15-68. It would be advisable to read those passages before deciding to put the ten commandments on your walls or public places as the guide for righteous living.

**11. Now [the fact] that within [the] Law no one is in process of** (or: in union with [the] Law or some legal practice or custom is no one normally) **being rightwised** (put in right relationship; made just, fair, equitable, set free from guilt, or, placed within the Way pointed out; also: = made a covenant member) **at God's side** (or:

with God) [is] **clearly visible and evident, because,**

**"the fair and equitable man** (the one in right relationship within the Way pointed out; the just one) **will live from out of faith** (or: the one [who is] just from out of faith, trust and conviction, will live)," [Hab. 2:4]

No one is being rightwised at God's side – no one (neither Jew nor Gentile) is included in the new covenant or placed in the Way – WITHIN (or: in union with the) Law, i.e., within the old covenant that is based upon the Torah. The Law has no part in the new covenant. It no

longer is a way to be in right relation with Yahweh, nor with other people. The new inclusion is via Jesus Christ's faith and faithfulness.

The only "**fair, just and equitable Man**" is Jesus Christ. Only by being in Him – being joined to and abiding in Him – are we "**living from out of faith and trust**" and having His faith-life as the source of our living.

12. **yet the Law is not** (or: [Torah] does not have its existence) [**springing**] **forth from out of faith and trust, but to the contrary,**

**"the one 'doing and performing' them shall be living [his life] within them** (or:

in union with these things)."

[Lev. 18:5]

Again Paul contrasts the Law, or Torah, with **faith and trust**. The Law does not have faith and trust as its source. It is an existence of "**doing and performing**" which defines and delineates its path. The faith that is based upon Promise is a life lived in the Spirit and which came to us via the life, death and resurrection of Christ. He inaugurated a new arrangement that is based upon our life in Him, not our performing or doing the works of the old covenant.

13. **Christ bought us [back] out** (or: redeems and reclaims us out by payment of the ransom) **from the midst of the**

**curse** (or: adversarial prayer; imprecation) **of and from the Law,** **while becoming** (or: birthing Himself to be) **a curse** (or: accursed One; an [embodied] adversarial prayer) **for our sakes** (or: over our [situation]) – **for it has been and now stands written:**

**"A curse** (an adversarial prayer) **[is settled] upon all** (or: [is] added to everyone) **continuing hanging upon a tree** (or: wood; a stake or pole)"  
[Deut. 21:23, omitting the phrase "by God," after the word "curse"] –

The Law's curse had enslaved them – and thus the need for redemption. Christ

came into the midst of this curse on behalf of their condition. And so,

**"You see, even the Son of the Man (or: And so, the Son of humanity, as well,) did not come to be given attending service, but to the contrary, to give attending service, and further, to give His soul (or: soul life) [as] a ransom payment – for unbinding and release – for, as, in the place of, and thus on behalf of and which corresponds to, many people."** (Mark 10:45)

The curse of the Law was death (the wages of sin or failure was death), so

He died as Israel, and "**as many people.**" The last phrase of this verse in Mark uses *anti*, and one of its meanings is "**as.**" The blessings of Abraham were extended to all the nations, so Paul saw that He in fact died as the first Man, the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). With the Gentiles being grafted into Israel's olive tree (the life and source of the Anointing – Rom. 11:17), the work of the Messiah applies now to us, as well. This was God reconciling us to Himself and freeing us from death since we non-Jews were far off and estranged from the life of the covenant, as Paul says in Eph. 2:

**12. that (or: because) you were, and continued on being**

**for that season** (or: in that appointed situation), **apart from Christ** ([the] Anointed One; = [the] Messiah): **people having been alienated from the state of being a citizen** (or: estranged from citizenship in the commonwealth) **of Israel and [being] strangers pertaining to the arrangements of** (or: foreigners from covenants and testamentary dispositions whose origin is) **The Promise** (or the assurance), **continually having no expectation** (or: hope), **and [were] folks without God** (or: godless; atheists) **within the**

**ordered System** (world of culture, religion and governments).

**13. But now, within and in union with Christ Jesus, you – the folks once being** (continuously existing) **far off** (or: at a distance) – **came to be** (were birthed; are generated; are suddenly become) **near, immersed within and in union with the blood of the Christ** (the Anointed One).

Paul has used the phrase of Deut. 21:23 to connect Christ's death with a symbol for the curse of the Law. His hanging upon a tree, or pole, fulfilled the

payment that ransomed humanity from slavery to the Law, and His resurrection brought humanity into freedom (5:1, below) from the bondage to failure and sin. As the Last (*eschatos*) Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) Christ became a life-giving Spirit – giving life in the spirit to a dead humanity.

His word-pictures are set in the scene of Israel's history, but his conclusions are the news about Christ's birth from the grave (which became a womb) which he elsewhere describes as a new creation: the life of the Age of the Messiah, and an arrangement where all humanity is one (Eph. 2:14).

"Christ's death on the cross rendered him

**an accursed thing;** yet Christ was shown (by the resurrection) not to be accursed in God's eyes, but on the contrary righteous. Thus, by Christ, the law was discredited, and along with the law that [traditional] legalistic interpretation [by the Jews] according to which it was thought that the blessing of Abraham could be extended only to the Jews" (Harvey, *ibid.* p 608; bracketed insertions mine).

**14. to the end that the Good Word** (the Blessing; the Word of wellness and goodness) **pertaining to Abraham** (belonging to and possessed by Abraham; whose intermediary source is Abraham) **could within Jesus Christ**

**suddenly birth Itself** (or: may from Itself, within Christ Jesus, at once come into being [and be dispersed]) **into the multitudes** (the nations; the ethnic groups; the Gentiles), **so that we** [note: "we" = the new "one" mankind?] **could receive the Spirit's promise through the Faith**

(or: to the end that we [all] may take in hand the Promise from the Breath-effect, through trust; or: in order that we [Jew and Gentile] can lay hold of and receive the Promise – which is the Spirit – through faith and conviction).

The purpose of our being redeemed and

reclaimed from out of the curse of the Law was so that the Good Word (blessing; word of well-being) that was promised to (and pertained to) Abraham could suddenly birth itself and come into existence within Jesus Christ – and from Him be dispersed into the ethnic multitudes (non-Jews), so that we all, as one new humanity (the Second Humanity – 1 Cor. 15:47), could receive the Spirit's promise that was made to Abraham. "[T]he **Faith**" to which Paul refers here is the faith and faithfulness of Jesus Christ "**through**" which it came to us. The Abrahamic covenant was a unilateral covenant: a promise made by God, who said that HE would do it.

The parenthetical expansion of the last phrase informs us "that we [all] may take in hand the Promise [God's Spirit – Lu. 24:49; and Acts 1:4, 'the promise which is the Father'] from the Breath-effect, through trust." This last phrase reads *tou pneuma* as an ablative, expressing the Spirit as the source of the Promise. "The Promise which is the Spirit" expresses this same phrase as apposition. Note that here I have suggested that "we" means "[Jew and Gentile]."

So to "receive and take hold of" the Promise, all mankind had to be **"bought [back] out from the midst of the curse of and from the Law"** (vs. 13, above). This would have applied "to the Jew

first, and then to the Greek." That curse was death.

Harvey (ibid.) points to the dual meanings of the word *diatheke* which was used in the LXX in the particular case of the covenant, or arrangement, made by Yahweh with Israel, but which also had a secular meaning of "last will and testament." Paul takes up this second meaning as he begins the next phase of his arguments in vs. 15.

**15. Brothers** (= fellow believers; family), **I am now speaking humanly** (in accordance with and on the level of mankind; = with an illustration of common human practice). **Like with the situation of a human settled**

**arrangement** (or: will; contract; covenant; or: will and testament deed of gift): [when] **existing as having been validated** (authoritatively confirmed; legally ratified; publicly affirmed), **no one is proceeding to displace it** (to annul it; to set it aside) **or modify it or add stipulations** (super-add an injunction; add a codicil; introduce additions or arrangements throughout it). Here his rhetoric takes the form of "an illustration of common human practice." He sets before them "**the situation of a human settled arrangement**, a will, a contract or a deed of gift." He points out that once it is "**validated**, authoritatively confirmed and legally ratified or

publicly affirmed," no one can "**displace it**, annul it, set it aside, modify it, add a codicil or introduce additions or arrangements throughout it."

This kind of legal transaction from existing customs becomes the basis of the following arguments. With this in place, he reaches back into Israel's history to a time before the Law came into being and before Israel was a "people" or a recognized nation.

**16. Now the promises were declared (said; spoken) to (or: for; in) Abraham, and to (or: for; in) his Seed (Descendant). It (or: He) is not saying, "And to the seeds (descendants)," as upon many, but rather, as upon One,**

**"And to, for and in your Seed,"** [Gen. 12:7; 13:15; etc.] **Who exists being Christ** (or: which is [the] Anointed One [= the Messiah]).

Now he picks up his theme of **"the promises"** that were made **"to** (or: for; in) **Abraham, and to** (or: for; in) **his Seed** (Descendant)." Making an issue of the singular form of the noun "seed" in Gen. 12:7, 13:15, etc., he boldly states that this **"Seed"** is Christ, the Messiah. Harvey instructs us that the rabbis study their Scriptures from different methods of interpretation:

"In the so-called 'allegorical' method of interpreting Scripture, which Paul occasionally

adopted (see below on 4:24), the hidden or 'spiritual' meaning of a text was held to be at least as important as the literal meaning. One of the signs which was believed to indicate the presence of such a hidden meaning was a noun occurring in the singular when a plural noun might have been expected (or vice versa)" (ibid.)

Israel had long awaited the coming of the Messiah, but the Jewish leadership had rejected Jesus as being the one that had been promised. Paul, however, had affirmed to those in Galatia that the Messiah had indeed come in Jesus, and

now he reminds them that He is the Promised Seed (vss. 14, 16). If the Messiah has come, then the awaited age had begun and all has changed.

**17. Further, I am now saying and meaning this: the Law [= Torah], being that having come into existence after four hundred and thirty years, is not invalidating (depriving of authority; annulling) into the situation to idle-down (render ineffective, useless, unproductive or inoperative) the Promise – a settled arrangement (contract; covenant; will and testament deed of gift) existing as having been previously validated (confirmed; legally ratified) by, and under [the**

**authority of], God!**

In vs. 17 he builds upon the history of Yahweh's relationship with Abraham. This was the basis of the unilateral covenant and the origin of the promises. "[T]he Law [= Torah]... **having come into existence AFTER... is not invalidating, or making inoperative, the Promise**" which was "a settled arrangement, a contract, a will and testament, a deed of gift." What had been inserted in the interim between the creation of the "settled arrangement" and the death of the testator (God, in Christ) could not in any way alter God's covenant with Abraham. The point that he is making is that cultic works of the

Law cannot displace the faith brought by the Spirit, and cannot make the new covenant dependent upon the rituals of the Mosaic arrangements, nor upon any part of the Torah that had to do with the Law.

**18. For if the inheritance** (the possession and enjoyment of the distributed allotment) **[is] from out of Law [= Torah], [it is] no longer from out of Promise. Yet God has Himself graced [it]** (has for Himself, in favor, freely granted [it]), **so that it now stands as a favor of grace, to** (or: for; in) **Abraham through a Promise** (or: because of a promise).

In this verse Paul distinguishes between

an inheritance based upon the Law and one based upon Promise: the two are mutually exclusive. If this life in Christ is dependent upon aspects of the Law, then it is not any part of the Promise. These contrasting scenarios neither overlap nor do they mix.

Next, Paul inserts the component of grace, favor and gratuity, so that "**it now stands as a favor of grace, to** (or: for; in) **Abraham through a Promise** (or: because of a promise)." The result is that the Good Word (the blessing) comes to the ethnic multitudes (the nations; the non-Jews) apart from the Law as a freely granted gift that was based upon God's promise to Abraham.

**19. Why, then, the Law [= Torah] of The Transgressions? It was at one point set aiming at, and thus provided a view to, grace and favor [D, F, G & others read: It was appointed for (or: set {beside}) grace]**

(or: Why, then, the Law? It was placed close and applied {imposed; added} on behalf of the walks to the side of [the path]; or: What, therefore [is] the Law [= Torah]? Something set, as a favor, face-to-face with the over-steppings and transgressions to the side of and beyond [the Way])

**– being precisely arranged and**

**thoroughly prescribed and mandated by injunction through means of agents** (or: messengers; folks with the message) **within the midst of [the] hand of a mediator** (or: in an umpire's hand; within [the] hand of an arbitrator or an intermediary in a middle position) – **as far as to where** (or: until which place or time) **the Seed would** (or: should) **come, to Whom and for Whom the promise had been made** (or: in Whom He had been promised).

Paul anticipates his audience's questions and objections to what he has just said, above, with another rhetorical question. As a good rhetor he immediately gives the answer before his opponents can

make their points: **"It was at one point set aiming at, and thus provided a view to, grace and favor..."** The alternate MSS readings give a paraphrase: "It was appointed for, or set beside, grace." This recalls Paul's statement in Rom. 5:20,

**"Now Law and custom at one point entered in alongside (or: came into the situation by the side) to the end that the effect of the fall to the side (or: so that the result of the offense and the stumbling aside) would increase to be more than enough (should greatly abound and become more intense). But**

**where the Sin** (the failure; the divergence and missing of the target) **increases** (or: abounded to be more than enough; becomes more intense) **THE GRACE** ("the act producing happiness, which is granted as a favor" – Jim Coram) **at once super-exceeds** (or: hyper-exceeded) **over and above, surrounding to excessive abundance and overflow."**

It was set as a contrast, and was to be a dark, shadowy backdrop to the grace that was to come in Jesus Christ. These renderings set the Law apart from grace, indicating that it was just a sign post that

was set to point away from itself to the grace of the promised **Seed**.

The optional parenthetical renderings are also instructive:

"Why, then, the Law? It was placed close and applied (added; imposed) on behalf of the walks to the side [of the path]; "What, therefore, [is] the Law? Something set, as a favor, face to face with over-stepping and transgressions to the side of and beyond [the Way]."

The Law both defined and confronted transgressions. It was on behalf of people's failures and weaknesses, and was set as a favor to deal with them until

the time of the arrival of the Promised Seed. It was **"precisely arranged and thoroughly prescribed and mandated by injunction."**

This arrangement was made **"through means of agents** (or: messengers; folks with the message) **within the midst of [the] hand of a mediator** (or: in an umpire's hand; within [the] hand of an arbitrator or one in a middle position)."

These agents were Moses, Aaron, the priests and other folks (later, e.g., the prophets) to whom God may have given the message. Moses was the first mediator, followed by Joshua and the various judges. These agents mediated God's Law to Israel, from Moses to

Malachi.

This arrangement was only "**as far as to where** (or: until which place or time) **the Seed would** (or: should) **come, to Whom and for Whom the promise had been made** (or: in Whom He had been promised)." It was only in effect until the coming of the Messiah.

Thus, Paul describes the Law (and the cultic works associated with it) as parenthetical in the history of the Promise which began with Abraham and was fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ. The whole existence and history of Israel lasted only during this parenthesis – and was tied to the Law that created it. "The law furnished a norm by which

transgressions were produced (*cf* Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 14, 20; 7:7-12)"

(Samuel J. Mikolaski, *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, *ibid.* p1098).

"Paul has been arguing that salvation depends neither on physical descent from Abraham, nor on obedience to the (subsequently enacted) law, but only on faith..." (Harvey, *ibid.*).

**20. Now there is no mediator of one** (= when one person is concerned or is acting alone). **Yet** (or: Now) **God is One.**

[note: to make a promise, one is sufficient – there is no need for a middleman]

There was no middle position between

God and His promise. The Promise was not mediated through agents. God provided the Seed and He is the Promise. The implication from Paul's point is that since there was no intermediary involved with the Promise, then the Promise is superior to the covenant that came through the Law.

**21. Is the Law, then, following the pattern of** (or: down from; or: down against; or: on a par with; commensurate with; corresponding to) **God's promises? May it not happen** (It could not come to be; = Of course not)! **For if a law** (or: [the] Law) **were given which continued having power or being able at any point to make alive** (to construct

or create living folks; to engender living ones; to impart life), **really, the fairness and equity in right relationship** (the rightwised qualities of justice and freedom from guilt within the Way pointed out; also = covenant inclusion) **were likely being from out of the midst of [the] Law** [= Torah; other MSS: residing within law].

The various renderings of this rhetorical question derive from the semantic range of the preposition *kata*: following the pattern of; down from; down against; on a par with; commensurate with; corresponding to. To each of these the answer is "NO!" – or as Paul says, "Of course not!" In fact, there is no

association between the Law that was given to Israel and the promises that were made to Abraham. Why? Because the Law had no power or ability to **"make [folks] alive."** Now if it had been able to, then the fulfillment of the promises would likely have come from the Law. But this is not the case.

Guthrie makes a good observation about the final clause in relation to the "if-clause" concerning **law**, "righteousness is shown to be the counterpart of 'life' in the if-clause" (ibid. p 106). Thus, the eonian life ("**that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially know You, the only true and real {or: genuine} God – and Jesus**

**Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary" – John 17:3)** came with the promised Messiah (the Way, the Truth and the Life – John 14:6) and it is manifested in the covenant communities. The alternate reading of other MSS, "residing within law," would say that neither the power to engender life nor the true Way of fairness and equity (rightwised relationships; righteousness) were inherent within the Law.

**22. But to the contrary, the Scripture encircles and encloses [as fish in a net] all things, shuts them up together and locks the whole (the totality of everything) under (or: by) failure (error; deviation; the missing of the**

target; sin), **to the end that the Promise would** (or: could) **suddenly be given to** (or: in; for) **the folks habitually trusting** (or: progressively believing with faith's conviction) **from out of Jesus Christ's faith**

(or: forth from the midst of the faith whose source and origin is Jesus Christ; from the midst of the trust and conviction which is Jesus Christ; or: so that the promise [which comes] forth from Jesus Christ's trust, can at some point be given to the people presently having convinced assurance).

And here Paul emphasizes that the

hypothetical supposition in vs. 21 is not the case by his words, "**But to the contrary.**" The rest of this first clause "**encircles... under (or: by) failure (etc.)**" once again personifies Scripture and calls to mind Rom. 11:32,

**"For you see, God encloses, shuts up and locks all mankind (everyone; the entire lot of folks) into incomppliance (disobedience; stubbornness; lack of being convinced), to the end that He could (or: would; should) mercy all mankind (may make everyone, the all, recipients of mercy)!"**

The imagery in both of these verses is

that of a prison (and Christ came to set the prisoners free – Lu. 4:18). Guthrie notes that "By personifying Scripture the apostle reveals his estimate of the activity of the Word, which derives its authority from the activity of God" (ibid. p 107).

The second clause begins with the purpose conjunction, *hina*, "TO THE END THAT..." just as Paul did in Rom. 11:32. The **Promise** equates to "making everyone the recipients of mercy." But for Paul's forensic rhetoric, here, he is showing that the Law encloses everyone in slavery to failure and a missing of the target and goal of being image-bearers of God, and so to return to Law in any

way would strip folks of the freedom that Jesus purchased for them. The new arrangement is a habitual trusting and a progressive believing with faith's conviction which has its source in **Jesus Christ's faith** and faithfulness.

The optional renderings of the final phrase give more insights into the beauty of Christ's work for mankind. One gives the phrase as apposition: "from the midst of the trust and conviction which is Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ IS the faith and trust that comes to us as the Word, and that Word is spirit and life. The whole last clause can also read, "... so that the promise [which comes] forth from Jesus Christ's trust, can at some point be given

to the people presently having convinced assurance." This means that the proclaimed message of Jesus Christ crucified enters people, endowing them with the faith which the Word embodies, and brings them into covenant relationship with the Father and forms called-out communities of the body of Christ that has been brought to birth by the coming of the Spirit.

With each of these alternate translations, Christ is the One that is the source of peoples' faith, and it is His faithfulness to the Father (on the cross) that gives folks the faith and trust to believe what He has accomplished for humanity. The Promise (Christ) is given to those who

He equips and endows with His own faith and trust. The faith is the form and substance of the Christ that is given – the faith is the promise that makes people the children of Abraham and which injects them into the new covenant. All people sin because of death, as Paul said in Rom. 5:12,

**"in this way The Death thus also passed through in all directions** (or: came through the midst causing division and duality; went throughout) **into all mankind** (or: into the midst of humanity; or: to all people), **upon which [situation and condition], all sinned** (or:

everyone fails and misses the target, falls short of the goal, makes mistakes and deviates from the goal)."

And then we see,

**"Now Law and custom at one point entered in alongside (or: came into the situation by the side) to the end that the effect of the fall to the side (or: so that the result of the offense and the stumbling aside) would increase to be more than enough (should greatly abound and become more intense)..."** – Rom. 5:20a.

Thus, none can receive the Promise

(Christ) and the Blessing through means of Law – it must be received through Jesus Christ's faith and faithfulness, which is the source of their believing and having His confidence.

**23. So before the [time, or, event for] the Faith to come (or: prior to the coming of this trust, assurance and conviction), we were being continuously confined and held in custody under the watch of a guard, being folks constantly encircled, enclosed, shut up and locked together by and under Law, [with a view to, aimed and moving] into the Faith and Trust being about to be unveiled (or: revealed; disclosed),**

Take note that "**the Faith**" CAME!  
**Before** it (He; Christ) came we were "in a world of hurt" being "**continuously confined and held in custody under the watch of a guard, being folks constantly encircled, enclosed, shut up and locked together by and under Law...**" So – and this is Paul's implied point – why would people want to return to that former condition? This applied specifically to the Jewish believers that he is addressing, but the Gentiles were no better off (as 4:8-10, below, may be implying). He is stacking up one point after another to prove to the Galatians that these Judaizers are totally wrong in their intents for the Gentile believers.

We should not miss the connection of "sin and failure" to the "Law" in vss. 22 and 23, for each verses uses the same verb about being **"constantly encircled, enclosed, shut up and locked together."** Recall that **"the power and ability of the Sin [is] the Law"** (1 Cor. 15:56).

Now let us consider the last dependant clause, **"[with a view to, aimed and moving] into the Faith and Trust being about to be unveiled** (or: revealed; disclosed)." Here my bracketed insertion expands the idea inherent in the Greek preposition *eis*. This echoes the first clause of vs. 19, above: the Law was **"set aiming at, and thus provided**

**a view to, grace and favor."** The Law was not the **Faith and Trust**, and it did not give **Faith and Trust**. This came with the birth of the Son of God who **"receiving** (or: taking; accepting) **a slave's form** (external shape; outward mold), **coming to be** (or: birthing Himself) **within an effect of humanity's** (mankind's; people's) **likeness."** (Phil. 2:7) [note: see the article "What was The Form of a Slave" at the end of the comments on Philippians in my book, *Peter, Paul & Jacob*]

What was **"about to be unveiled,**

**disclosed and revealed"** was the Spirit of Christ that was given to humanity following Christ's resurrection. This **Faith and Trust** was, in fact, Christ Himself being unveiled and disclosed through the proclamation of the Good News.

Parker Voll discusses the implications of the present participle of the verb *mello* (to be about to, be on the point of) that we find in the last clause of this verse:

"... I would argue that if we pay close attention to both the larger and the immediate context, Paul is making the case to the Galatian people in particular that *their* receiving of the Spirit

was initiated through the process of hearing by faith, and until that point *they*, like everyone before them, were 'shut up' under law. But it so happened under God's providence that Jesus' faith did come into the world while *they* were alive, and so *they* became the initial beneficiaries of the faith which was 'about to be revealed' to them – the Galatian people to whom Paul was writing. This makes sense of the 'we' pronoun in the verse, as well as the surrounding verses, especially verse 25.... It makes

no sense that Paul has an idea of 'we' in mind other than himself and his contemporaries, in which case the to-be-revealed faith Paul is talking about in verse 23 is relevant to his audience, which means that in context he is talking about a faith that was to be revealed in an imminent fashion – to **them**.

Thus we see that *mello* here has a meaning of timely imminence.... [and] gives a time-context to infinitive verbs (which, by nature, lack a time context), and it is always pointing towards some action

that is concrete, and subsequent (or future) to a relatively previous *status quo*, or event" (The Greek Column; Mello: A Greek Word Study, Part 2, *Fulfilled! Magazine*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, p 13; emphasis original).

**24. so that, consequently, the Law (= Torah) had come to be (had been birthed into existence) and continued being our supervising guardian and attending escort [with a view to, aimed and moving] into Christ, to the end that we could (or: would) be made just, fair and equitable (rightwised; turned in the right direction and placed**

in right relationship within the Way pointed out; freed from guilt; also = included in covenant) **from out of faith, conviction and trust.**

In this verse Paul further describes the Law's place and function in God's plan for blessing all the nations (the ethnic multitudes). It came to be (was birthed into existence) at Sinai, and continued with Israel as their "**supervising guardian and attending escort.**" Escort to where? Into Christ! Note the preposition that Paul used here. It is not *pros* (toward, facing), but *eis* (into; into the midst of). It is a preposition of motion that leads to entry. And thus does Paul often speak of our being "in, within,

in the midst of" (*en*) Christ. *En* is the goal of *eis*. We saw this preposition *eis* in vs. 23, above.

The Law escorted Israel through its history unto the coming of the Anointed One, into the midst of participation in Christ by some of the olive tree's branches. It could not give us life, but it brought humanity into the new age by its crucifying of Israel's Messiah, and then its function ceased. Christ is the new age. He is eonian life which lasts throughout the ages and has the qualities of Christ. It brought humanity to the place in history where the Promise (Christ) was given to humanity ("THE MANY" of Rom. 5:15, 19) and the

nations were included in this covenant. Notice the corporate language that Paul has used in this passage, starting with the universal expression "**the whole** (the totality of everything)" in vs. 22, above, the "**we**" in vs. 23, 24, 25, the "**you folks**" of 26, 27, 28 and 29. The pattern and type displayed in Israel being dealt with as a corporate people in the OT finds its fulfillment in the establishing of a new creation in the new covenant.

**25. So now with the coming of the Faith and Trust, we no longer continuously exist (or: are) under [the] supervising guardian or an attending escort [comment: = the Law; Torah]!** Once again Paul speaks of "**the coming**

**of the Faith and Trust,"** which equates to the coming of the Messiah. Faith and Trust had now come, in Him, not to just a favored person but as a blessing to all humanity. It is the ability and power of His Spirit within the community and within the individual that make it possible to be faithful. But here Paul hammers in another point in this progressive argument: **"we no longer continuously exist under [the] supervising guardian or an attending escort."** As I commented above, this means that we are no longer under the control or effects of the Law or the Torah – it should have no effect upon anyone. Paul expands this argument in

chapter 4, below, using the same metaphor of the escort.

So if this is the new reality, taking up any part of the Law is error. The new is complete within itself.

**26. For you folks are all** [i.e., Jew and non-Jew; male and female; slave and freeman] **God's sons, through the faith resident within Christ Jesus** (or: by means of the trust in union with an Anointing from Jesus)!

Here he takes a stronger stand. We are not just sons of Abraham – folks endowed with faith – but we are "**God's sons.**" In Rom. 8:14 Paul defines God's sons as being

**"as many as are being**

**continuously led by God's Spirit** (or: are being habitually led in [the] Breath-effect which is God; are being progressively led with an attitude from God)."

This reference to God's Spirit means that he is referring to those who have been placed in the new covenant. One can only be led by God's Spirit if he or she is "in Christ," is joined to the Head, and abides in the Vine. Being "**God's sons**" means being in a different status in God's family: no longer a minor under the influence of the **supervising guardian** (the Law), as 4:1-7 will point out, below.

The faith and trust that is "**resident**

**within Christ Jesus**" is only accessed by being within Christ Jesus – i.e., in the new covenant, the new creation, the new humanity of the Spirit. All of this points to the cross, the resurrection, and the giving of His Spirit. The parenthetical rendering gives *en* as "in union with" and translates *christo* as "Anointing," which is in the dative case. But the name Jesus is in the genitive/ablative, and so we have "an Anointing from Jesus" that brings the inner union.

We should not miss the inclusive word "**all**" that he adds to the plural "**you folks**." In the kingdom communities, everyone is "one new humanity" (Eph. 2:15), with no distinctions. The duality

has ceased to exist; there is no more division, no more "us and them."

**27. For you see, as many of you folks as were immersed into Christ, at once clothed yourselves with Christ** (or: were plunged into so as to be enveloped by then saturated and permeated with Anointing – or, the Anointed One – instantly entered within and put on [the] Anointing)!

Here he is speaking to the corporate communities: "**as many of you folks as were immersed into Christ.**" This is the "entry into Christ" to which he referred in vs. 24, above. The verb is passive, plural. These folks had been "plunged into Christ so as to be enveloped by, and

then saturated and permeated with, the Anointing – or, the Anointed One." The "instant entry" is an expression of the punctiliar action of the aorist tense. For a more complete development of this theme see Rom. 6:3-11.

Being immersed into Christ is equivalent to **"cloth[ing] [our]selves with Christ."**

We are clothed with that into which we have been immersed. The verb "to clothe" literally means "to enter in." The picture created by Paul's metaphor is of a person "stepping into" a long cloak or a seamless gown. He uses this same metaphor in Rom. 13:12, Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:12f. In Rom. 13:14a he says,

**"but rather, you folks must**

**clothe yourselves with** (or: enter within and put on) **the Lord, Jesus Christ, and stop** (or: do not continue) **making forethought** (constructing provision; planning ahead; performing provident care) **into excessive desires of the flesh."**

Here Paul has specified entering into a close relationship with Jesus, as though He were a garment. What is admonished is the antithesis of what Paul tells them to stop doing. From this, Guthrie contends that "... the metaphor conveys an essentially new kind of life.

Everything now has to be related to Christ" (ibid. p 110). The garment of His

righteousness (*cf* Rev. 19:8) is what people will see as we manifest Him to the society at large.

28. **Within** [Him; us], **there is not** (there does not exist) **Jew nor Greek** (or: Hellenist); **within, there is not** (does not exist) **slave nor freeman; within, there is not** (does not exist) **male and female; for you folks all exist being one within Christ Jesus** (or: are all one person in union with an Anointing from Jesus).

"Gal. 3:28 is more than just an idealistic statement. It makes clear that the Christian community would have neither socioeconomic nor gender nor culture requirements for entry or continuation in the body of Christ" (*Conflict &*

*Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, Ben Witherington III, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, p 201).

This verse gives the details of the social aspect of the "all" of vs. 26, above. Note that he begins this verse with "**Within**" – in the interior of a human, or in the makeup of a corporate body – "**there is not** (there does not exist)..." racial, ethnic, cultural, social status, or sex categories or distinctions. You see, "the kingdom of God is within." Outwardly these distinctions continue. But not in the realm of the Spirit; not in the new covenant. The word **within** reflects the

verb "to be" (*eimi*) prefixed by the preposition *en-*, and the central meaning of the verb is "to exist (or, be) within." The term "**Greek**" was a common term among Jews for the non-Jews, especially in Hellenistic cultures. This is a corporate verse, as we see from the last clause, "**for you folks all exist being one within Christ Jesus.**" They were "all one person" – the corporate Second Human; the last (*eschatos*) Adam that has Jesus as the Head to whom all are united. "The full force of the masculine gender of *heis* (one) should be retained, for the idea is not of a unified organization, but of a unified personality" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 111). The

last phrase here is, in Greek, identical to the last phrase in vs. 26, above, and thus vs. 28 both echoes and expands vs. 26. The new has come, the old distinctions are gone – within covenant community economy, and within God's plan and dealings. Humanity is one and God is no longer dealing with any favored nation. The reign, kingdom and sovereign activity of God are "**within.**"

**29. Now since you folks belong to Christ** (or: have [the] Anointing as your source and origin; or: So since you people have the qualities and character of Christ, and [are] that which is Christ), **you are straightway and consequently Abraham's Seed: heirs** (possessors and

enjoyers of the distributed allotment),  
**down from, corresponding to and in  
the sphere of Promise!**

In the first clause, "**Christ**" is in the genitive case. Therefore I first rendered it as a possessive, "**belong to,**" and then rendered *christou* as "[the] Anointing" and expressed it as an ablative (source and origin). Next I rendered it as a genitive of character and quality, and finally as apposition, "that which is Christ." We belong to Him – He is our owner; the Anointing of His Spirit is our source and origin (in this new creation); we have the qualities and character of Him, and we are Christ in the earth today – we are His body; His image-

bearers.

This all means that corporately (and individually) "[we] are straightway and consequently Abraham's Seed: heirs (possessors and enjoyers of the distributed allotment), down from, corresponding to and in the sphere of Promise!" No longer slaves, but sons and heirs! Therefore, in us all the families and the nations (ethnic multitudes; swarms of humanity) are being blessed because of our union with Christ and His Spirit within us who we dispense to the world through the lives that we live.

This is the climax of Paul's arguments, up to this point. In the following chapter

Paul expands on the concept of being an heir in contrast to being slave, and uses these analogies for comparison to existence in the old covenant – versus existence in the new.

## Chapter 4

1. **Now I continue saying, for (or: upon [the length of]) as much time as the heir (the apparent possessor of the distributed allotment) is progressing from being an infant to a minor (one having either no ability, or no right, to speak; = continues being under legal age) he continues essentially differing nothing from a slave, [though] continuously being owner (lord and master) of everything (of all),**

We cannot be certain about from which cultural tradition Paul draws in making this analogy of a young son growing into manhood. Whether it be Hebrew, Roman

or Greek does not really matter. The point is in what he says in his description of an heir-apparent when he is still a minor.

This position of immaturity he compares to slavery – the opposite of freedom – but also indicates that this condition and the attending circumstances are not the final situation, for he is to be "**owner, lord and master of everything (all).**" Even though not existentially living as such – due to his young age – Paul describes his destiny as sure: he is "**continuously being**" what he will in time existentially manifest. Having seen above Paul's associating freedom with the new covenant, and slavery with the

old, we get a glimpse of where he is going with this.

**2. but further, he exists being under those to whom the trust is committed** (guardians; ones entrusted with control and right to turn upon their charges) **and house managers** (stewards; administrators) **until the father's previously set** [time or situation]. During this "essential slavery" of immaturity, the father has set trusted guardians and house managers in place for the household's and the son's benefit. In following Paul's line of reasoning up to this point, we might suspect what he will say explicitly in vs. 5, below: the guardian and house managers are a

figure for the Law and its attendants (the priests and the prophets).

Now this situation, regarding the son, was not meant to continue after the Mature Son had been placed in His destined position in the household (of God). It was to continue only "**until the Father's previously set time or situation.**" (I have purposely used capital letters to draw your thinking into the situation to which Paul is speaking) Then things would change: He would be free from the guardians and house managers (the old arrangements) – free from the Law, the priesthood and the prophets. From this time on, the Father would say,

**"This Man continues existing being My Son! The Beloved One** (or: The One exemplifying and expressing My love) **within Whom I think good thoughts** (or: in Whom I imagine thoughts of wellness and ease; in Whom I appear well; in Whom I approve and of Whom I have a good opinion). **Make it a habit to listen, to continue paying attention, and then to [really] hear Him** (implies: obey Him)!" (Matt. 17:5).

This calls to mind Paul's thoughts in 1 Cor. 13, as well,

**10. still, whenever the**

**destined goal** (the mature person; the finished product; maturity; the complete attainment of the purpose; perfection) **should** (or: may) **come, that which is out of a part** (a piece; a portion) **will be rendered useless and unproductive** (idled-down to be inactive, unemployed or discarded).

11. **When I was an infant** (a baby; a non-speaking one), **I used to babble and make vocal utterances as a non-speaking infant. I used to habitually be in the frame of mind, take**

**thought with the intellect and understand as a non-speaking infant (baby). I continued taking account, reasoning and logically considering things as a non-speaking infant. Yet when I had come to be an adult male, I had permanently made inactive (idled-down so as to be no longer used and discarded) the things which pertain to a non-speaking infant (infantile things).**

**3. Thus also we ourselves, when we were progressing from infants to minors, we continued being folks having been enslaved under (or: by)**

**the System's elementary principles** (the rows, ranks and series of the organized system of culture, economy, government in secular society and religion, as well as of the world and universe; or: the rudimentary things pertaining to the cosmos).

Here Paul inserts "**we ourselves**" into the cultural setting which he has just set. He includes the Galatians in the "**we**," but the context behind this immediate context is the Law. He uses a more generalized term *stoicheia* that would refer both to the Law's elementary and rudimentary principles (things meant for children, not for adults) as well as the "organized grid-work of the system of

culture, economy, government and religions" of the Greek and Roman cultures that enslaved the non-Jews of Galatia. Both Jew and Gentile were enslaved to their religions and their societies – and so it is today, outside of the kingdom (which is not of this dominating organized-system). They were like the minor son in a Great Household of the universe. Maturity from the Breath-effect had not yet come to humanity. Heaven had not yet been joined to the earth.

The NEB gives a footnote for *stoicheia*: "the elements of the natural world, *or* elementary ideas belonging to this world." Some of these latter could refer

to superstition, philosophy or astrology.

4. **Yet when the effect of the filling of the time came** (or: that which was filled up by time reached full term), **forth from out of a mission** (or: from out of the midst of [Himself]), **God sent-off His Son, being Himself come to be born from out of a woman, being Himself come to be born under [the rules, authority and influence of] Law,** But now, Paul reminds them, the scene had changed: the "**filling of the time came,**" and they were under its effect. The time which "reached full term" was the age of Israel and of the Law. And when this happened, "**forth from out of (ek) a mission** (or: from out of the midst

of [Himself]), **God sent-forth His Son.**" The verb that he uses here is the word from which we get our word Envoy, Emissary, Representative or "Apostle." It has the preposition *ek* prefixed to it. Got sent the Son both out of Himself, and out from God's mission which He had planned for the Son. Christ became the Envoy for God's mission.

Paul next refers to either the Incarnation or to the humanity of Jesus when he states that He was "**born from out of a woman.**" However, this previews the scene of the allegory of the two women which he speaks of, below, and I think that we can see that Jesus was in fact born from both of them – first from the

natural, enslaved Israel – through Mary, then from the Jerusalem which is above (vs. 26, below) by the Spirit of Life through His resurrection. In His flesh He put an end to the flesh-system and covenant; in His Spirit He brought into being the second birth of which he mentioned to Nicodemus (John 3:3-17). Then he says that He was "**born under [the rules, authority and influence of] Law,**" for as Jesus said in Matt. 15:25, **"I was not commissioned and sent off as an emissary (representative) – except into the midst of those sheep having been destroyed, the ones that belong to the house**

**of Israel** (or: unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel)."

And here, Paul's rhetoric returns to focus on his main target, the Law.

**5. to the end that He could** (or: would) **buy out** (ransom; redeem; reclaim [from slavery]) **those under [the] Law** – **so that we could and would receive and take away into possession the placing in the condition of a son** (or: the deposit of the Son; the setting in place which is the Son; the constituting as a son).

The purpose, "**the end**" in view, was to free the people that were "**under [the slavery of the] Law.**" There are many references in Matt. which show that

what Jesus did and what happened to Him were in order to fulfill what was written in the old covenant Scriptures. But Paul focuses on one specific aspect of the Messiah's work here. It had to do with a benefactor (often a relative) buying a slave out of his enslaved condition. So he uses the cultural picture of a slave being ransomed (redeemed) as an analogy for the "we" being released from the slavery of being "**under Law**" – and in this specific example it would mean those who were "under the Torah." It is fruitless to overanalyze the metaphor to try to figure out to whom or what the ransom money was paid. The point of the analogy is the

freeing of a slave, and all through Paul's arguments up to this point, he is using this slavery metaphor as a negative picture for the Galatians to associate with the potential of Judaizing. Paul has reached back to Israel's story of their deliverance from Egypt. In Deut. 7:8b we read,

"... the Lord brought you folks out within a strong hand, and redeemed you [singular; i.e., as a people] from out of the midst of the house of slavery (or: bondage)..." – LXX.

Rather than God "paying Pharaoh" in ransoming Israel, He had Israel sent off with gifts from the Egyptians. But Moses

described this as a "redemption; ransom" in the Deuteronomy text. The point was that they had been slaves, but now they were free. After quoting this same verse in Deuteronomy, Richard Rohr says,

"This quote, and its continual, constant pattern, is the foundation stone of our entire theology of grace! God did not choose or love the Israelites because they were good, but out of free and arbitrary choice. From the very beginning, Divine election is utterly free, gratuitous and indifferent to any criterion of worthiness or

earnedness." (*Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008, p 163).

And to what end is our emancipation?  
**"So that we could and would receive and take away into possession the placing in the condition of a son** (or: the deposit of the Son; the setting in place which is the Son; the constituting as a son)." "Paul's thought seems to be that God sent his Son to gain other sons. This involves a remarkable change of status from slavery to sonship" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 114). If we consider the setting in vs. 1, above, this would mean to be put into the status of being a master of the

household. This completes the analogy, but as a good rhetor, Paul expands and enhances this same analogy in the following verses – to drive home his point, once more.

**6. Now, because we exist being** (are presently and continuously) **sons, God sends off His Son's Spirit** (or: the Breath-effect, which is His Son) **as an emissary into our hearts, repeatedly crying out** (habitually calling out or exclaiming in an inarticulate cry; even: screaming, shrieking [verb also means: croak, as a bird]), **"Abba** (Aramaic: = Dad, or, Daddy!), **O Father!"**

Notice the present reality of the first dependent clause, **"because we exist**

**being sons."** From this statement, Guthrie concludes that, "this *appears* to give the basis on which the Spirit is given. But realization of the full privileges of sonship can only come through the Spirit. *Rather* is Paul making clear that adoption and the gift of the Spirit are concomitant" (ibid. p 114; emphasis mine).

We see the corporate "we" of an inclusive body which includes Jew and Gentile in one community. This is not about just individuals, but about God's new economy and relationship with humanity at large. The metaphor of "son-  
placement" is now applied to their real-life situations and the changed existential

condition. The new covenant is not a realm of childhood but of adulthood, because of being joined to Christ through God sending off "**His Son's Spirit as an emissary into our hearts.**" This is what Lawrence Garcia referred to as phase two of the gospel (God's plan; see above). Paul was the prime example of the break from Judaism and the entrance into the new covenant. Note that it is the **Son's Spirit** that is "**repeatedly crying out, 'Abba, O Father!'**" We see a similar situation expressed in Rom. 8:26,

**"Now similarly** (or: likewise; in like manner), **the Spirit also** (or: even the Breath-effect; the

Attitude) **habitually takes hold together on the opposite side of a situation so as to assist in our weakness** (or: joins with a helping hand in our lack of strength and infirmity), **for we have not seen, and thus do not know nor are aware of, the thing which we should think, speak or do toward things going well and being good – to accord with what must be** (or: can pray commensurately to what is necessary and down from what is binding), **but rather the Spirit Himself** (the Breath-effect Itself; this Attitude

itself) **from above constantly hits the target within us** (or: falls in on our behalf; instead of us hits within; falls in for and over us; or: makes hyper-intercession)

**with unexpressed, unutterable or inexpressible groanings**

(or: in sighs too deep for words; with wordless and inarticulate battle cries of deep emotion; in shouts of victory from the core of His Being)."

Jesus was sent off as an Emissary to Israel and those under the Law/Torah. Now His Spirit is sent off as an emissary into our hearts (*cf* Heb. 10:22; Acts 2:4). In John 14:16-17a, Jesus tells His disciples,

**"I Myself will ask** (make a request of) **the Father, and He will give another Helper** (One called alongside to give assistance, relief, comfort and encouragement; Paraclete) **of like kind to you folks – to the end that He** (or: It) **can continue being** [other MSS: would be constantly remaining and dwelling] **with you folks on**

**into the midst of the Age – the Spirit of the Truth** (or: the spirit and breath of reality; the Breath-effect and Attitude which is Reality)..."

Recall that Jesus said that He was **the Truth** in vs. 6 of this same chapter of John. Then in vs.18 of this same chapter He says, "**I am repeatedly** (or: habitually) **and now progressively coming toward you people.**"

The result is the "I – Thou" experience and relationship which Martin Buber described in his book of this same title. It is the "*shared knowing*" of which Richard Rohr wrote (*The Naked Now, Learning to See as the Mystics See*, The

Crossroad Publishing Co., 2009, p 16), and Absolute Reality. "Pure experience is non-dualistic" (ibid. p 50). It is the "awakening" to which the mystics point; it is the cry of the heart, "Abba – Oh Father!" It is the Presence of the Breath-effect in the core of our beings. And corporately, it is the establishment of true covenant community that is in fact Family.

Regarding "**God sends off His Son's Spirit** (or: the Breath-effect, which is His Son)," Guthrie comments, "[S]ince the same verb is used here as in vs. 4, the two actions may be regarded as complementary" (ibid. p 115).

**7. So that, you are** (you exist being) **no**

**longer a slave, but rather, a son, and since a son, also an heir** (a possessor and an enjoyer of the distributed allotment) **through God** [other MSS: God's heir through Christ].

So Paul comes full circle from vs. 1, above. It is basically a restatement of vs. 5, above. Thus, we are no longer slaves to the Torah, or any other law – except, **"the principle and law of, and which is, the spirit and attitude of 'The Life within Christ Jesus'** – or, the Law of Life's spirit, joined with [the] Anointing of Jesus; or: the Spirit's law of life within Christ Jesus; or: the Law [= Torah]

from the Breath-effect, which is Life in union with [the] Anointed Jesus –" which "**frees you away from the Law of the Sin** (or: the principle of failure and the missing of the target; the code of behavior that produces error; the principle of deviation from the goal) **and the Death** (or: immediately set you [other MSS: me] at liberty from the law that deals with and has the character of sin and death)" – Rom. 8:2.

We have been inserted and immersed into this Life, with its Law of Love. And further, we are in a family relationship:

**a son AND an heir, through God** – the Father who placed us as a son (it was the Divine initiative). And in relation to Jesus, we are His brothers, for He is, **"the Firstborn among, within the center of, and in union with many brothers** (= a vast family of believers)!" – Rom. 8:29.

Now this personal, existential reality is a wonderful truth – but let us not lose track of the line of Paul's argument. He did not write this letter just to make theological or ontological assertions about our new existence as "sons of God" – true as they may be. He is making a covenantal argument, as the

rest of this chapter will show. Being an "heir" and a "son" (no longer a minor) meant that they were released from the guardianship of the Law. Compare Rom. 8:14-17, where in vs. 17 we find the phrase, "**Christ's joint-heirs.**"

Notice that he has changed from the plural to the singular in this verse. It applies individually, but he is speaking to them as one body in corporate solidarity. They are a plant that has grown from the single Seed (Christ); they are "**a son**" – the body of Christ.

**8. But on the other hand, at that time, in fact, having not perceived and thus not knowing God, you folks were, and performed as, slaves to (or: for) those**

**[who], by nature, are not gods.**

From a surface reading, this verse would be assumed to be directed only to the Gentiles, since he says that they had in the past existed "**not knowing God.**" But recall how Jesus addressed the Pharisees:

**"You folks have neither seen nor known Me, nor My Father. If you had seen and knew (or: were acquainted with) Me, you would also have seen and know (or: be acquainted with) My Father."** (John 8:19)

The Jews has assimilated many pagan beliefs in their history of associations with Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece and

Rome. Even at their very beginning as a nation, some asked Aaron to make "gods to go ahead of [them]" (Ex. 32:1).

Some assume that the last clause "**those [who], by nature, are not gods**" refers to the gods of mythology, or to the unseen "forces of the universe."

Superstition has most likely always been a factor in human existence, until the revelation of the true God was given.

But within the Roman Empire during this period, Emperor Worship was being promoted and, despite the Roman gospel of the so-called *Pax Romana*, everyone was in a kind of slavery to it and many did in fact worship Caesar as a god.

However, verses 9-10, below, seem to

suggest that Paul was referring to the Jewish myths and customs that had been woven into the fabric of their old-covenant paradigm. Bear in mind that even these Gentile believers would seem to be familiar with all of Paul's arguments from the history of Israel. Also recall the incident in Matt. 12:22 where Jesus treated and cured the man that was blind and mute. In response to this we read,

**24. Now upon hearing, the Pharisees said, "This person is not casting (or: throwing) out the demons except in union with Beelzebub [other MSS: Beelzeboul; Beezeboul], the**

**ruler** (or: chief; originator) **of the demons** (Hellenistic concept and term: = animistic influences)."

[comment: Beelzebub, is the NT spelling for *Baal-zebub*, a Philistine deity (2 King 1:2). So here we have the Pharisees validating the existence of a pagan god! And yet, we are told in Ps. 95:5 that "all the gods of the peoples (= people groups) are mere idols (nobodies; things of naught)." The LXX (Greek OT) renders this: "all the gods of the ethnic multitudes (nations; non-Israelites) {are} demons."

But Isaiah says in 65:3 (LXX),  
“This is a people that ...  
offer{s} sacrifices in gardens,  
and burn{s} incense on bricks to  
the demons – which things DO  
NOT EXIST!”]

**9. Yet now, coming to know God by intimate experience and personal insight – or, rather, being known intimately by God – how are you folks progressively turning around again, upon the weak (feeble; infirm; diseased; impotent) and poor (beggarly) elementary and rudimentary principles to which (for which; in which) you people are presently wanting (and progressively intending) to again**

**become, and perform as, slaves anew**  
(or: back again)?

Nonetheless, the present situation is that the Galatians had "**come to know God BY INTIMATE EXPERIENCE and personal insight**" (*gnosis*). Then Paul corrects himself: the change came through God having intimate knowledge and experience **of them** (the initiative is always with God). This is love language – the knowing of a Husband in intimate sexual relation with His wife (e.g., Gen. 4:1, LXX; cf Ezk. 16 and Hos. 1-3).

So "**how**" – by what reason or logic? by what influence? by what idea or word? – are they "**progressively turning around again**"? The "**weak and poor**

**elementary and rudimentary principles"** refer specifically to the Law to which the Judaizers are trying to get them to come under again. Such a move would be **"to again become, and perform as, slaves"** to the old religion of the Jews.

**10. You are for yourselves and in yourselves continuously watching closely and observing days [e.g., sabbaths; days for fasting] and months (or: new moons) and seasons (or: appointed situations [e.g., feasts]) and [sacred] years!**

**11. I continue fearing for you, lest somehow I have, to the point of exhaustion, labored in vain (for no**

purpose) **into you folks.**

"One of the features of Jewish law was its observance of special times. In this passage the *days* are the Sabbaths of each week; the *months* are the new moons; the *seasons* are the great annual feasts like the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles; the *years* are the Sabbatic years, that is every seventh. The failure of a religion which is dependent on special occasions is the almost inevitably it divides days into sacred and secular..." (Barclay, *ibid.* p 36-37, emphasis original). Paul sets before them some overt examples of what they have been doing that demonstrate that they are returning to the

slavery of elementary and rudimentary principles. They have returned to being children – minors under the guardian. Along with what Barclay has pointed out, there were "days for fasting" and the days of having no unleavened bread in the house, which was a part of the celebration of Passover. "**Months**" indicates that their lives were tied to a religious calendar. These folks had inserted "Law-keeping" into the new covenant that had freed them from such things.

Paul's concern for those who had been circumcised and had taken up these other Jewish practices is expressed in 5:4, below,

**"You people were discharged** (made inactive, idle, useless, unproductive and without effect; or: voided, nullified, exempted) **away from Christ, you who are now in Law trying to be rightwised** (also = be included in the covenant) **and are basing your fairness and relationships on the way it points out – you at once fell from out of the grace and favor!"**

And if they persisted in this direction of living, then he would have **"labored in vain and to no purpose into [them]."** They would have returned to the old covenant, the old creation, as if the

Messiah had not yet come.

In vs. 11 he repeats the refrain of 2:2, above, showing that this is a continuation of the same theme of this letter – a warning that they should not blend the old covenant in with the new. Otherwise, all his efforts to bring freedom to them would have been in vain. They were turning back to the elements of the Torah.

**12. Brothers** (= Fellow believers), **I beg of you, progressively become as I, for I also [was; am] as you folks. You did me no wrong** (or: You folks treat me unfairly in nothing).

Paul now turns his rhetoric to an emotional appeal. He addresses them as

family: brothers. He begs them to become (once again) as he now is: free; one having put away the childish things (1 Cor. 13:11b) of being under the escort of the Law. He was once there, and was as they are now becoming by observing the Torah. But in the spirit He has become an adult, in the new covenant arrangement of Christ – in the spirit, no longer in the flesh of the old.

"Paul makes not a theological but a personal appeal. He reminds them that for their sake he had become a Gentile; he had cut adrift from the traditions in which he had been brought up and became what they are [*cf* 1 Cor. 9:22]; and his appeal is that they should not

seek to become Jews but might become like himself" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 38, brackets mine). Then he reminds them that they had done him **no wrong** – or, "treat [him] unfairly in nothing." So there should be no rift or discord between them nor cause for affront – they were on good terms – and there will be no repercussions concerning their Judaizing behaviors. But he begs them to simply turn from the practices of Judaism, and return to the freedom in Christ that he himself continues to enjoy.

**13. Now you have seen and known that through weakness** (impotence; sickness; infirmity; feebleness) **of the flesh** (or: = pertaining to [my] imperfect

human nature; = whose source is the self which was affected by the System; = which is the deficient inner person) **I formerly brought and announced the message of goodness, ease and well-being to you folks,**

Paul recalls his former visit to them and recounts the situation, but has not given any details about this "**weakness,**" or impotence, sickness, infirmity or feebleness "**of the flesh,**" so speculation is fruitless, but vs. 14, below, indicates that it was an "**ordeal**" for them – and his flesh was the source. In the parenthetical expansion I have offered some potential paraphrases as extended meanings of the term "**flesh.**" They all

probably apply. Paul came as a man who was in solidarity with the condition that they were in when he first brought them the "**message of goodness, ease and well-being.**" He had not put himself as though being in some way above them, but allowed whatever this weakness was to be seen by them. Considering the popularity of rhetoric as social entertainment, a person's skills at this were always under scrutiny. It is possible that here he is speaking about his "weakness or impotence" as a polished rhetor – his feebleness of presentation. He may simply be humbling himself before them, in this verse. His appeal is that he had become

one of them, and he now reminds them of this: they should listen to him now, as before.

**14. and yet you folks did not despise or treat as nothing your [other MSS: my] ordeal (or: trial; testing) – located within my flesh (= in my human weaknesses) – nor did you spit it out (= reject it as loathing; [note: perhaps referring to the practice of spitting to break the spell of “an evil eye” – a common pagan belief]), but to the contrary, you took me in your arms and welcomed me as God's agent (or: messenger) – as Jesus Christ!**

He continues calling to their common history together. They had not rejected

him then, so his appeal is that they would not reject him now, in the arguments that he is presenting. It is possible that reminding his listeners of all of this is simply a rhetorical device of this letter to win the listeners' sympathy for his present cause – this was common to forensic rhetoric, and his listeners would appreciate this. He reminds them that they did not formerly "**spit out**" what he brought to them – so likewise they should treat this letter in the same way.

He recalls the warm reception that they had given him and how they had perceived him as being "**God's agent and messenger.**" He was "**as Jesus**

**Christ**" coming to them, and they received him **AS** Jesus Christ. He was a living epistle to them; His life was a presentation of Christ to them. They had received him as a bearer of the Anointed Jesus – as actually being Jesus Christ coming to them in the flesh of Paul; he was to them an embodiment of the Spirit of Jesus.

Has Paul been identifying with the imagery of Isa. 53 in this passage? Is he once more embodying the message of "the wounded healer" (Henri Nouwen's phrase)? Is he imaging Christ-markers for them, so that they might see what their lives, as well, should look like?

**15. Where, then, [is] your happiness?**

**For, I continually bear witness to you folks (or: give testimony for you) that, if possible (if [you were] able), upon gouging (digging) out your eyes you would give [them] to me!**

This question is instructive for us. There had come a change in the mood of the Galatian communities as the result of being told that they must live like Jews. This loss of the freedom that Paul had originally brought to them would naturally bring about some depression. By accepting what the Judaizers told them, the "ease, goodness and well-being" (the meaning of the term "gospel") had begun to slip away from them. It was not such good news, after

all. So Paul rhetorically challenges them here. What had happened to their happiness?

He had continually observed how they responded to him when he first brought them the Message. They were so happy and thankful that they would have "**if possible** – i.e., if they were able to – given their eyes to him, after having gouged them out to do so. This hyperbole is simply saying that they were so thankful for the good news and the life that he had brought to them, that they would have given their most precious possession to him. In other words, "they would have done anything for him."

**16. So then, by habitually being real and speaking Truth to you (constantly telling you the truth; progressively speaking reality to you), have I come to be your enemy?**

Now he thrusts home his point of this section. In his constant speaking of this new reality that came with the Messiah, of the Truth of Jesus Christ, of their inclusion in the new covenant – has this made him to be their enemy? The question is a rhetorical device meant to evoke the emotional response from them, "No, Paul, of course not!"

Some interpreters think that this should be rendered as a statement, "... I have come to be your enemy!" Either makes

the same rhetorical point: a shocking contrast of their former attitude toward him to their possible present stance (assumed only rhetorically, to make his point in regard to their present alignment with the Judaizers). There may be more facts behind this question/statement, since the Judaizers stood in enmity towards the freedom that Paul preached. But Paul does not state them here, if in fact they exist, so as not to bring blame upon them or to suggest that they had hurt him. He made sure, in vs. 12, above, that this was not the case.

**17. They are constantly zealous over you folks** (= These folks are constantly showing you great attention in order to

win you over) – **[though] not beautifully** (or: ideally; in a fine way). **But on the other hand they are constantly willing** (intending; wanting) **to shut you out** (to exclude you), **so that you folks might be habitually zealous over them** (= trying to win their favor).

Having pricked their hearts toward him in vss. 15-16, he now turns his light on his opponents that are among them – the Judaizers. He affirms the zeal of these people over the Gentile believers, but exposes the deceptive, selfish motives of their show of great attention. Their "great attention" is in order to win them to their point of view and bring them

under Synagogue control. So how they are behaving was not beautiful ("not as fine as it appears on the surface," Donald Guthrie, *ibid.* p 121) – it was self seeking. Brian Zahnd sheds insightful light on the character and quality of the Way of following Jesus,

"Thus the cruciform (the shape of a cross) is the eternal form that endows Christianity with its mysterious beauty.... [It] is the posture of love and forgiveness where retaliation is abandoned and outcomes are entrusted to the hands of God." (*Beauty Will Save the World*, Charisma House, 2012, p 6)

The attempted psychological manipulation by the Judaizers was just the opposite of beauty and the way of Christ. It was old covenant exclusivism and prejudice which would "**shut [them] out**" if they did not comply with their religious requirements: circumcision and observance of Torah customs. This was just another tactic to try to make them really want to be a part of their supposed superior religious ceremonialism. The doctrines that they were attempting to teach the Galatian Gentiles were not fine, ideal or beautiful – they returned them to the bondage of slavery to the Law. Zahnd gives good advice about discerning the truth of a

teaching,

"If a particular doctrine doesn't come across as truly beautiful, then we should hold it suspect."

(ibid. p 31)

18. **Now [it is] always ideal (fine; beautiful) to be normally made zealous (or: to continue having a ferment of spirit) within a beautiful (fine; ideal) thing or situation, and not only within the situation for me to be present (or: at your side) and focused toward you folks.**

There is nothing wrong with zeal or with "having a ferment of spirit," so long as it is "**within a beautiful thing or situation**" – and he is not just speaking

about him being present with them and having all his attention "**focused toward [them]**." He is not hinting at the possibility of his taking up the strategies of the Judaizers. The "**beautiful situation**" is that of love, of laying down one's very soul for his or her friend, of giving to others, of accepting folks as they are – even in their broken and estranged conditions. Beauty is the cruciform life that is in union with Christ as He gives His life to others, through us.

**19. My little children (born ones), with whom I am progressing, again, in childbirth labor (travail; labor pains), until Christ may be suddenly formed**

(= until the Anointing would be at some point birthed) **within you folks.**

"No one can fail to see the deep affection of the last words. *My little children* – diminutives in Latin and Greek always express deep affection" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 39). But he is also reminding them of their relationship to him – inferring that he had given birth to them when they first met. Paul then uses the language of being a pregnant woman in the process of giving birth. He is a part of the "**the Jerusalem above**" (vs. 26, below) that births people into covenant relationship in Christ. The metaphor cannot be taken too literally, for in the natural the "forming" of the

child comes while it is still in the womb, not during the "**childbirth labor.**" But here he is emphasizing the stress, pressure and pain involved with bring them to a place of stability in Christ – so that they will see the reality of the new creation and not be persuaded by the Judaizers to return to the old ways from which humanity has been delivered. This metaphor aptly paints a picture of the transition from the womb of the former arrangements to the new life and existence that has come into being. We see another mother/child picture drawn by Paul in 1 Thes. 2:7-8,

**7. But rather, we were birthed babes** (or: became infants;

[other MSS: we were made to become gentle and kind ones]) **within the midst of you folks, as whenever a nursing mother would constantly or repeatedly cuddle to impart warmth to her own children. 8. Thus, continuously being your affectionately "attached-ones"** (ones having a like-flow [of nourishment from our Nursing Mother]), **we were habitually delighted** (thinking it good; well-pleased) **to share or impart to you not only God's message of goodness and well-being** [other MSS: the good

news which is Christ], **but rather even our own souls** (= inner beings and lives; or: = selves), **because you have been birthed** (or: come to be) **beloved ones to us** (or: folks loved by us; or: = very dear to us, accepted by us and appreciated by us).

In this Thessalonian passage there are good witnesses for both readings in the first clause of vs. 7. The bold rendering makes Paul and his associates as infants; the alternate text makes them nurses to the Thessalonians. But the point is the close attachment and organic relationship that Paul engendered with

the communities that he sought to establish – and his desire for them to be nourished and to grow in the Lord.

The goal of the new creation is to have Christ formed within all of humanity – and here, specifically within and among those Galatians. Again, phase two of the coming of the Messiah is the Anointing among all the nations. This was the new birth of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (John 3:7, "... **it is necessary and binding for YOU FOLKS [i.e., the Jews] to be born back up again to a higher place.**"); to the Jew first, and now to the ethnic multitudes. Their taking up religious practices (e.g., the observance of "days," etc. – vs. 10,

above) shows that "the Anointing" has not yet been birthed within them. Christ Jesus had not yet taken form as being their path of life among them.

Notice here Paul's use of the word "**formed**" (*morphoo*). Paul said to the Corinthians,

**"You see, I decided not to see or know anything among you folks, except Jesus Christ – and this One being one having been crucified!"** (1 Cor. 2:2)

He wanted to observe the cruciform life of Christ within the believers, and know only that.

**20. Yet I was wanting (or: intending) to be present (at your side) and focused**

**toward you right now, and to alter** (change; make otherwise) **my voice** (or: tone; sound), **because I continue without a way or path to bring myself in union with you folks** (or: = I am now perplexed, uncertain, disturbed and at an impasse in your case).

Now he lets them know that he really does want to be with them – and is intending to do so, so as to have all his focus and his attention on them – but not for ulterior motives. He wanted to be present at the birth that he was referring to in the previous verse. Yet he was at his wits' end to do this, but could not find "**find a way or path to bring [himself] in union with [them].**"

Whether he meant this literally, or in the sense of mindset, outlook or paradigm, we have no way of knowing. The extended meaning of *a-poroumai* would suggest the latter, as the parenthetical paraphrase indicates. I have rendered the prepositional phrase *en humin* both as "**in union with you folks**" and "in your case."

His desire to "**alter or change [his] voice**" (right then, in their current situation with these Judaizers), suggests that he may have wanted to elevate his voice in vehemence about their present situation. This also suggests that he might take a different tack and change his rhetorical strategy with them. It

appeared to be necessary, because he could see that his former presentation left them vulnerable and left him without a path to reach the union that he desired to have with them. He was "perplexed, uncertain, disturbed and at an impasse" concerning them. These adjectives present the semantic range of *a-poroumai*, but my bold literal rendering best hits the mark of what he was saying to them. His present arguments in this letter represent his "change of voice" to them, endeavoring to attain this goal of renewed union with them.

**21. Go on telling me, those of you constantly wanting or intending to be under Law (or: exist [controlled] by a**

legalistic custom or system, or [Torah]), **do you not continue listening to and hearing the Law** (or: paying attention to the [Torah])?

Here, in this first clause, we see plainly stated what this letter is opposing: "**to be under Law** (or, Torah)." It is not just a matter of circumcision; it is not about sabbath-keeping, or about morality codes, or about keeping certain Jewish feasts, or just about keeping the Ten Commandments. It is about being **UNDER** the rule and regulation of the Law brought through Moses.

And so, he rhetorically asks them if they are actually hearing or listening to what the Law says. "Are they really paying

attention to the Torah?" This rhetorical question can be taken in more than one way:

1) The foregoing verses have set the stage, bringing his listeners to intimate receptivity, and now the next phase of his argument begins. Do they really want to be controlled by a legalistic custom or system of prejudice-creating divisions between races, genders, and social statuses of "clean and unclean," privileged and unprivileged, all under male-dominated hierarchies? All of that is what the Law teaches, and 5:3, below, tells us that Paul is referring to "**the whole Law**," which means "the entire Torah!"

2) He is asking them if they are, by implication of "hearing," "... obeying what the Law says for those under it to do and perform?" In other words, "Are you listening to all that it has to say and are you performing all of it?"

3) Paul is simply setting up what he is about to point out to them in the following allegorical interpretation that is taken FROM the Torah. So he is in effect saying: "Listen to what the Torah teaches us about the Law from the story of Sarah and Hagar."

So now Paul references a story from Israel's history as the foundation for what he will say about what these folks should do with the Law.

**22. For it has been, and stands, written that, Abraham had two sons: one forth from out of the servant girl (the maid; the female slave), and one from out of the freewoman.**

As he says in vs. 24, this argument will be in the form of an allegory, interpreting the incident in the story of Abraham which involved Sarah and Hagar, and their respective sons. He takes their social standing to be representative of what he has been contrasting between the slavery of the Law, and the freedom that comes with the advent of the Promise (Christ; the new humanity and new creation; the covenant of life in the Spirit). So he sets the stage: a son from a

female slave (or, "**servant girl**" – Hagar) versus the son "**from out of the freewoman** (Sarah)."

"It is important to note that Paul does not at first mention them by name, because he wishes rather to draw attention to the categories to which they belonged" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 123).

**23. But, on the one hand, the one from out of the servant girl (the maid) had been born (generated and birthed) down from (in accord with; on the level of) flesh (= by human means); on the other hand, the one from out of the freewoman [was] through Promise (or: a promise)**

The manner of birth becomes a key issue

of his argument. Ishmael, Hagar's son, represents the "**flesh**," since his birth came by natural means; on the other hand Isaac's birth was an act of God – the result of the Promise. This is the crux of the issue that he is presenting, and it points to the miracle of the cross: God's saving act and the birthing of the Second Humanity. Paul never mentions Sarah by name, but instead emphasizes that she was a "**freewoman**," underlining the inherent freedom that comes with the Promise – set in stark relief against the dark background of the slavery inherent in the old covenant. The old covenant was NOT God's plan for humanity; the freedom that comes with His Promise

(Christ) has always been His plan and purpose for the destiny of humanity.

**24. – which things are habitually being allegorized** (or: are normally being expressed in an allegory; are commonly spoken of as something other [than what the language means]) – **for these women are** (= represent) **two settled arrangements** (covenants; contracts; wills): **one, on the one hand, from Mount Sinai, habitually** (repeatedly; continuously) **giving birth into slavery** (or: bondage) – **which is Hagar.**

Here I rendered the present tense of the participle of the first clause as "**habitually**" and "normally." Paul is by this statement bringing in the authority of

rabbinical precedence for allegorical interpretation of the OT stories. The "allegorical interpretation of Scriptures... was brought to a fine art, for example by Philo of Alexandria" (Harvey, *ibid.* p 612). So now Paul focuses on the women: they are "**two settled arrangements** (covenants; or – wills)."

Next he allegorizes **Hagar**, the female slave, as being **Mount Sinai** – which was an accepted figure for the Law and Moses' instructions. From this he posits that the Law (Hagar) is "**habitually, repeatedly and continuously giving birth into slavery.**" The Law constantly produces slavery and bondage to and for

those that are "**under it.**" So it stands that if you are under the Law, you are not Abraham's seed in accord with the Promise. You will not enjoy the allotment of the Spirit nor of Grace. You will be void of faith and remain a slave to sin and death. There is no life in you, because the Law cannot produce life (3:21, above), and you are under a curse (3:10, above).

25. **Now this Hagar is** (= represents) **Mount Sinai, within Arabia, and she continuously stands in the same line** (or: keeps step in the same rank; marches in a column; walks or stands in a parallel row; or: is habitually rudimentary together; = corresponds to)

**with the present Jerusalem, for she continues in slavery (or: bondage) with her children.**

Paul repeats the significance of Hagar representing Mount Sinai, thus once again placing the Law in the status of a slave, not a son, in God's metaphorical household. Next, he builds upon this by now equating the "**present Jerusalem**" as another figure of the Law, since it is the capital of natural Israel and the seat of the Law. Hagar/Mt. Sinai

**"continuously stands in the same line or rank with Sinai, and is habitually rudimentary together with [first century] Jerusalem [= the Law]."**

Thus, those living under the control and

direction of the Jews in Jerusalem are also in slavery – along with her children, i.e., what she produces, just as what the slave girl Hagar produced was also in slavery. Paul is equating the historical Jerusalem and the Judaizers with Ishmael, a slave – not a son who will inherit the promises. A gloomy picture, indeed!

The clause, "**continuously stands in the same line with**" is the verb *sustoicheo* (from *sun-* and *stoicheo*) and I have given different pictures of this word (used only here in the NT) in the parenthetical expansion. What is of interest is that it is in the same word family as *stoicheia* which we

encountered in 4:3 & 9, above, as well as in Col. 2:8, 20 and Heb. 5:12. With this in mind, I gave the optional rendering, "is habitually rudimentary together with." The Law was the *stoicheia*, "**the elementary things** (or: fundamental principles; rudiments and rules)" that pertained to the education of one that was still a minor (4:1-2, above), and had not yet been placed as a son. This figures the old covenant of Judaism.

**26. Yet, on the other hand, the Jerusalem above is** (continues being) **free, who is** (or: which particular one continues being) **our mother.**

And now, against the dark background of

vs. 25 he provides the glorious, heavenly contrast: **"the Jerusalem above** (= the new Jerusalem of Rev. 3:12 and 21:2, 9ff), who is **free** and is **"our mother"** – i.e., she produces sons of the Promise (Christ) who inherit the freedom of the new covenant. They are not slaves to the Law, or to any part of the old covenant. Paul was a citizen of this heavenly city, and had given birth to the Galatians as free sons of the new creation. We see her again in Heb. 12:22a,

**"But to the contrary, you folks have approached so that you are now at Mount Zion – even in a city of a continuously**

**living God; in 'Jerusalem upon heaven'..."**

**27. For it has been and stands written,**  
**"Be made well-minded (Be**  
given a competent way of  
thinking; Be made glad; Be  
turned to a good attitude),  
**barren (or: sterile) woman, O**  
**woman consistently not**  
**bringing forth** (not bearing; not  
giving birth; not producing)!  
**Break forth** (or: Shatter) **in**  
**pieces and shout for joy** (or:  
implore aloud), **O woman**  
**consistently not having labor**  
**pains** (birth pangs), **because**  
**many [are] the children** (the

**born-ones) of the desolate woman (of the abandoned woman of the desert), rather than of the woman continuously having (holding; possessing) the husband."** [Isa. 54:1, LXX]

So now Paul reaches back to Israel's prophetic tradition to support the claims of his revelation, and quotes Isa. 54:1. "Isaiah... was in fact prophesying a new Jerusalem of the future (54:11-12)" – (Harvey, *ibid.* p 612). Thus the Galatians should be "**well-minded and glad** (be turned to a good attitude and a competent way of thinking)" for until the coming of the Messiah they, too, had

been barren – producing no blessing to the nations. And here, again, Paul is classifying the present, earthly Jerusalem with Hagar (the desolate woman that was abandoned to the desert – Gen. 21:14) who has produced many children who are slaves. But the Galatians should **"shout for joy"** (even though having consistently had no labor pains) because as he says in vs. 28, they are **"children of Promise."**

28. **Now we [other MSS: you folks], brothers** (= fellow believers; = my family), **down from** (or: corresponding to; in the sphere of) **Isaac, are** (continuously exist being) **children of Promise** (or: ones-born of [the])

Promise).

They (or, the inclusive "we") correspond to Isaac and truly have Abraham as their father, with the bride of Christ, the heavenly New Jerusalem, as their mother. They are folks produced by Christ's faith and His faithfulness.

Guthrie point to this form of address, "**brothers**," and says that it "is particularly relevant here in view of the phrase 'children of promise'..." (ibid. p 126).

**29. But nevertheless, just as then, the one being born down from (in accordance with; corresponding to; on the level of) flesh (= human efforts) was constantly pursuing and persecuting**

**the one down from** (in accordance with; corresponding to; in the sphere of) **spirit** (or: Breath-effect), **so also now**.

The incident to which he refers apparently must have been what is briefly described as Ishmael's "mocking" in Gen. 21:9, which prompted Sarah to speak to Abraham, recorded in vs. 10, and quoted here in vs. 30, below. Paul now turns to the current situation that both he and the Galatians are presently experiencing. The Jews and the Judaizing Christians are "**pursuing and persecuting the one**" – and note the contrast to the "**many**" of vs. 27, for the new creation was no longer two: us and them, but "**one**" – "**down from spirit** (or:

Breath-effect)." Note that the contrast in vs. 23, above, was between "**flesh**" and "**Promise**," so Paul is affirming the connection of the Promise with the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit fulfilled the Promise. The "**flesh**" is seen here as a figure for the works-oriented Law of the old covenant, while the "**spirit**" was the new covenant marker – those who possessed the Spirit, and its fruit, were citizens of the Jerusalem "**above**." They live in and by the faith which is Christ, and from Whom faith is provided to us. In 2 Cor. 3:6 we see that the letter (= the Torah) kills, but the spirit (= the new covenant and arrangement in Christ) brings life.

The ancient pattern was being fulfilled as the blessings of Abraham were coming to the nations and including them in this one new covenant.

**30. Still, what does the Scripture yet say?**

**"Cast out (or: At once expel) the servant girl (the slave-girl; the maid) and her son, for by no means will the son of the servant girl (the slave-girl; the maid) be an heir (take possession of and enjoy the distributed allotment) with the son of the freewoman."** [Gen. 21:10]

Once again Paul nails his arguments with

this quote from Gen. 21:10. The Galatians were to cast out the Law, together with the old covenant and all legalism, Phariseeism, ceremonialism (*cf* John 4:21) and the divisive prejudice which are produced by them (their children). Here it is not people that are being cast out, but the Law and all of its effects. Instead of religion what the Messiah brought were covenant communities that are bound together with love and an attitude of mutual acceptance and fair treatment of others. It's as simple as that. It is Christ within and among us.

The last clause of this quote means that the Law will not exist alongside of the

Spirit within the called-out groups. The Law and its rules and regulations are not to be a part of the new creation. Paul's rhetoric describes a summary separation and exclusion of Judaizing elements from the new covenant.

**31. Wherefore, brothers** (= fellow believers; family), **we are not** (we do not exist being) **children of a slave-girl** (a servant girl; a maid), **but, to the contrary, of the freewoman.**

In this verse he affirms that they did not come forth from keeping the Law, but from the faith that comprised the freewoman who is joined to Christ's faithfulness. It is the Vine that produces the branches, and then the fruit. They and

**we** (in corporate solidarity: **brothers**; Family) are the fulfillment of Abraham's (= the Seed's faith) vehicle of blessing the ethnic multitudes.

Guthrie makes an astute observation: "[I]t should be noted that the Greek has 'a slave,' which draws more pointed attention to the qualitative aspect, i.e. slave children, although when the free woman is referred to an article is used..." (ibid. p 127).

## Chapter 5

**1. For the [aforementioned] freedom, Christ immediately set us free (or: [The] Anointed One at once frees us in, to, for and with freedom)! Keep on standing firm, therefore, and do not again be habitually held within a yoke of slavery (or: a cross-lever [of a pair of scales] whose sphere is bondage)**  
(or: Continuously stand firm, then, in the freedom [to which the] Anointing sets us free, and let not yourselves be progressively confined again by a yoke pertaining to servitude)!

I have inserted an interpretive word "

**[aforementioned]**" to suggest to the reader that the freedom of which Paul speaks in this verse is the same freedom (from Law and Torah) to which he was allegorically referring in the previous passage. The Christ-event, the death of the Messiah (figuring the death of Israel as her representative Head), immediately set humanity free from outward religious observance. What is now observed is the Christ within us and within others. We live with a new heart that operates naturally in accord with its new spiritual "DNA." It is the Spirit's law of Life (Rom. 8:2).

So Paul, basing his admonition (the imperative that follows) upon the fact

(the indicative which expressed the fact of our being FREE), urges them to **"Keep on standing firm"** in this state and condition of freedom. **"Do NOT again be habitually held within a yoke of slavery."** Note that the word "yoke" (*zugos*) can also be rendered "a cross-lever," such as one used with a pair of scales. Is Paul giving a double meaning here, suggesting the legal implications that the "scales of justice" often figured? Recall Jesus' use of the word "yoke" (Matt. 11:30) – His is easy and His burden is light (as compared to that which the Pharisees imposed out of the Law).

The parenthetical alternate rendering

simply puts Paul's Greek into different English. The meaning remains exactly the same. Here, the rendering of *christos* as "Anointing" may help us to see the present, ongoing work of "Christ" within us. Like God as the Creator, there was an original, historic work; and now there is an ongoing action of His creating – all through the ages (past, present and future). So it is with the Spirit of the Son (4:6, above), the Spirit of Christ, the Anointing.

**2. See and individually consider! I, Paul, continue saying to you folks, that if you should proceed to being circumcised, Christ will benefit you nothing (will be of use to you [for] not**

one thing)!

He speaks to them here both corporately, "you folks," and yet calls each member of the body to participate ("**individually consider**"). He emphasizes that he, himself (both using the personal pronoun and stating his name), is the one now about to make a critical statement.

Rhetorically, this combination of "**See and individually consider!**" followed by his name will both call them to heightened attention and also add authority (for he is their father/mother; they are his children) to what he is about to say. So we should likewise sit up and listen – as on the edge of our seats!

**"If you should proceed to**

**being circumcised** (= take up Law observance) – **Christ will benefit you NOTHING: He will be of use to you [for] NOT ONE THING!"**

This is a staggering statement. If you bring even one element of the Law (circumcision, in this case) into the community or covenant of the called-out, Christ will be of no benefit to you. THIS is why Paul was so concerned that ALL of his work may have been in vain! We might be tempted to ask, How can this be? And does this refer ONLY to circumcision? Well, it was the foremost identity marker for the Jews. Paul, above in 2:7ff, used "**Circumcision**" in this

very way. Since the foregoing arguments were directed again "Mt. Sinai" and its slavery, we may be safe in understanding "**circumcision**" to be a code word for the entire Law. Take moralism as an element of the Law, and as Paul said in Rom 7:9, when the injection came in the form of an implanted commandment, he died. Or, as cited above, "**the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.**"

**3. Now I continue solemnly asserting** (attesting; affirming; witnessing), **again,** **to every person** (or: human) **proceeding to be circumcised, that he is, and continues being, a debtor** (one under obligation) **to do** (to perform; to produce) **the whole Law** [= the entire

Torah]!

The point that he made in vs. 2 is so important that he makes is AGAIN, in these words,

**"To every person (or: human) proceeding to be circumcised, that he is, and continues being, a DEBTOR (one UNDER OBLIGATION) to do (to perform; to produce) the WHOLE Law [= the ENTIRE Torah]!"**

There was nothing uncertain about what he was saying. Such indebtedness will without any doubt lead to the very slavery from which Christ set us free! The "WHOLE LAW" means that nothing

is left out. If you have any doubts or questions about what he means, just read Exodus through Deuteronomy.

**4. You people were discharged** (made inactive, idle, useless, unproductive and without effect; or: voided, nullified, exempted) **away from Christ, you who are now in Law trying to be rightwised** (also = be included in the covenant) **and are basing your fairness and relationships on the way it points out – you at once fell from out of the grace and favor!**

Here we have both restatement of vs. 2 and amplification of it, with an expansion of what he meant by "circumcision" there. If they were

attempting to be included in the NEW (NOT "renewed") arrangement (or: covenant) – and be rightwised (turned in the right direction) by being placed in the Way (Christ – John 6:14) that has been pointed out – by being **in union with the Law**, they were (by this inclusion of the old into the new) **discharged away from Christ**; they "were voided, made inactive and unproductive, away from Christ." The moment that they turned back to observance of days and weeks and months, they at once "**fell from out of the grace and favor.**" They had been seated in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph. 2:6); now they had fallen to the

earth – the flesh realm of the Law cultus. They were broken out of the olive tree into which they had been grafted. Now they were just like any other religion. But like what Paul said of the faith-void Israelites, if they did not remain in this faithless condition, Christ would graft them back in again (Rom. 11:23ff). Jesus referred to the "fallen out" condition in John 15. It means not "abiding, dwelling and remaining" in Christ, but returning to religion (Law, ceremonies, food codes, morality codes, dualistic paradigms, us versus them mentality, prejudice toward this versus that, exclusion of certain categories, etc.). Christ is a life, not a system of laws, customs, behaviors or

practices.

**5. For in spirit** (or: by [the] Breath-effect; with [the] Spirit) – **forth from out of faith and trust** – **we continuously** (or: progressively) **receive by taking away, as with our hands, from out of [the] expectation which belongs to and whose source and reality is the fairness, equity and freedom from guilt in right relationship within the Way pointed out** (or: forth from the midst of expectant hope, which is the state of being rightwised and pointed in the right direction; also = out of an expectation from covenant inclusion and participation),

Here he asserts his solidarity with them ("we") in the corporate setting of the called-out communities. We all

**"continuously (or: progressively) receive by taking away, as with our hands, from out of [the] expectation."**

See the discussion of this verb in the comments on Heb. 9:28. It is the verb *dechomai* with two prepositions prefixed to it which modify the meaning "to receive by taking (as with the hand)" with the added sense of "away from" and "out of." This is now constantly done (note the present tense of the verb) **IN spirit, BY [the] Breath-effect, and WITH [the] Spirit [of God]**. As stated before, these

prepositions set forth the various functions of the dative case, and all of them fit the context: in, by and with the realm, instrumentality and participation of God. Having just spoken against participation in the Jewish religion that required flesh practices, Paul here stresses the contrast which characterizes the new covenant: **spirit**. And the spiritual activity of **receiving and taking away** operates **from out of faith and trust**. Seen from another perspective, the realm of being **in spirit** resides in and has its source in **faith and trust**.

In viewing *pneuma* as referring to "[the] Breath-effect, or, [the] Spirit" (there is

no definite article in the Greek) – with God's Spirit having been given to us in this new arrangement – we now **continuously receive** from out of the **expectation** that is resident within **faith/trust** (that came with the proclaimed Word) "**by** [the] Breath-effect" (i.e., by "... the activity, the action, the motion, the operation, the force, the energy, the influence of God toward men" – J. Preston Eby), which is to say, "**with** [the] Spirit."

The expectation belongs to covenant inclusion in the Promise. Its source is Christ's fairness; its reality is His equity and the release from a sense of shame or guilt. The Promised expectation is right

relationships within the Way pointed out. Stated otherwise, we now progressively receive forth from the midst of what had been an expectant hope – which is the state of being rightwised (Bultmann's term).

**6. for within Christ Jesus** (or: for you see, in union with [the] Anointed Jesus) **neither circumcision continues having strength, for competence or effectiveness, to be availing** (or: be of service for) **anything, nor [does] uncircumcision, but rather, [it is] faith-and-trust: of itself continuously working effectively** (operating; being inwardly active and productive) **through Love** ("[God's] acceptance of

the object of love without restriction, in spite of the estranged, profanized and demonized state of the object; the whole being's drive and movement toward reunion with another, to overcome existential separation; an ecstatic manifestation of the Spiritual Presence" – Tillich, *ibid.*, on *agape*; brackets mine; *cf* John 3:16; 1 Cor. 13:4-8).

Verse 6 continues Paul's explanation of the characteristics of the new covenant: "you see, in union with [the] Anointed Jesus **neither circumcision continues having strength (= is ineffective) to be availing anything, nor [does] uncircumcision...**" These categories are irrelevant have been ended. "This

statement shows expressively the tremendous emancipation which has taken place in Paul's mind" (Guthrie, *ibid.*, p 130). The situation now is **"faith-and-trust: of itself continuously working effectively, being inwardly active and productive – operating through Love."** Consider well Paul Tillich's expanded definitions and descriptions of *agape* (Love) in the parenthetical expansion, above. This, in itself, describes the new covenant, the new creation and (using Tillich's term) the New Being. Love is unambiguous acceptance of others, without qualification, despite whatever, with a drive for a reunion that overcomes all

alienation and estrangement. This Love can only be God, manifesting Himself through Christ: first on the cross, and now in us via cruciform living. I will quote, again, Paul's description of this Love as stated in 1 Cor. 13:7,

**"[Love] continuously covers all mankind; it is habitually loyal to all humanity; it constantly has an expectation for all mankind; it continuously remaining under and giving support to all people."**

Notice that vs. 5 sets the sphere of this life: **in spirit**, or, in God. The manifestation which brings the expected

promise of inclusion in Christ (the new arrangement) – with all its attendant markers of the rightwised Path, fairness, equity and relating rightly with others – is seen and experienced through His love that resides within His body.

Furthermore, this Love operates in us **by** His Breath-effect and in union with His Spirit (which are just two expressions for the same Reality: God).

In the foregoing six verses, Paul has essentially recapped the great argument of ch. 3 – a skillful rhetorical maneuver. Here he has brought his audience back from the allegorical expansion and to the central flow of his theme.

**7. You folks have been running**

**beautifully** (finely; ideally)! **Who** (or: What) **cut in on you folks, to hinder or thwart you, [for you] not to continue to be persuaded** (convinced) **by** (or: in; with) **the Truth and this reality?**

Now Paul moves from the realized christology of vss. 4-6 to focus back on the immediate history of the Galatians. They had be "**running beautifully** – finely, ideally." In 2:2, above, Paul used this same athletic metaphor to describe the focused quality of how he was living, as if running a race. So who was this – or what was it – that "**cut in on [them]**"? What thwarted their progress? Why did they "**not continue to be persuaded and convinced by and in the**

**Truth and this Reality"**? Paul knows the answer – this is just his rhetoric at work. It was those who are trying to get the Galatians to Judaize – to take up Law-keeping. All was going well; whence came all these thorns and thistles (Heb. 6:8)?

**8. This "art of persuasion"** (or: The enticement; or: The yielding to [their] persuasion) **[comes] not from out of the One continuously calling you folks.** This enticing rhetoric (**art of persuasion**) came from the Jewish quarter – it did not come from Christ. It is a foreign call; it was the Great Prostitute's allurements (Rev. 17:1-6; 18:3-4), like the enticement in the

wilderness journey for Israel to return to Egypt, away from the leading of God's Spirit. "Don't be led by the Spirit (they say) – that's rebellion against the organizations leadership" is an example of the modern "art of persuasion." "Keep paying those tithes – you don't want to rob God, do you?" The Law is inserted in the covenant communities by enticing, seemingly reasonable, rhetoric.

**9. A little yeast (or: leaven) is progressively permeating so as to ferment (to be leavening) the whole batch of kneaded dough.**

Keeping even one part of the Law is like mixing leaven "**until [the] whole [batch] is leavened**" (Matt. 13:33).

Here, the "**batch**" is a figure for the called-out congregation – and don't miss the corporate inference in the metaphor. Whether it be tithing, circumcision, re-instituting the priesthood cultus (which Christianity has done), or incorporating any other "law" from the Torah, any such legalism will eventually saturate the entire individual with the spirit of the Law (flesh-orientation) and corrupt the entire corporate assembly – "**the whole batch.**"

**10. I myself have been convinced so as to be confident** (have come to a settled persuasion), [**with a view**] **into you folks – within [the] Lord** (Owner; [= Yahweh, or Christ]; or: I am confident in

[the] Lord, [directing my thoughts] into you) – **that you will [in] nothing be disposed otherwise** (or: that you will have not [even] one other opinion or frame of mind). **Now the person constantly agitating and disturbing you people will lift up and carry** (or: bear) **the effect of the decision** (or: result of [his] sifting and judgment), **whoever he may be.**

Now just as the Galatians had been running ideally and beautifully (and "the beauty of the cruciform life will save the world" – a paraphrase of Brian Zahnd), Paul had "**been convinced so as to be confident**" (the perfect tense of the verb) with regard to them and their being

centered with the Lord. Despite their momentary wandering due to the false teachers that had led them out of grace, Paul was sure that this letter of admonition and persuasion would win them back so that they "**will [in] nothing be disposed otherwise**" nor have "**not [even] one other opinion or frame of mind**" than what they had originally received from the Spirit and what he was now once again affirming to them. In regard to "**the person constantly agitating and disturbing [them]**," this false teacher "**will bear** (lift up and carry) **the effect of the decision** (the result of [his] sifting and judgment)" that Christ will bring either through the

mature members of the local assemblies, or as a psychological burden within himself. What we sow we will also reap. Paul chooses not to name this person – if it was just one person. He is probably indicating "any person," since this letter would be circulated through all the called-out communities in Galatia. It is probably for this reason that he ends the sentence, "**whoever he may be.**"

**11. Now I, brothers** (= fellow believers; = my family), **if am still habitually preaching circumcision as the message, why am I still being constantly pursued and persecuted? If that has been the case, then the**

**snare** (trap-spring; bait-stick; = offense; = a stumbling-block) **of the cross** (the execution stake) **has been, and remains, discharged** (made inactive, down-idled, useless, unproductive and without effect; or: = removed or abolished).

He returns to his arguments with this term of endearment and solidarity "**brothers,**" and poses another rhetorical question, "... **why am I still being constantly pursued and persecuted?**" [by the Jews] – "**if am still habitually preaching circumcision as the message.**" So he is once again setting himself as evidence for his arguments. If he, their father in the good news and their mother that gave birth to them, was

not preaching circumcision, they why would they trust and follow the Judaizing teachers that were leading them back to the very religion that was persecuting him?

If he is advocating circumcision (the code-word for observing the Law), the consequences are that **"the snare of the cross has been discharged – made unproductive and without effect."**

Christ, therefore, died in vain – the chief priests and Pharisees must have been right. It was an offense, and thus a snare, to the Jews that their Messiah would be crucified by the very occupying country which they had hoped that their Messiah would overthrow – and not only that, he

had become a thing accursed by their Law, in being hung on a tree/pole. Only a revelation from God's Spirit could make them see otherwise (e.g., 2 Cor. 3:16). And thus, there was no condemnation even for them, and in unconditional love He forgave them while hanging on the cross.

"But Paul was **still persecuted**, his preaching was still a **stumbling-block** (as he describes it himself in 1 Cor. 1:23)" – Harvey, *ibid.* p 613.

12. **Would that** (or: I wish that) **those continually unsettling you** (causing you to rise up as in an insurrection; thus: disturbing or exciting you folks) **will also cut themselves away** (i.e.,

amputate themselves from your body [of believers]; or: cut themselves off [note: some read this to mean to mutilate themselves or castrate themselves]!

Here he affirms that it is a group ("**those**") that was constantly "**unsettling**" them – which indicates that they HAD been **settled** in Christ. This word *anastatoō* can mean "disturbing or exciting" – even to the point of raising an "insurrection" against Christ.

Paul expresses the desire that these false teachers would "**cut themselves away**" from the covenant assembly. This would allow the ecclesias (called-out communities) to be at ease in Christ's goodness, and not be in turmoil about the

divisive and spurious teachings. Many have taken one use of the word *apokopsontai*, which can mean "castration or self-mutilation," as being what Paul meant here: a mocking reference to circumcision. Although this is a possible translation of the word, it would be mean-spirited and out of character for such as Paul who constantly spoke of love, and represented the Christ who forgives His enemies. I believe that a literal rendering of the Greek elements far better suits the practicality of the situation, as well as the heart of Paul that we see expressed in all his letters. He simply wants the Galatians to be free

from these unsettling influences that promote keeping the Law. What good would a vulgar interpretation of Paul do? It does not serve either his character or his rhetoric. Cutting themselves away – or off (both meanings from the prefix *apo-*) – from the body of believers would affect the purpose of his whole letter.

Furthermore, would Paul be invoking Deut. 23:1 on these folks (self-mutilation was a ground for excommunication from Yahweh's congregation)? If so, he would be doing exactly what he has been arguing against: brining an element of the Law into the new covenant.

**13. For you folks were called upon the**

**foundation of** (on the basis of; for the purpose of) **freedom, [my] brothers. Only not** (or: Just not) **the freedom [which is leading] into a starting point** (or: unto an opportunity, occasion or incentive; to a base of operation) **for** (to; in; by; with) **the flesh** [comment: = circumcision with the flesh ordinances and ceremonial laws of Judaism; or: = personal license for the estranged human nature], **but to the contrary, through the Love** [*agape*: cf vs. 6b, above] **be continuously slaving for one another** (serving and performing the duties of a slave to each other).

Here he picks up his theme of freedom again (and this would flow from the

freedom from the Judaizers that he wishes for in vs. 13), reminding them that freedom is the very foundation and basis of their calling into covenant inclusion, i.e., into the "called-out" – that is called-out of Judaism and the slavery to the Law – body of Christ. Rhetorically, Paul uses the emphatic personal pronoun (**you folks**) in addressing them afresh in his arguments, ending the statement with the term "**brothers**" to reinforce their solidarity with **him**. Harvey is instructive here:

"This is not a general statement about the human race, like 'Man is born to be free.' It refers to a particular moment of liberation.

The freeing of slaves was a familiar feature of Paul's world. It was often done, both by Jews and pagans, under the guise of a religious act: the ransom money was paid to the owner through the treasury of the temple or synagogue, so that it could be said that God had 'bought' (or **called**, as here) a slave into freedom. This procedure offered a ready analogy to Christian experience." (ibid. p 614)

But now he inserts a warning into this positive argument. They are not to let their new freedom be a "**starting point or an opportunity, nor an occasion, nor**

**an incentive, nor a base of operation** (the Greek is a military term) **for, to or in the flesh."**

This admonition has historically been used as a moralistic imperative against personal immorality. But this is not how Paul has used the term "**flesh**" (i.e., in a moralistic way) in this letter. He is still arguing against inserting elements from the old covenant rituals, and works, into the new arrangement – which is a covenant of **spirit**, and from the Spirit. It is NOT a covenant of race or outward religion. It is NOT a covenant of physical offerings or flesh sacrifices. What he says here is what he said about circumcision, above. Don't let your

freedom lead you back into slavery of legalism or moralism.

So what is the contrast to this warning? "... to the **CONTRARY**, through the **Love** [*agape*: cf vs. 6b, above] **be continuously slaving for one another** (serving and performing the duties of a slave to each other)." Instead of seeking personal holiness or righteousness for yourself, to try to lift yourself up by personal efforts, serve and perform as a slave to each other (notice the corporate emphasis here). And through "**THE LOVE**" (i.e., God; the Spirit; the new covenant of Christ whose only law is "**the Love**" – the essence, power and ability of God Himself) be constantly

slaving (note the paradox: slaving with and in "**the freedom**") for one another – NOT for personal purity or any identity marker of the old arrangement. This is new kind of slavery that turns a "flesh culture" on its head. You have become free in Christ so that you can give your life to the world, virtually performing as a slave in order to heal them and set them free (cast out their demonizing thinking which sets one person as separate from another, and thus more special than the other; free them from the demonizing mindset that has made them "of their father, the devil" – John 8:44 – so that they are blind to the new union of heaven and earth). Tell them that the

poor (the vast majority of humanity) now possess God's reign (Lu. 6:20) – it belongs to them – and they are a part of His sovereign activities.

**14. For, the entire Law has been fulfilled and stands filled up within one word** (or: within one thought or idea; within one saying or message) – **within the one:**

**"You will love [*agapao*; cf vs. 6b, above] your near-one** (your associate; your neighbor; the one close by your position), **as** (in the same way as; or: as he/she were) **yourself."** [Lev. 19:18; comment: this one "expressed thought" is the idea and purpose

of the Word]

Now Paul reaches back to the Torah (Lev. 19:18) for the authority of this world-shattering proclamation. This verse echoes the words of Jesus (Matt. 5:43) and this expressed thought (*logos*; Word) encapsulates the whole idea and purpose of God's Word: "**Love the one that is close to your present position and location.**" The verb "love" is not in the imperative here (and thus, not a command) but is a simple future indicative (and thus, a promise): "**You WILL love your near-one** (the one that you can reach out and touch or support)." But we should not miss the import of this one word (and: message). "**The entire**

**Law** (the whole Torah) **has been fulfilled and stands filled up** (the perfect tense) **within**" this one statement. The new encompasses and transforms the old just as life swallow down and changes death into resurrection life (1 Cor. 15:54ff). Nothing, in the way of religious marker, ritual or ceremony, is needed from the old. Christ has been born from the old, took it to the grave, and left those old vestments in the tomb. The new has only the identity marks of a crucified life that is in union with Christ. In reference to the phrase "**one word**," Guthrie sees that, "a contrast is clearly intended between 'one' word and the whole law" (ibid. p 134).

We can see that the Jews were quite familiar with this concept from the lawyer's response to Jesus' question to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you normally read it?" (Lu. 10:25ff). The man answered with a quote of this same verse in Leviticus. Then when Jesus responded, "**With discernment you answered correctly. Be habitually doing this and you will be living,**" the lawyer asks, "**And who is my neighbor** (associate; the one close to me)?" The lawyer had correctly interpreted "**the entire Law**" but was missing the understanding of how this should be applied. The answer that Jesus gave to this second question came in the form of

the parable of the "Good Samaritan," and then Jesus' question to him, "**Which one of these three now seems (appears) to you to have come to be a neighbor (associate; close-one) of the person...?**" The lawyer's answer is instructive: "**The person doing (performing) the mercy with him.**" This verbal exchange was a foreshadowing of "phase two" of the good news that came through Paul: the concept of "neighbor" was now extended beyond the boundary markers of the old covenant and included folks beyond the confines of Israel. Not only that, "**eonian life**" (the life of the new covenant community) of which the lawyer had asked (vs. 25) is

expressed in terms of "**mercy**" to someone in need – not in just a "belief system" or "correct theology" or some ceremonial observance. It reflects corporate responsibility and inclusion of those often considered to be "sinners" by one's institutional religion.

"The old slavery has gone, and been replaced by – another slavery! The new slavery is **to one another in love** – and this is nothing other than a summing up of **the whole law**. The same point is made more fully in Rom. 13:8-10"

(Harvey, *ibid.*)

**15. Now since, or if, you folks are habitually biting and repeatedly eating one another down, watch out, lest you**

**may be used up and consumed by (or: under) one another.**

Again Paul returns to how they have been behaving (reading *ei* as "**since**") from this "**fallen-out-of-grace**" influence. Or, he is warning them (reading *ei* as "if") about the absence of love and slaving service to others. Such behavior will consume the entire covenant community to where it will no longer exist. This has happened far too many times.

**16. Now I continue saying, be habitually walking about (= living your life) in spirit (or: by [the] Spirit; with a Breath-effect), and you should under no circumstance (or: would by no means)**

**bring to fruition** (carry to its goal; end up with; bring to maturity) **the full rushing passion** (the over-desire; craving) **originating in flesh**

(= pertaining to the estranged human nature or the self which has been dominated by a system of culture or religion; or: corresponding to flesh-[righteousness]; belonging to [a religious system] of flesh-works).

So what is the antidote to vs. 15? "... **be habitually walking about** (= living your life) **in spirit** (or: by [the] Spirit; with a Breath-effect)" – which means to live your life in the new arrangement, in

alignment with the new creation, i.e., in Christ. Now as you see, the dative case can also have an instrumental function:

"Be constantly living BY [the] Spirit (i.e., by the life and power of God)."

And in an associative function: "Live your life WITH a Breath-effect."

By living in this sphere, and by the abilities of the new arrangement, there is no way that folks will "**bring to fruition** (carry to its goal; end up with; bring to maturity) **the full rushing passion** (the over-desire; craving) **originating in** [the old covenant]." On a practical level, and for we who are living almost two thousand years later, "**flesh**" also means that the old estranged human nature – the

self that had been dominated by a system of culture, religion, government and economy – will not be producing a life based upon the passion of flesh-works or ritual-based religion, since that first-Adam part of us died with Christ and has been raised with Him **in spirit**, empowering us to live our lives by the effect of His Breath.

**17. For the flesh [system or nature] is constantly rushing passionately down upon (or: against) the spirit (or: Breath-effect), and the spirit (or: Breath-effect) down on (or: against) the flesh [nature, or, system of religion], for these things are constantly lying in opposition to each other (lying set to displace each**

other), **so that – whatever you may habitually be intending** (wanting; willing; purposing) – **these things you repeatedly can not be doing.**

[comment: either because of the estranged flesh nature, or, because of the rules of the system]

The old covenant and the new covenant stand in passionate opposition to each other – they are "lying set to displace each other." We see this with the Jews pursuing and persecuting Paul, on the one hand, and Paul's message and arguments against the Judaizers, on the other.

If we take this verse outside of the flow

of Paul's arguments against returning to old covenant Judaism, we can make a personal application to "the estranged flesh nature," or we can apply this in a sociological way in regard to the rules of some system. But this is not Paul's argument here. He is speaking to the conflict that the Judaizers have brought to Galatia. We see this clearly stated in vs. 18, below.

**18. Yet since** (or: if) **you folks are continuously being led in spirit** (by [the] Spirit; to [the] Spirit; with a Breath-effect), **you do not exist** (you are not) **under Law** [= Torah; = the flesh system of works].

"**Since**" they are **continuously being led**

**in spirit** (or: by [the] Spirit – Rom. 8:14; or: to [the] Spirit; or: with a Breath-effect), it clearly follows that they (and now we) **do NOT exist under Law** – or: are NOT associated with the Torah nor controlled or directed by some system of religious works, ceremonial requirements or ancient customs. They, and WE, are FREE! We are led by the Spirit (i.e., by God) who has taken up residence within and among us. Our only rules are the DNA of the Christ-life that has been imprinted within our new heart: we have a new "core" of our being, and it is God. Reading the dative as "by [the] Spirit" calls to mind Paul's definition of being placed as a son in Rom. 8:14, and

the same metaphor as used in 4:1 ff, above.

The reading "**in spirit**" is a reference to covenant inclusion, and the sphere of the "new creation." The thought contained in "to [the] Spirit" instructs us of our progressive path toward the Father. The picture drawn by "with a Breath-effect" describes our partnership with Christ, being co-laborers with God as the new creation progressively unfolds: a vibrant, living existence in His reign that is joined with His sovereign activities.

**19. Now the works** (actions; deeds) **of the flesh [religion]** (or: = whose source and origin are the estranged human nature; or: pertaining to the flesh

[system, or, nature]; or: = whose results and realm are the self in slavery to a system) **[are] seen and made apparent in clear light, which are, and continue being, the works of a prostitute** (or: [the] Prostitute): **uncleanness** (or: waste or worthless material, as of decayed flesh; a never-pruned tree; material that has not been sifted), **excess** (immoderation; outrageous behavior),  
Now a casual reading of this and the following two verses would seem to appear as Paul pointing us to personal morality ("List of virtues and vices were a standard rhetorical device in the ancient world..." – Harvey, *ibid.* p 615), but I suggest that this is not the case.

Each category listed here in 19 and 20 are corporate issues that the prophets laid charge to Israel in regard to their religious prostitution with the idolatries of their pagan neighbors. On the first item, recall Isa. 1:21, "How has the faithful city [i.e., Jerusalem] become a prostitute?" On the second, *akatharsia*, Barclay points out that it "can be used for the pus of an unclean wound, for a tree that has never been pruned, for material which has never been sifted" (ibid. p 47). This was not just about a moral issue. Also, see Ezk. 34:18 and Matt. 23:27. These were all corporate pronouncements. As to excessive behavior, see the religious behavior that

Jesus addresses in Matt. 23:14-23.

I suggest that Paul is demonstrating the rhetorical skill of "the double-meaning." Taken as literal vices, they are indeed works of the estranged human nature. But as you see, the prophets used this same technique, associating the physical vice with the spiritual – the second being the main point.

20. **idolatry** (being a servant to or worshiping external forms or appearances, phantoms of the mind, unsubstantial or reflected images, or conveyed impressions) **sorcery** (employment of drugs and enchantments; magic rites; witchcraft), **hostilities** (enmities; alienations), **strife**

(contentious disposition), **jealousies** (or: zealous emotions), **stirring emotions** (rushing passions; furies), **factions, standings-apart** (divisions), **sects** (religious denominations; parties with a particular opinion; the making of choices from preferences),

All of the items listed in this verse can apply to religious groups, on a spiritual level. The meanings of **idolatry** in the parenthetical expansion are easily and often seen in religious settings even today. Francis Frangipane has said that the basic form of **witchcraft** is the attempt, or the practice, of controlling others by any spirit [or attitude] that is not God. **Hostilities** were seen in the

attitudes and actions of the scribes and Pharisees toward Jesus – as well as between the various sects of first century Judaism. **Strife** and **factions** (divisions) was seen in the Corinthian groups, as we see in 1 Cor. Paul, as Saul, had demonstrated "zealous emotions" against the Christians. The Jews killed Jesus out of **jealousy** (*cf* John 11:47-48; 12:19). As to **stirring emotions**, consider the Jews who had vowed to kill Paul (Acts 23:12). The term **sect** was seen in the Judaism of Jesus' day, and throughout the history of Christianity.

21. **envies, murders, intoxications** (times of being drunk), **festal processions** (or: excessive feastings),

**and things like to these [whether religious, or personal], which things I continue predicting (saying beforehand; or: = giving warning) to you folks, just as I said before, that those habitually practicing (or: performing) such [religious, or personal] things will not inherit (receive and enjoy a distributed allotment of) God's reign (kingdom; sovereign influence and activities).**

**Envy** is often a corporate attitude and emotion. John addressed the attitude of hate, and equated it to **murder** (1 John 3:15). The "**intoxications and festal processions**" were issues involving feasts in idol temples (*cf* Ben Witherington III, *ibid.*, where he

addresses this issue in 1 Cor.).

We should keep in mind the present tense in the verb "**habitually practicing** (repeatedly performing)." This indicates a way of life for the group ("**those**" – plural). All such things are antitheses of the Love that fulfills the Law (14, above) and are the opposite of "walking about (living) in the spirit and Breath-effect" (15) of the Promise. Living in things of the old creation (the flesh) precludes living in the enjoyment of the allotted inheritance – which is the new (the spirit). The term "**inherit** (etc.) is simply another metaphor in Paul's rhetorical arsenal. God's reign – His sovereign influence and activities – is a

living relationship that is shared by the covenant community. The foregoing "laundry list," above, represents behaviors that damage and break relationships. They divert the attention away from Christ (the opposite of 2 Cor. 3:18) among people (as well as within individuals) and blind the group from seeing the manifestations of His sovereign activities within and among others. Such activities make it impossible for them to be participating (enjoying the allotment) in God's kingdom. His reign is happening now – this is not referring to some future time. For a similar statement, see 1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Eph. 5:3-18.

As to the phrase, "**and things like to these**," Guthrie observes, "this is clearly added by Paul to show that he has intentionally been selective for the purpose of illustrating his point" (ibid. p 138).

**22. Now the Spirit's fruit** (or: So the fruit whose origin and source is the Spirit; But the fruit which is Breath-effect; Yet the fruit of the Attitude) **is: love** (unrestricted acceptance and the drive to overcome existential separation), **joy, peace** (or: harmony; [= shalom]), **length before a stirring of emotion** (slowness of rushing toward something; long-enduring; longsuffering; patience), **useful kindness, goodness**

(virtuousness), **faith** (or: faithfulness; trust; trustworthiness; loyalty; reliance; reliability; allegiance; fidelity),

In contrast to the "**WORKS of the flesh**" of the old creation (the old Adam) and the old covenant (the flesh systems of human endeavor and flesh living), the new arrangement bears the **FRUIT** of the Vine (God's **Spirit**). Rendering *pneuma* as in apposition, we see that this multi-qualified fruit (the word is singular) IS, in fact, the effect of His Breath being "breathed" by us. This **FRUIT** is the result of the new covenant of the Spirit – it is the Life that flows out from its innermost being (John 7:38).

My expanded renderings give a fuller

spectrum of the qualities and character of God. His fruit lets us know what kind of "tree" that He is (Matt. 7:16): the Tree of Life (*cf* Rev. 22:2).

"Paul's list can be paralleled from both pagan and Jewish sources, and indeed these show that he drew on both."

(Harvey, *ibid.* p 615). With the second list having the "spirit" (Paul's code word for the new covenant) as its source, it is congruent with his line of argument that the first had its source in the old covenant, "the flesh." This list portrays maturity (it is a mature plant that produces fruit) and corresponds in his arguments with being placed as a son – as opposed to the status of the slave with

the immature, and with that which is not out of the Promise (or: the Spirit).

That this list was not meant to be complete or comprehensive, consider what he says in Eph. 5:9,

**"for the fruit of the Light**  
[other MSS: **Spirit**] [is] **in union**  
**with** (or: [exists] within the  
midst of) **all Goodness** (virtue;  
beneficence), **Justice** (fair and  
equitable dealing in rightwised  
relationships which accord with  
the Way pointed out; also =  
covenant participation) **and**  
**Truth** (or: Reality)."

Now take note that *dikaiosunē* (see 2:21; 3:6, 21; 5:5, above) is listed in

association with the **FRUIT** of the **Light or the Spirit**. Goodness, Justice (*dikaio<sup>s</sup>une*) and Truth/Reality were all birthed through the coming of the Light (John 1:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) and of the Spirit. They, too, are, in fact, the Fruit (or: the produce; the production) of the Spirit.

It is significant that one of the attributes of the Spirit's fruit is FAITH. No one can have faith without first ingesting the FRUIT which contains faith. Ingesting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (a figure of the Law: that which gives the knowledge of good and evil, or right and wrong) brought death. Ingesting the fruit of the tree of Life (a

figure of that which produces the Life of Christ) brings the FRUIT of "**the Spirit of the Life within Christ Jesus**" (Rom. 8:2) into the body (both individually and corporately) and *voila* (Behold!), suddenly we have FAITH. And being given FAITH, we can now believe, be faithful, have fidelity, etc. This is similar to what we read in 1 John 4:19,

**"We ourselves are [some MSS add: now] habitually loving (or, as a subjunctive: can and should be constantly loving) because He Himself first loved (or: urges to reunion with) us."**

23. **gentle friendliness** (meekness; mildness), **inner strength** (self-control).

**[The] Law is not down from such things** (or: In the sphere of such things [the] Law does not exist; There is no law against such things; Law does not correspond to and is not on the level of such things).

The last half of this verse brings Paul's audience back to his central theme of the Galatians' terminated relationship to the Law, which they had once had in their association with the synagogue of the Jews. I have presented five possible meanings of the preposition *kata* which inform us of Paul's potential meaning here:

1) [The] Law is not down from such things. I.e., the Law does not have its

source in "love, joy, peace, etc."

2) In the sphere of such things [the] Law does not exist.

3) There is no law against such things.

4) Law (or: Torah) does not correspond to such things. The two

covenants/arrangements – just like the two creations – do not correspond to each other: one is death; the other is life.

5) Law is not on the level of such things: the spirit is of the heavens, while the Law is of the earth. The Law attends childhood; the spirit creates maturity.

**24. Now those whose source and origin is Christ Jesus (or: those who belong to the Anointed Jesus) crucified the flesh (or: put the flesh [system] on an**

execution stake; or: = associate their old estranged human nature as being put to death along with Christ Jesus), **together with the results and effects of the experiences** (emotions; feelings; sufferings; passions) **and the over-desires** (rushing passionately upon things; full-rushing emotions).

Paul is not just contrasting individuals here, but communities. The called-out communities have left the flesh-system (Judaism) on the execution stake with Christ. They have crucified the Law and the old covenant, together with their effects and results, and the rushing passionately against the followers of Christ (I am here referencing Saul,

before he was transformed to be Paul). They have left their old **experiences**, emotions, feelings, passions – and sufferings (these terms express the semantic range of *pascha*) in the grave with Christ's grave clothes. Their "**over-desires**, full rushing emotions and the passionate rushing-upon things" have been crucified with the Messiah. Although these aspects of "the flesh" can be applied to individuals, the theme of Paul's argument applies first and foremost to the corporate body of Christ: the called-out covenant communities which "belong to the Anointed Jesus" and have Him as their source. Covenant inclusion was the product of His death

and resurrection, and not of personal holiness or morality. The individual becomes holy and moral by his or her inclusion in the Christ. In effect, their hearts have been circumcised (Rom. 2:29) by inclusion in the resurrected Israel, the Second Man. Consider what Paul said in Phil. 3:3,

**"For you see, we ourselves are (exist being) The Circumcision: the people (or: those) continuously rendering sacred service in a spirit of God (or: by God's Breath-effect; to God's Spirit; with God's breath; [some MSS: service to God in spirit; p46 omits "God," so simply:**

serving in spirit]) **and constantly making our boast** (being loud-tongued, vaunting and exulting) **within, and in union with, Christ Jesus; even folks** (or: those) **being people having been persuaded and thus continuing to put no confidence within flesh** (= having no reliance upon what is physical: e.g., religious works or natural heritage; or: the estranged human nature; [comment: this could be a reference to animal sacrifices])."

And then there is Col. 2:11,

**"within Whom you folks were also circumcised (or: in union with Whom you are cut around and off) by (or: in; to; with) a circumcision not done by hands (not handmade): in the sinking out and away from (or: the stripping off and undressing of; the going out and away from) the body of the flesh**

(= the corporate body of the Jewish religion and national heritage; or: = the natural body, or, the body pertaining to the natural realm; or: = the estranged human nature

and alienated self) – **in the circumcision of the Christ** (in Christ's circumcision; in the circumcision which was done to Christ; or: in the circumcision which is the Anointing)."

**25. Since (or: If) we continue living in and by spirit** (or: for [the] Spirit; to Breath-effect; or: with attitude), **we also can habitually advance orderly in line in regard to, or amidst, elementary principles** (or: [observing] rudimentary elements), **in and by spirit** (or: for [the] Spirit; by Breath-effect; with attitude; or: = walk in rank following [the footsteps]

behind the Spirit). [*cf* Rom. 4:12]

**26. We can (or: should) not repeatedly (or: habitually) come to be (or: Let us stop becoming) folks with empty glory (or: a vacuous reputation; = to be egotistical or conceited), continually being those challenging one another [as to combat], constantly envying one another.**

In these two verses Paul is affirming their abilities to live in peace and harmony – to bear the Spirit's fruit. By "**living in and by spirit**" (not by living in accord to or under the Law) **we** (corporately – and also, individually) "**can habitually walk in line** (i.e., orderly, in accord with our place and

function in the body) behind the Spirit." By staying "joined to the Vine," **we can not** (and should not) **repeatedly come to be folks with empty glory** (or: a vacuous reputation) – like those who continually challenge one another over issues. We can live in peace and harmony, being void of envy and strife which lead to divisions and factions. "We're never going to get it right in our private selves" (Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007, p 50). Paul told the Corinthians that "every joint" needed to give its supply. The eye needs the ear; the hand needs the foot, etc. It is a corporate message to a

corporate entity. Observe the corporate US and WE in Eph. 1:

**4. even as He chose US out** (or: selects and picks us out) **within Him, and in union with Him, before [the]** (or: prior to a) **casting down** (or: a laying of the foundation; a conception) **of [the] ordered system** (world; universe; cosmic order; or: human aggregate), **[for] US to continuously be set-apart ones** (or: to progressively exist being sacred and dedicated people) **and flawless folks** (people without stain; blameless ones) **in His sight and presence** (or: in

the midst of the sphere of His gaze) **in union with love.** [or, putting this last phrase at the beginning of vs. 5:]

**5. In love [He was] marking US out beforehand** (or: definitively appointing US in advance; before-setting our boundaries and defining US, with a designation) **[and directing us] into a placing in the condition of a son** (or: a deposit of the Son; a setting in place which is the Son; the constituting as a son; a placing IN the Son) **through and by means of Jesus Christ –**

**[moving us] into Himself,**  
**according to** (or: down from; in  
correspondence with; following  
the pattern of) **the good**  
**thought, the intention of well-**  
**being, and the well-imagined**  
**delight of His will** (determined  
purpose).

6. **[This was] with a view unto**  
**praise of His grace's glory** (or:  
This [led] into [the] praise of  
[the] reputation and honorable  
consideration of His favor) **with**  
**which He graced US** (or:  
favors and gifts US with grace)  
**within the One having been,**  
**and continuing being, loved**

(or: the Beloved One;  
or: the One having been  
given and now  
expressing the essence  
and qualities of love;  
[some MSS: within His  
beloved Son]),

**7. within and in union with  
Whom WE continuously have  
(constantly hold; progressively  
possess) the redemption (the  
release into freedom procured  
by the payment of a ransom; the  
liberation from our  
predicament) through His blood  
– the sending away (causing to  
flow off; forgiveness; dismissal)**

**of the effects and results of the fallings-aside** (the stumblings by the side; wrong steps; offences; transgressions), **in accordance with** (or: down from; corresponding to; in keeping with; to the level of) **the wealth and riches of His grace and joyous favor,**  
**8. which He caused to superabound around [and] unto US** (or: which He makes to be more than enough unto US; which He excessively supplied and then lavishes into US) **within and in union with all wisdom** (or: in every wise

**thing) and thoughtful prudence**  
(gut-intelligence; mindful  
purpose; considered  
understanding).

## Chapter 6

1. **Brothers** (= Fellow believers; = My family)! **Even if a person** (or: human) **may be at some point overtaken** (caught; laid hold of before; be surprised) **within the effect of some slip or falling to the side** (or: the result of some offense, lapse or mistake), **you folks – the spiritual ones** (the people influenced by the Breath-effect and Attitude) – **repeatedly** (or: continuously) **adjust, mend or repair such a one so as to thoroughly prepare and equip him, within a spirit of gentle friendliness** (attitude of meekness; breath of mildness), **as you each are**

**constantly keeping a watchful eye on yourself** (carefully noting yourself with regard to the goal), **and so you folks may not at some point be put to the proof** (or: and you, yourself, would not be tried, tested or harassed by some ordeal).

Continuing the corporate context of the previous verses, he addresses them in a term of corporate solidarity: "**Brothers** (= Fellow believers; = My family)!" Yet now he speaks to the concerns of the body toward its individual members: "**even if a person** (or: human) **may be at some point overtaken** (caught; laid hold of before; be surprised)" – an event that HAPPENS (passive voice) to this

"person" – **"you folks, the spiritual ones** (the people influenced by the Breath-effect and Attitude)," i.e., the ones being led by the Spirit who are walking in the spirit of the new covenant, etc. (vs. 25, above), be **"repeatedly** (or: continuously) **adjusting, mending or repairing** (= healing) **such a one so as to thoroughly prepare and equip him"** for life within the called-out community. But do it in a mild, gentle and friendly spirit and attitude.

As Paul said to the newly-engrafted Gentiles in Rom. 11:17ff, let each one constantly keep an eye on one's own relationship to the group. We, too can be

tested and harassed by some ordeal that affects our humanity (1 Cor. 10:13). Now here, Paul may be referring to someone who has been "**overtaken**" by the persuasion of the Judaizers, and thus had "lapsed into a mistake" of adopting some unnecessary "flesh" practice (like observing days or months – 4:10, above, or purity codes – 2:12) because of "**the effect of [this] slip to the side**" – away from the true Path of Christ. As with any group, each member responds individually to the teachings and persuasions that are presented. This is part of the freedom that we enjoy in Christ. But this is where a gentle, friendly "word of knowledge"

concerning the Truth can redirect this person back into the true Way. This is what Paul did with Peter (2:11 ff, above).

**2. You folks be habitually lifting up and carrying one another's heavy burdens and oppressive matters** (grievous weights of and from one another), **and thus, you will fulfill** [or, with other MSS: In this way, at once fill up and fulfill] **Christ's Law**

(or: the law which is Christ; the law of the Anointing; [other MSS: and in this manner, at once fill up the law of the Christ {the law whose character and source is Christ} ]).

It is with the above thoughts in mind that Paul now reminds them of their corporate solidarity, saying, "**You folks be habitually lifting up and carrying one another's heavy burdens and oppressive matters.**" This is something of a larger scale than the "**little load**" referred to in vs. 5, below. But the amazing thing is that this social, relational endeavor "**will fulfill Christ's Law.**" It is a law and principle of extending love, in concrete ways, to others.

In the first parenthetical expansion I gave another function of the genitive *allelon*, "of," and then rendered it as an ablative, "from." Here it means carrying

folks who can become "grievous weights" to the body – or bearing the "oppressive matters" that they bring to the body. Paul used this same verb in Rom. 15:1,

**"Now we ourselves, the able ones (the powerful people), owe and thus are constantly obliged (or: are continually indebted) to pick up and habitually carry (or: embrace) the weaknesses (the results of being without strength) of the unable ones (the powerless or disabled people; the incapable), and not to constantly be pleasing ourselves."**

Christ's law has nothing to do with creeds or belief systems. It has nothing to do with dogma or theology, with christology or soteriology. It has to do with the law of the life of the Anointing. It is living out of 5:14b, above: loving your associates and fellow body members as existentially being yourself – a part of you.

The bracketed reading of other MSS is from the verb in the aorist imperative, instead of the future. Guthrie favors this reading, saying "The aorist reinforces the completeness of the fulfillment, which is also stressed by its compound form (*anapleroo*)." – *ibid.* p 143.

The appositional rendering, "the law

which is Christ," really hits the heart of the matter when it is connected with what Paul says elsewhere, "Christ in you folks." This equates to the "new heart," or new DNA, as it were, that is brought about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through abiding in the Vine (John 15:1ff). Since *christos* also means "anointing," the rendering, "the law of the anointing," can refer to the principle of the new life in the spirit which has created the new-covenant existence. The fourth option, which follows other MS readings, also duplicates the phrase "fill up the law" of 5:14, above, but uses the punctiliar aorist tense applied to the present moment in life. "The law of the

Christ" can also be an ablative and read, "the law from the Anointed One," or as an associate genitive "the law (or: principle; custom) whose character and source is Christ." So what we have is not a new set of rules, but Christ Himself, indwelling and residing among the covenant community – via His Spirit. In vss. 3-8, Paul turns to issues upon which each member of the group needs to focus:

**3. For you see, if anyone, being presently nothing, continues imagining (supposing; presuming) himself to be something, he continues leading his own mind astray (he keeps on deceiving himself; he misleads and cheats his**

intellect and way of thinking).

The conjunction, "**For you see**" shows that this verse is a continuation of the same thought of the previous verse. Paul extends this line of reasoning on through verse 5, below, and so he is still speaking about a member's responsibility to the rest of the body. Service to others does not align with an attitude of "self-importance." **Here** the "**anyone**" refers to any individual, but it is addressed to the entire group. There is to be no "spiritual hierarchy" or thinking that deceives people into imagining or presuming that because a brother or sister is under some oppressive burden – or even is a burden – that it implies that

such a person is somehow of lesser importance to the body, or of a lower status of membership in the community. Christ within the other members will out of unconditional and unambiguous love come alongside the weighed-down member and be a paraclete to this one – and perhaps wash his or her feet.

The "nothing – something" polarity is a rhetorical contrast pointing out divided, dualistic thinking that leads the mind astray into a perception of separation and difference between members of the body – and breeds prejudice. Being "something" exists only in "being Christ." If our intellect has to "imagine, suppose or presume" a quality of our

being or some "level of spirituality," this presuming is an indicator that we still exist separated from the Christ mindset. Such a separation (which = not abiding in the Vine) is existential "nothingness" and leads the **mind** astray.

**"I am saying to (or: for) everyone being among you folks not to be continually over- opinionated or elated (to be constantly hyper-thinking to the point of being haughty, arrogant or having a sense of superiority; to be habitually over-thinking issues; to constantly mind things above; to be overweening) beyond what**

**is necessary** (binding; proper),  
**but rather to think** (mind; be  
disposed) **into the disposition**  
**to be sane and of a sound**  
**mind..."** (Rom. 12:3)

In 2:20, above, Paul refers to himself as crucified with Christ, and that his present life is only lived in the faith that is God's Son.

**4. So let each one habitually put his own work to the test for approval** (examine and prove the deeds and actions which he does), **and then he will have a cause for exultation-effects** (or: hold a sense of achievement) **in regard to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person,**

This is an admonition to self-examination of how one is living – putting our "works" to the test – and exulting in how the body is being built up (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-17), if what has been done is with materials of worth and value (figured as "gold, silver and precious stones").

But the sense of achievement is to be based upon the Christ-life within himself alone, **"and not in comparison with the other person."** There is no competition in Christ; our focus is to be Him (2 Cor. 3:18) within ourselves and within others, as we reflect His image – the image of cruciform servanthood. *Cf* Rom. 4:2, 1 Cor. 9:15-16 and 1 Thes.

2:19 in regard to "**exultation-effects.**"

5. **for, each one will lift up and carry** (or: shoulder) **his own specific little load** (or: pack; small thing to be borne).

It is the burden that belongs to Christ that is one's "**own specific little load,**" or back-pack. Jesus told us,

**"You see, My crossbeam** (or: the yoke which is Me; the balance beam that comes from and pertains to Me) **is useful and kindly obliging, and My load** (the burden that is Me and which pertains to Me) **continues being light** (not heavy)" – Matt. 11:30.

The easy, light thing to be borne is in

fact the cross that He both gives and carries with us as we live in union with Him. The picture of the "**crossbeam**" is the picture of the cross that He bore, which He asks us to take upon us as we live the cruciform life:

**"At once lift up My crossbeam** (or: the yoke which is Me; the balance beam that comes from and pertains to Me) **upon you people, and instantly learn from Me, because I am** (or: I continuously exist being) **mild-tempered** (gentle, kind and considerate) **and humble** (low) **in the heart, and 'you folks will find refreshment and**

**discover rest in and for your souls** (the whole inner person; the mind, emotions and nerves)' [Jer. 6:16]" – Matt. 11:29.

The word "**crossbeam**" also meant a "yoke" which two oxen shared in pulling a plow. I suggest that Jesus was using the word with a double meaning – the first a yoke (which the people would readily understand); the second was a reference to His cross (which His disciples had a hard time accepting). Both are figurative uses of the word. As a yoke, we can picture ourselves paired with Jesus as together we do the Father's work in the kingdom. Both aspects of this "balance beam" bring us into balance within His

reign: death to the false self; life to others as we plow their fields to plant His Seed. This is the function and purpose for which we were born: to pour out our lives as living water from our innermost being (John 7:38), and as bread (of His life) given to the world. We carry Him to the masses!

**6. Now let the person being habitually orally-instructed** (being sounded down [from above] into the ears so that they ring) **in the Word** (the message) **constantly express common being to** (or: hold common partnership in and fellowship for; share equally with) **the one regularly giving the oral instruction** (sounding down and making

the ears ring), **in all good things.**

Paul now addresses the economic relationship between community members and those who regularly give oral instruction to the group. This is a logical development of what he has been saying in vss. 2-5, above. What he describes looks more like a barter system: "share equally... **in all good things.**" This partnership and "common being/existence" (*koinonia*) shows relationships of equity on a common social standing – the opposite of a hierarchy. Each "joint" of the body shares what he or she has to share. At the same time, this "does not exempt the taught having responsibilities towards

the teacher" (Guthrie, *ibid.* p 145). And this leads into the proverb that he references in the next verse.

**7. Do not be continually led astray** (or: Stop being caused to wander and being deceived); **God is not one to be sneered at** (to have a nose turned up at; to be scorned, mocked or treated like a fool), **for "whatever a person is in the habit of sowing, this also he will reap,"** In vs. 7 he uses a farming metaphor (a common proverb) to emphasize the equality of contribution that should happen within the community. If all folks sow liberally of "**the good**" into the group, then the entire community will reap from the whole spectrum of life:

body, soul and spirit. In the new creation, all is sacred; all ministers spirit. We can note how Paul moved effortlessly from this holistic view of "all good things" to his continuing theme of "flesh" versus "spirit," in vs. 8.

**8. because the person continually sowing into the flesh of himself (= his estranged inner being), will reap corruption (spoil; ruin; decay) forth from out of the flesh (= the estranged inner being);**

(or: the one habitually sowing into the flesh [system], of himself will reap decay from out of the flesh [system];)

**yet the one constantly sowing into the**

**spirit** (or: the Breath) **will be reaping eonian life** (life having the qualities and characteristics of the Age [of Messiah]; or: life from the Age that lasts on through the ages) **forth from out of the spirit** (or: the Spirit; the Breath; the attitude).

This contrast has been traditionally taken as a moralistic admonition on a personal level. It has obvious good-application for this. But as we have followed the rhetoric of Paul's arguments through this letter, we see that he has used these two categories to contrast the old covenant to the new, and Guthrie points out that this metaphor identifies "two different kinds of soil, flesh, and spirit..." (ibid. p146). If some Galatian now sows "**into the**

**flesh** [system; religion], **from himself** **he will reap decay from out of the** [old] **flesh** [system; religion]" of the old covenant, or Law. I followed the parenthetical option here which puts "of or from himself" with the second clause rather than with the first. Either reading is correct.

Taken on either level, the flesh represents the corruptible which quickly decays because its core is death. On the personal level, the soul which sins dies due to its estrangement from the Vine (or, the archetypical Garden). On the covenant level, the old has died with Christ and so only decay and ruin exist in it. It was left in the tomb.

The second half of the verse presents the contrasting parallel: sowing to the spirit – which equals participating in the new covenant, in the called-out community and in the Life and union with Christ. From out of the Spirit of the Christ – the Christ-life and attitude (i.e., "inclusive serving") – the Galatians (and we) "**will reap eonian life**" – the life having the quality and character of the Messianic Age, through the knowledge of the Father and Jesus (John 17:3); the life from out of the Spirit, which comprises the new covenant and is the means of inclusion in it. Notice the emphasis of "**constantly**" that attends the present tense of the verb "**sowing**." This is a "life-way," the Path

that is the Life (John 14:6). Since the sowing is "**constant**," (i.e., season after season) so is the reaping, and the harvest is enjoyed in this life right here, as well as in the next.

**9. So – not being people [who are] let loose out from** (or: set free from out of) **[the laboring]** (or: not being made unstrung or exhausted so as to be relaxing [from laboring]) – **we should not in worthlessness be remiss** (or: act badly by failing; be despondent; in bad quality, give up) **in habitually doing** (making; constructing; producing) **the beautiful** (the fine; the ideal; the noble), **for in our own appropriate situation** (or: in our own appointed season; or: to

or by our own fitness and proportion)  
**we will gather in a harvest** (or: will be reaping).

So – as a result of "**sowing into the spirit**" – we are not people that relax from our mission as though we had been let loose from out of it (*cf* 2 Thes. 3:13). In fact, it would display a worthless character if we should be remiss (etc.) in "**habitually producing the BEAUTIFUL, constructing the fine, doing the ideal and making the noble.**"

"Christ upon the cross giving the world a new axis [the axis of Love, around which the life in His kingdom centers itself] is the BEAUTY that saves the

world – from its sin, from its intractable hostilities, and from the dominion of the principalities and powers.... the power structures within society – political, economic, religious and so forth. These are the institutions that shape our world" (Zahnd, *ibid.* p 83, the bracketed addition, based upon his material, and the emphasis are mine).

This describes a life of quality and value. These are also the "**good things**" that we are to share (vs. 6, above). This sowing into the spirit (8b, above) will produce a harvest of all that has been

sown, and we will see these crops within the community and in the world at large.

The "ideal" is the new creation, the life based upon the Spirit, in the realm of spirit, and led by the effect of the Breath of God. The "noble" results will appear in their **"own appropriate situation and appointed season."**

**10. Consequently, then, as we are continuing to hold a fitting situation** [or, with other MSS: while we may continue having occasion or a fertile moment], **we can keep on actively working the good** [other MSS: we should habitually be performing the excellent; we can continue in the

business of the virtuous] **toward all – and especially toward the members of the family and household of the faith and trust** (the conviction and loyalty)!

The consequence of the coming of the Messiah and of the giving of the Breath-effect (the Spirit) is that,

**"as we are continuing to hold a fitting situation** [or, with other MSS: as we may continue having occasion or a fertile moment], **we can keep on actively working the good** [other MSS: we should habitually be performing the excellent; we can continue in the business of the virtuous] **toward**

**all."**

"**All**" here means EVERYONE. There is no more prejudice or separation of "the good guys" from "the bad guys."

Everyone needs God's **good**, and **we** (the corporate body of Christ) – as we have fertile moments in people's lives, in institutional structures, with regard to environmental policies or in respect to human freedom – "**can keep on actively working,**" and thus working FOR, "**the Good.**" We work the works of, and that are, God. Other MSS use a different verb here: "habitually be performing the excellent, or, continue in the business of the virtuous." What a beautiful picture Paul paints here!

The added thought about "**especially**" means that it all must start toward other members of the covenant community (as in vs. 6, above), so as to present an integrated corporate witness to the world at large. Notice his use of the relational word (*oikeios*) "**members of the family and household.**" The house, the body, parent/children – all pictures of an organism that is based upon relationship; not a description of an organization (system; world). In these last words, "**family and household of faith/trust/loyalty,**" Paul effectively concludes his arguments of this letter with tying this last to his beginning remarks concerning Abraham and the

faith that God's Word to him implanted within him. Paul describes this same family/household in Eph. 2:19, but there the genitive phrase that follows this noun is "... of God (or: **God's family/household members**). So to Paul, "**faith**" is equivalent to God. *Cf* 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17.

This is not a message of covenant inclusion through works that come from the Law (the Torah; the old covenant; the old creation of Israel as a nation). It is not about being rightwised or set in the new Way of the Messiah by means of self-effort or extinct ceremonies. It is a message that brings the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to us which turns us in the

right direction (aimed at Jesus and our Father), and which places us in His new creation (the corporate Christ; the Second Humanity).

**11. Consider (or: See) how large [are the] letters [i.e., of the alphabet] [which] I write to you, in (or: by; with) my [own] hand!**

[comment: Paul is doing this to make his point, i.e., he is “shouting” at them via the script, so that they will take note of the point he is making]

Paul must have written bold, large-font letters in writing the final statement in vs. 10, above. He is possibly indicating that the person reading this letter to the

congregations in Galatia should raise his voice and give emphasis to Paul's words here. He is emphasizing the importance of **"working the good."**

**12. As many as continually want (intend; will; purpose) to make a good impression (a pleasing appearance; a fair face, front or facade) within flesh [i.e., in a flesh system or religion], these are habitually urging, or trying to compel or force, you folks (or: making you feel obliged) to proceed to be circumcised – only so that they may not be continually pursued and persecuted for (or: in; with) the cross of Christ Jesus (or: by the execution stake that pertains to the Anointed**

Jesus).

But Paul cannot stop. He must drive home his main message – which is to stop the Galatians from Judaizing. So he raises again the particular identity marker of circumcision. He points out that the Judaizers in Galatia want to look good, religiously. They want to "**make a good impression**" to both the Jews and Christians who have incorporated elements of the Law (symbolized in this letter mainly by "circumcision") into their called-out communities.

They want to have everyone become Law (Torah) observers "**only so that THEY may not be continually pursued and persecuted for and in the cross of**

**Christ Jesus.**" We must not miss how his argument places the **cross** (i.e., the Christ-event – the coming of the Messiah who was then crucified – and all the changes that resulted from His resurrection) as the antithesis of circumcision, i.e., Law observance. They wanted to make this just another sect of Judaism, or even join with the Jews via being circumcised, etc. That this included more than this one identity marker is evidence by the action of Peter and even Barnabas in their beginning to eat separately from the Gentiles (2:11ff, above).

The new believers were being pressured by those who would drag them back

under the Law – into slavery.

**13. For not even the folks being presently (or: currently getting) circumcised (or, as a middle: habitually circumcising [people]; requiring [the practice of] circumcision; [other MSS: having been circumcised]) are themselves habitually keeping (guarding; protecting; observing; maintaining) [the] Law, but even so, they constantly want and intend you folks to proceed to be circumcised, so that they may have cause for boasting in your flesh [ritual or religion].**

Although those who were at that time submitting to circumcision, or were requiring others to be circumcised, were

not regularly keeping the Law, they still wanted these uncircumcised believers to take on the identity marker of Judaism. This would let the Judaizers **boast** about the religious conformity and outward show of "holiness" that they had enforced upon those who had embraced the freedom of Christ. Harvey suggests that Paul has named his opponents here: **"the folks being presently circumcised"** (= those recently receiving, as well as advocating, circumcision), and suggests that these, therefore were "not Jews (who would have been circumcised at birth), but Gentiles who had yielded to Jewish pressure and had only recently been

circumcised" (ibid. p 615-616).

This recap by Paul, along with the element of an emotional appeal, was standard rhetoric for ending a speech or a letter during this time and the Greco-Roman culture.

**14. Now may it not happen to me (or: in me) to take up the practice of boasting, except within the cross (the execution stake) of our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom (or: through which [i.e., the cross]) the organized System (or: the world of culture, economy, government and religion) has been, and continues being, crucified (executed on the stake) in me (or: to me; for me; by me; with me), and I by (to; in;**

with; for) **the organized System** (the world; = their culture, secular society, religion, and government).

Paul now turns the tables on the Judaizers by saying that he will only **boast** in the **cross** – the code-word for the Christ-event, the coming of the Promise, the new covenant in the Spirit and all that the coming of the Messiah – with His death and resurrection – entails.

It was the cross – the killing of the Messiah, and thus through that event the killing of Israel and the first Adam – that reversed the tables on both the Jewish leadership and upon Rome: the cross **crucified** the organized System, i.e., the

"world" of the Jewish religion, the Jewish culture that embodied their "religion," the world's economic principles (get rather than give) and the "axis of power" (Zahnd's term) that drove these and the governmental systems of the world.

The advent of the kingdom, through Jesus, displaced the Roman Empire for those who entered into Christ's reign as He became King of kings and Lord of lords. For the followers of Christ, up was now down, and down was now up. Servanthood became what was great in the kingdom. The sovereign activities of God were no longer in the area of the elite, but belonged to the poor, the

outcasts, the strangers. This was happening IN Paul (he bore and imaged the kingdom which was turning the world upside down – and, it was happening WITH him – in his spirit); it was happening TO him and FOR him as he experienced his own death and resurrection in Christ; it was happening BY him as he brought the message "to the Jews first, and then to the Greeks (a figure for the ethnic multitudes of non-Jews).

But at the same time, the Jews were in process of having Paul killed by Rome. Or, reading the dative as TO, it meant that Paul was dead "in relationship and meaning both to the organized system of

Judaism and to Rome."

15. **For** [some MSS add: within Christ Jesus] **neither circumcision nor uncircumcision continues being anything, but rather: a new creation** (a founding and settling [as a village] with a new character, in a place that was wild and without order; a new act of framing and building).

Here Paul declares that the issue over circumcision – as Judaizers are presenting it – is pure nonsense, and amounts to nothing. This is another "recap."

All that matters is that there is a new creation – in fact all has become new in the economy of God and His dealings

with humanity. There is even a new humanity that was started by a new Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) that is a "life-giving Spirit."

**16. So as many as are habitually advancing** [other MSS: will advance; can advance] **in line by ranks,** **corresponding to this measuring rod** (or: continue belonging to the rank living in conformity to this rule; or: shall in this standard progressively observe the rudimentary elements or elementary principles and walk in line with them), **Peace** (harmony; [= shalom]) **and Mercy** [are continually] **upon them – even** (or: that is) **upon the Israel whose origin and source is God** (or: God's

Israel).

When they progress down the path of the life of the covenant community, the new creation is now the measuring-rod; as they use only Christ (the measure of the stature unto which we grow up – Eph. 4:13) as their measure, they will experience peace, harmony and mercy. They are the anti-type of old covenant Israel – they (both Jew and Gentile combined) are now God's Israel – the Prince with God – with Christ as both Source and Head (the two meanings of *kephale*): the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). The phrase about **Israel** is in the genitive case, and so could simply be rendered "the Israel

of God." As such, this would correlate to "**the house of God**" in 1 Pet. 4:17, or to, "**the household of faith**" in vs. 10, above. These are all descriptive terms of the same group: the called-out, covenant communities.

**17. Pertaining to the rest** (or: In regard to what is left over), **let no one continue offering hard labor to me** (or: let no one be making trouble for me or be holding me to his side for a beating), **for I myself continuously carry the brand marks [of a slave or a soldier, showing ownership] of Jesus, within** (or: the effects of being stuck by a point from Jesus, on) **my body!**

The verb in the first clause has the

semantic range from the bold rendering to the parenthetical alternative. In the bold, "**offering hard labor**," Paul could be making a reference to people wanting to add Law-keeping to him. "Making trouble" would refer to subverting his influence upon the Galatian communities. The third option, "holding me to his side for a beating," could imply a harsh rhetorical response from his opponents.

The "**brand marks of Jesus**" can signify that he considered himself owned by Jesus, as His slave – branding of slaves was a custom of those times. Or, it could be speaking of the marks from the beatings he had received on behalf of the

cause of proclaiming Jesus as Lord. Harvey points out that the meaning of this word includes "a soldier's tattoo" as well as "a leopard's spots" (ibid. p 616). But I suspect that he was speaking metaphorically of the cruciform life by which he was spreading the influence of Jesus' kingdom. Whichever is his meaning here, he needed nothing more from the Judaizers of Galatia.

**18. The grace and favor of, and whose origin and source are, our Lord, Jesus Christ [are continually] with your spirit (or: the Breath-effect belonging to you folks), brothers (= fellow believers; = [my] family)! It is so! (Amen; So let it be; Count on it!)**

He ends his letter affirming that Christ's grace and favor had indeed come through Jesus, and that this condition and situation presently exists with them – in the realm of their corporate spirit (note the singular). This can also be understood as the effect of the Breath of God that they have as a constant possession. Guthrie observes,

"It is significant that Paul mentions the 'spirit' at this juncture in the epistle, for he has had much to say about the Holy Spirit and this makes a fitting conclusion. He treats the Galatians as spiritual people" (ibid. p 152).

He calls them brothers again – an intimate, familial term of the solidarity that he has with them. He is on the same level in Christ as they are – not their hierarchical superior. He leaves them hearing a high note, **"It is so – count on it!"**

*ZZZZZZ*

## THE RICH MAN and LAZARUS

This story is found in Luke 16:19-31  
Alfred Edersheim says of this teaching  
by Jesus,

"The Parable itself is strictly of  
the Pharisees and their relation

to the 'publicans and sinners' whom they despised, and to whose stewardship they opposed thoughts of their own proprietorship. With infinite wisdom and depth the Parable tells in two directions: in regard to their selfish use of the literal riches – their covetousness – and in regard to their selfish use of the figurative riches: their Pharisaic righteousness, which left poor Lazarus at their door to the dogs and to famine, not bestowing on him aught from their supposed rich festive banquets" (*The Life and Times*

*of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. II,*  
Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing  
Company, 1953, p 277).

(I am grateful to my friend Mike Davenport for pointing me to this passage of Edersheim's work)

First, note that vs. 19 starts out in a similar way that Jesus' discourse does in 16:1, "**Now there was a certain rich man...**" I suggest that as vs. 1 begins a parable, so does vs. 19.

Now observe that in vs. 15 He is speaking to the Pharisees of vs. 14. In response to their deriding Him, "**Consequently He said unto them...**"

So I concur that vs. 19 begins a parable directed at the Pharisees, as Edersheim asserts, above. Thus, we should consider this context: the Pharisees were still present and although it would seem that vs. 16-18 are not on the surface related to what goes before them or to what follows, a closer look will reveal that Jesus is still speaking about the Pharisees in these three verses, preparing the setting for His next parable. His last statement in vs. 13 evoked their reaction to Him in vs. 14. Verses 16-17 are building another case against them which climaxes in vs. 18 with a charge that what they were doing was in fact causing a part of the Law "to

**fall."** Jesus is in vs. 18 condemning the then-current practices of the male-dominated marriage/divorce arrangements of those who followed the school of Hillel, which taught that a man could divorce his wife "for any reason." But now let us proceed to look at the features of this "story" of the rich man, and Lazarus.

The story has nothing to say about belief in Jesus as the Christ, or even about faith in God.

The story does not say the rich man was bad or evil, or that Lazarus was good or righteous.

Vs. 25 has Abraham saying,  
"**Child** (or: Born one; or: Descendant),  
**be reminded that within your life** (or:  
lifetime) **you took away** (or: received  
from; or: got in full) **your good things**  
(or: the good things that pertain to you;  
the good things that had their source in  
you), **and Lazarus likewise the bad  
things** (the [experiences] of poor  
quality; the worthless things; the harmful  
and injurious [treatments]; the  
[conditions] as they ought not to be). **But  
at the present time, here he continues  
being called alongside and given relief,  
aid, comfort and consolation, yet you  
yourself continue being given pain.**"

Is this "the plan of salvation"? Is this teaching a simple reversal of situations in the next life? Does it mean that only the destitute and miserable get saved and the rich go to hell? Of course not! So let's consider these two figures. We see in vs. 24 that the rich man said, "**Father Abraham.**" Likewise, we saw that Abraham acknowledges him as his "**child**" in vs. 25. This identifies him as a Jew, and this is the figure he plays in this parable. The rich man is a figure of the Jews (specifically, the Pharisees).

I suggest that Lazarus is a figure of either the "outcasts" (or: sinners) of Israel, as the Pharisees considered them – since

they were considered to be unclean, and he was covered with sores and attended by dogs (figure of the Samaritans or pagans, in the eyes of the Pharisees) – or he is a figure of the non-Jews, to whom the Good News was soon to come.

These two men are two classes of people, and they represent how the self-righteous viewed themselves, and the rest of the world. The Pharisees had it all:

**"the placing in the condition of a son** (or: the deposit of the Son; the setting in place which is the Son; the constituting as a son) **and the glory** (the things which call forth praise and bring a

splendid reputation) **and the arrangements** (or: covenants) **and the placing of the Law** (or: the setting of custom and legislation by/as [Torah]) **and the sacred service and the promises"** (Rom. 9:4).

They were rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing. But their culture and religion was soon to perish, and they would enter a time of testing after AD 70 (the word "tormented" in the KJV of vs. 23-24 is the Greek *basanidzo* which referred to the testing of metals with the touchstone, and figuratively meant to be tested or to have a hard time – used of having a hard time with the

waves, in Matt. 14:24 and Mk. 6:48 and of the pain of childbirth in Rev. 12:2).

But the outcasts, sinners, publicans, harlots, etc. would enter the kingdom before the Pharisees (Matt. 21:31).

Lazarus represents these looked-down-upon folks. Abraham represents the place of God's acceptance, care and comfort – and Paul looks to him as a figure of God's chosen who would produce the Promise (figured in Isaac), the Messiah, who would inaugurate the new covenant, from which the old arrangement (represented by the scribes and Pharisees) was to be excluded.

Note also that the rich man's brothers had the Scriptures (vs. 29 & 31). But Jesus said that even if one went to them from the dead (a veiled reference to Himself) they would not believe. And, they didn't. But in the fire of God's dealings, the once rich man becomes aware of his need of the water of life, and realizes that the outcasts have it. He asks for mercy. But his condition and his time of judgment has placed a gulf between himself and those now being graced with God's favor (a gulf that only Christ can span). Still, we can see another change happening in him: he begins to think of others. He wants Lazarus to evangelize his brothers so

that they will not have the same fate.

This is the only place where "hades" (the grave; the realm of the dead – vs. 23) is associated with fire, and it is within what many view as a parable. A study of the figure of fire, as used in Scripture, will show that it signifies God's judgments which bring purification – but that's a study all of its own. Cf Mal. 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 3:9-17

I suggest that since both of these men died they represent the end of the former situations of which each, respectively, are representative. Lazarus in the "bosom of Abraham" is a figure of those in Matt. 5:

**3. "The destitute folks [are] happy in spirit and attitude, because the reign of the heavens is continually belonging to, and made up of, them**

(or: Blessed [are] those dependent for support on the Spirit, for the kingdom from the sky and the atmosphere is continuing to pertain to them; The people who need to beg for sustenance [are made] happy by the Breath-effect because the effect

of the sovereignty of the heavens is being a source in and for them; The financially poor folks [exist being] happy with an attitude that the sovereign influence and activity from the atmospheres continuously exists with reference to them)!

**4. "Those constantly grieving and mourning [are] happy and blessed because they, themselves, will be called alongside to receive relief, aid, encouragement and comfort!"**

The rich man in the grave (recall that he was buried – vs. 22) speaks of the death of the place and position of the Jewish leadership of that time, and of their exclusion from participation in the activities of God's reign, which Jesus initiated. I suggest that this story runs parallel to the metaphor of the olive tree in Rom. 11:16-24, where Paul had been speaking of Israel, and their "casting away" in vs. 15. It also compares to the allegory in Gal. 4. The rich man was a figure for the old covenant that could not be included in the blessings of Abraham.

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# UNDERSTANDING

## RIGHTEOUSNESS (JUSTICE; FAIRNESS)

dikaioσunh

This word, with its cognates, presents one of the central concepts of the good news as given by Paul. But do we understand it, or is it just another word on our lips that slips through our minds without comprehension? Different brands of "Christianity" tend to see this concept from different perspectives, and probably to each of us it means something slightly different. It was part

of the contention between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformers of the 16th century. For many years it was to me just another "Scripture word" associated with our salvation. I remember being offended when I heard one jazz musician call another's musical performance "righteous." I didn't know how ignorant I was.

Then, it was also part of God's character, and I can still hear the reverence in the voice of R. C. Sproul when he would speak of "a righteous and holy God." The words can be awe-inspiring. But what do they mean? How does this apply to us?

In my old age, I have decided to not wait

until I understand things perfectly before I enter into dialogue with the Body of Christ about important subjects. So I invite you into this dialogue. I want to share with you an understanding that has come to me.

William D. Chamberlain, in *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (The MACMILLAN Company, 1958. p 10), states the following regarding the history and development of the root of our word, "righteousness." He says,

"... a root as dik-, [has] in the Sanskrit the primary idea 'to show.'.... From dik-, 'to show,' 'point out,' we get dik-h, 'the

way pointed out,' i. e., 'the thing which is right,' 'justice.'

The *Analytical Greek Lexicon* gives the following definition of our word "righteousness," which in the Greek is dikaiosunh: fair and equitable dealing; justice; righteousness. An English word that has fallen out of use, but which Rudolf Bultmann (*Theology of the New Testament*) suggested as a proper definition is "rightwisedness," which means "the quality and situation of being turned in the right direction."

E. W. Bullinger, in *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (Kregel Publications, 1908), gives the following

meaning:

the doing *or* being what is just and right.... *it signifies* the sum total of all that God commands and approves. *As such it is* not only what God demands, *but* what He gives to man, and which is appropriated by faith; *and hence it is* a state called forth by God's act of justification, *viz.* by judicial deliverance from all that stands in the way of being dikaios [just; righteous; in accord with the way pointed out] (p. 648; italics, his; brackets, mine).

Liddell and Scott say that the classical

thought behind the concept of "righteous" (dikaios) was "observant of custom and social rule, well-ordered, civilized; decent; observant of right; fitting; well-balanced; just."

I recall William Barclay stating that righteousness, especially in a social setting, has the sense of being "in right relationship."

There is definitely a forensic use of this word-group, and they can have legal connotations in secular society. Both Augustine and Luther had legal training, and it is my suspicion that their personal bent in this direction led to the legal flavor of these words in church dogma and tradition. But here is where context

must play a decisive role. Yet, often, the context could be considered abstract, as Paul does not always relate his context to a specific social or religious setting. So the tendency is to put our own concepts into the text, based upon what we think the word means. "With Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313, both grace and forgiveness became basically politicized and controlled by formula and technique. *They became juridical concepts instead of spiritual realizations*" (Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008, p 161). This set the stage for dikaiosunh also being viewed as a legal transaction or

determination within the institutionalized church.

Using etymology (viewing word meanings based upon the roots and components of how they are made up) in translating has come under attack in recent linguistic trends which favor the concept of semantic domains (which gives the greatest weight to the context for determining the "meaning" of the word but results in a very broad range of semantic meanings for any word, and thus allows for translating a passage according to what we "think" it means). So, my views here are a bit out-of-step with current trends, but they are based upon centuries of linguistic theory and

practice. I also lean toward a concordant concept of translating. With all this in mind, I proceed to share my understanding of "righteousness" with you.

In my translations, I have given this expanded meaning: that which is in accord with the way pointed out; well-ordered dealings with fairness and equity in rightwised relationships; justice; righteousness; pointed in the right direction.

If we consider that Christ is "the Way [pointed out], the Truth [of justice, fairness and equity] and the Life [in right relationship with God and mankind]," as I have indicated in brackets, I think that

we can best understand this concept of "righteousness, justice, etc."

Looking at the verb form, we see that by being placed into Christ we have been declared righteous (which results from being a part of the Christ through our being buried and raised with Him – Rom 6:10-11) – the forensic view, but we have also been placed, and so now are, in "the Way pointed out" – the fair, equitable and just way of living.

Furthermore, we have been set, and so now are, in right relationship with both God and mankind. We have been "turned in the right direction" – toward Christ, and our Father. My wife, Lynda, called to mind Mal. 4:6 where the promise was

given,

"And he will turn (restore; bring back) the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers..."

This kind of reconciliation – in families – is the basic element of the goal of the Way that Jesus embodied. He brought our Father to us, and us to our Father, that we would be One in them (John 17). The way pointed out is also a life in and by the faith and trust that have been implanted in us,

**"being folks having been born again** (been regenerated; been given birth back up again), **not from out of a corruptible** (or:

perishable) **seed that was sown, but rather of an incorruptible** (imperishable; undecayable) **one: through God's continually living and permanently remaining Word** (or: through a message or expressed thought of [the] continuously living and constantly abiding God; or: through means of a living and dwelling Thought, Idea and Logically laid out Expression and Communication, which is God)" – 1 Pet. 1:23.

This is all due to the act of obedience that the One Man (Rom. 5:9-21) – the

Last Adam – did, and to His gracious gift to us.

A meaning which can be derived from Paul's use of this word in his letters signifies "covenant inclusion" or "covenant membership." For example, he associates this word with the Promise made to Abraham and his sons in Gal. 3:5-9. There, in vs. 5, it is shown to be in the realm of,

**"... continuously furnishing and supplying to (or: for; in) you folks the Spirit (or: the spirit; the breath; or: = attitude and vitality), and constantly and effectively energizing, being active, working and producing**

**abilities and powers within you people."**

Then, we see the verb form (dikaiow) in vs. 8, along with a quote of the Promise:

**8. Now the Scripture – seeing before [as a picture] that God is progressively putting the nations in rightwised relationship (setting the ethnic groups of non-Jews into the Way pointed out and freeing them from guilt) from out of faith – announced to (or: for) Abraham beforehand the message of goodness, ease and well-being (or: And further – the Scripture**

perceiving in advance and making provision that He is presently making the multitudes fair and equitable {or: = including the Gentiles in the covenant} from trust and conviction as a source – God brought- before in Abraham the glad tidings of goodness {a gospel; an evangel}), **namely that, "All the nations, ethnic groups and multitudes will be inwardly blessed** (will receive the Word of wellness, within; will participate within the Good Word) **in a union with you** (or: within you; in you; or: = in

relation to you; or: = as in your case)." [Gen. 12:3; 22:18]

**9. So then, those from out of faith** (or: = folks who are derived from trust and confidence and who come from a place of loyal allegiance) **are being constantly blessed** (repeatedly given the Word of wellness; continuously made to participate in the Good Word) **together with the full-of-faith Abraham** (or: the trusting, believing, convinced and loyal Abraham).

This blessing is people being included in the covenant made to Abraham. What

it looks like is "**putting the nations in rightwised relationship** (etc.)" and "making the multitudes fair and equitable," as well as placing them in the Way pointed out. Another presentation of this argument is seen in Rom. 4:13-17. In practice it equates to being "in Christ" in a living and relational way – or as Jesus said, "abiding in the Vine" (John 15).

We read in Gal. 3:11,

**"the fair and equitable man** (the dikaios person; the one in right relationship within the Way pointed out; the just one) **will live from out of faith** (or: the one [who is] just from out of

faith, trust, and conviction, will live)," [Hab. 2:4] – *cf* also Rom. 1:17

As you see, the central idea is the way in which a life is lived – not some fictitious courtroom action. When we live from the source of Christ's faith and faithfulness, we are considered to be, and are, *dikaioV*: turned in the right direction; one put in right relationship with all, made fair and equitable, created just – all of which is "the Way (Christ) pointed out," or, the new covenant in Christ. This is our new existence that has been created by the risen Christ having taken us into Himself. It is a description of who the

new humanity is, and where we reside:  
in Christ.

Now consider what Paul said of this in  
Gal. 2 as it is contrasted to the old  
covenant:

**"21. I make it no habit to  
displace (shove aside; upset;  
thus: reject; thwart; repudiate;  
nullify) God's grace and favor!  
For if justice, equity and  
freedom from guilt with right  
relationship within the Way  
pointed out (= covenant  
inclusion) [is] through Law (=  
by legalism or religious works),  
then as a consequence Christ  
died as a mere gratuity (= for**

nothing; to no purpose)."

The old covenant and the Mosaic Law was inserted,

**"to the end that the effect of the fall to the side (or: so that the result of the offense and the stumbling aside) would increase to be more than enough (should greatly abound and become more intense)" – Rom. 5:20a.**

That was the purpose of the old covenant: to be a dark backdrop to the Light that was to come in the new covenant. So we see with the new that,

**"... where the Sin (the failure; the divergence and missing of**

the target) **increases** (or: abounded to be more than enough; becomes more intense)

**THE GRACE** ("the act producing happiness, which is granted as a favor" – Jim Coram) **at once super-exceeds** (or: hyper-exceeded) **over and above, surrounding to excessive abundance and overflow**" – Rom. 5:20b.

Returning to Paul's arguments in Gal. 3:6, we see that he went to the period before the Law entered Israel's history and accessed Abraham's story and his relationship with God:

**"just as Abraham, "trusts in**

**God** (or: believed by God; experienced confidence with God), **and he is/was at once logically considered by Him [that he had come] into a right relationship** (or: and it was counted for him into a rightwised [covenantal] relationship with freedom from guilt, equity and justice which comprise the Way pointed out)" [Gen. 15:6]

You may have noticed that here, and in Gal. 2:21, I added the concept of "freedom from guilt" to the expanded definition of dikaiosunh. The reason for this is the consideration of the human

predicament before the coming of the Messiah. All in Adam (all humanity) suffered from Adam's guilt. We see the fact of this from psychologists having studied the human condition. Legalistic cultures propagated this view so that from childhood most folks grow up with a sense of guilt or failure that is often buried deep within the psyche.

God's grand epic drama of humanity proceeded from the grace of choosing to bless Abraham with a Promise to the interim of establishing a covenant nation, Israel, which was arranged under the Law. This made the rest of the ethnic multitudes as "strangers and foreigners" – people that were outside this special

covenant. But with the fulfillment of this covenant and its termination through the execution of the Messiah, God makes a new creation in the resurrected Messiah – a new arrangement with humanity, and not just with Israel. In Rom. 11:17-28 Paul describes this human drama as an olive tree (the tree that produced the oil for anointing) that grows through the ages, and as a tree into which the ethnic multitudes have been engrafted. In ch. 2 of Paul's letter, entitled Ephesians, we see another picture of this unfolding story:

**11. On which account (or: Wherefore) you must continuously call to mind (or:**

keep in mind; remember) **that once you, the nations** (multitudes; ethnic groups; Gentiles; non-Israelites) **in flesh** (= in your physical beings and cultural heritages) **the ones habitually termed** (spoken of as; called; said to be) **"uncircumcision"** by the one (or: that) **habitually being termed "circumcision," in flesh** (= in body and culture/religion): **made by hand,**

**12. that** (or: because) **you were, and continued on being for that season** (or: in that

appointed situation), **apart from Christ** ([the] Anointed One; = [the] Messiah): **people having been alienated from the state of being a citizen** (or: estranged from citizenship in the commonwealth) **of Israel and [being] strangers pertaining to the arrangements of** (or: foreigners from covenants and testamentary dispositions whose origin is) **The Promise** (or the assurance), **continually having no expectation** (or: hope), and **[were] folks without God** (or: godless; atheists) **within the ordered System** (world of

culture, religion and governments).

**13. But now, within and in union with Christ Jesus, you – the folks once being (continuously existing) far off (or: at a distance) – came to be (were birthed; are generated; are suddenly become) near, immersed within and in union with the blood of the Christ (the Anointed One).**

**14. For He Himself is our Peace (or: continuously exists being our harmony [= Shalom]) – the One making (forming; constructing) The Both [to be]**

**one, and within His flesh** (= His physical being which experienced death on the cross) **is instantly destroying** (unbinding; unfastening; loosing; causing to collapse) **the middle wall of the fenced enclosure** (or: the partition or barrier wall): **the enmity** (cause of hate, alienation, discord and hostility; characteristics of an enemy),

**15. rendering useless** (nullifying; rendering down in accord with inactivity and unemployment) **the Law** (or: the custom; = the Torah) **of the**

**implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive) **consisting in decrees** (or: prescribed ordinances), **to the end that He may frame** (create; found and settle from a state of wildness and disorder) **The Two into One New** [p46 & others: common] **Humanity within the midst of, and in union with, Himself, continuously making** (progressively creating) **Peace and Harmony** (= shalom);  
**16. and then should fully transfer from a certain state to another which is quite**

**different** (or: make completely other while moving away from what existed; or: fully reconcile) **The Both within One Body – by God through the cross** (or: in, to and for God, through the execution stake) – **within Himself killing the enmity** (or: discordant hatred; characteristics of an enemy).

**17. And so upon coming, He brings goodness and proclaims as good news** (or: as a message of ease and wellbeing), **Peace** (harmony; lack of discord; [= shalom]) **to you, the folks far**

**off, and Peace** (harmony; = shalom) **to the people nearby,**  
**18. that** (or: because) **through Him we, The Both,**  
**continuously have** (hold and possess) **the procurement of access** (conduct toward the presence; admission, being led), **within one Spirit** (or: in union with one Breath-effect and Attitude), **to** (or: toward; face to face with) **the Father.**

**19. Consequently then** (or: Thereupon), **you folks no longer continuously exist being strangers** (foreigners) **and sojourners** (temporary residents

in a foreign land), **but continually exist being fellow-citizens** (ones residing together in a City) **of those set apart: even God's family** (members of God's household),

**20. being fully built as a house upon the foundation of the sent-forth representatives** (or: emissaries) **and prophets** (folks who had light ahead of time),

**Jesus Christ continuously being a corner-foundation [stone] of it** (or: there being an extreme point of the corner, or, capstone: Jesus Christ Himself),

**21. within and in union with**

**Whom all the home-building** (all the construction of the house; or: = every house that is constructed, or, the entire building), **being continuously fitted [and] progressively framed together** (closely and harmoniously joined together; made a common joint by a word), **is continuously and progressively growing into a set-apart temple** (or: separate, different and holy inner sanctuary) **within [the] Lord** [= Christ, or, Yahweh]:  
22. **within the midst of** (or: in union with) **Whom you folks,**

**also, are continuously and progressively being formed a constituent part of the structure** (or: being built together into a house) – **into God's down-home place** (place of settling down to dwell; abode; permanent dwelling) **within [the] Spirit** (or: in spirit; or: in the midst of a Breath-effect and an attitude).

This passage has presented us with many details of the situation that has resulted from the work of Christ. All of this is God's *dikaiosunh* – His justification, His justice, His fairness and equity, His putting of humanity in rightwised

covenant relationships: the Way that He has pointed out to us, and His turning us into the Way in which we are to live our lives. Dikaiosunh is simply life in Christ: knowing the Father and the Son (John 17:3), by the Spirit. It is inclusion in the new covenant. Paul spoke of a dikaiosunh qeou in Rom. 3:21, 22, and I have given a number of potential renderings of this phrase in these verses:

**21. Yet now, apart from Law** (or: custom; habitual practice; ordinance made by authority; or: = Torah), **a righteousness of God** (God's solidarity, with fair and equitable dealings; from God, a turning in the right direction; God's

covenantal faithfulness, justice and pointing out of the Way; a rightwisenedness and right relationship, which is God) **has been manifested and remains displayed in clear light – being continuously attested in witness by means of (or: under) the Law (= Torah) and the Prophets –**

**22. yet a righteousness of God** (or: a right relationship with and which is God; justice from God; God's fair and equitable dealings in accord with the Way pointed out; a rightwisened condition effected by God) **through Jesus Christ's faith** (trust; faithfulness; loyalty)

**[coming] into all humanity – as well as upon and into all those believing, for there exists no distinction!**

Note the appositional rendering of qeou: "which is God." The true dikaiosunh is God Himself and it is this that is implanted within us, and this is the realm into which we have been transferred (Col. 1:13). Paul describes this realm as,

**"fair and equitable dealing which brings justice and right relationship in the Way pointed out (being turned in the right direction; rightwisdom; also = covenant inclusion and**

participation), **peace** (and: harmony; = shalom) **and joy** (or: rejoicing) **within set- apart Breath-effect** (or: a dedicated spirit and sacred attitude; or: in [the] Holy Spirit)" in

Rom. 14:17, and the writer of Hebrews compares Christ to the King of DikaiosunhV in Heb. 7:2. Observe, above, in Rom. 3:22 that this new "rightwised condition" has been "effected by God." As to the relational aspect of this word, John Gavazzoni has pointed out that all "right relationship" has its origin in the very essence of God. It is from God that we have family and right relationships. Dikaiosunh is the

very character of the interpenetrating and mutual inhabiting given to us in picture of the Oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and of the same oneness into which Jesus prayed to the Father for us to be included (John 17:21-23). This, too, is why Paul refers to the "one new humanity" (Eph. 2:15) and speaks of the "**purposed and destined** (or: complete; finished; mature; full-grown; perfect; goal-attained)" man which comes from "**the state of oneness of** (or: the unity belonging to; = lack of division in) **the Faith**" (Eph. 4:13). In vs. 20 of this same chapter we see Paul begin a beautiful admonition to live within this new state of being, and

then use our word dikaiosunh in vs. 24:

**20. But you folks did not learn the Christ in this way,**

**21. since, indeed, you heard and listen to Him, and within Him as well as in union with Him, you were and are taught – just as Truth and Reality continuously exist within Jesus –**

**22. to put off from yourselves [as clothing or habits] what accords to the former entangled manner of living (or: twisted up behavior): the old humanity (or: the past, worn-out person) – the one**

**continuously in process of being corrupted (spoiled; ruined) down from and in accord with the passionate desires (the full-covering, swelling emotions) of the deceptions (or: seductive desires) –**

**23. and then to be continuously renewed (or: from time to time, or, progressively made young again) by (or: in; with) the spirit (or: attitude; breath-effect) of your mind (or: from the mind which is you),**

**24. and to enter within (or: clothe yourselves with) the new**

**humanity** (or: the person that is new and fresh in kind and quality) – **the one in accord with and corresponding to God** (or: the person at the Divine level) – **being formed** (framed, built, founded and settled from a state of disorder and wildness; created) **within the Way pointed out** (or: in union with fair and equitable dealings with rightwised relationships, justice and righteousness; also = in covenant participation; CENTERD IN dikaiosunh) **and reverent dedication** (or: benign relationship with nature)

**pertaining to the Truth** (or: in intrinsic alignment with reality).

Titus 3:7 speaks of, "**being rightwised, and set in right relationship in the Way of fairness and equity which has been pointed out** (also: = being placed in covenant membership) – **by and in the grace and favor of That One,**" while Eph. 2:8 says,

**"For by** (or: to; in; for; with) **the grace and joyous favor you are** (you continuously exist being) **folks having been delivered** (rescued; kept safe; saved; made whole; restored to your original state and condition) **so as to now be**

**enjoying salvation through**  
[some MSS add: the] **faith** (or:  
trust; confidence)."

So "by grace" come both "righteousness"  
and "salvation" (note the semantic range  
of "**delivered**"). Through "salvation" we  
are given entrance into "righteousness."  
*Cf* Rom. 3:24.

The old covenant (or: arrangement) is  
described in the first half of 2 Cor. 3:9,  
and the new one in the second half:

**"For since (or: if) the  
attending service and  
dispensing of the  
corresponding evaluations and  
commensurate decisions which  
follow the pattern (or:**

separations for condemnation; judgments which are down-decisions against folks) [**had**] **glory, to a much greater degree does the attending service and the dispensing of the fairness and equity in rightwised relationships** (or: righteousness from covenantal inclusion: that which corresponds to the Way pointed out, and which turns us in the right direction) **progressively surround and continuously exceed in glory** (or: habitually overflow with a manifestation which calls forth praise and

brings a good reputation)!"

It would seem that Paul is casting the Law as a dispenser of condemnation, and is contrasting that to the Good News (the new covenant) – casting this latter as a dispenser of “righteousness” and a servant for folks being turned in the right direction.

Another verse, 2 Cor. 5:21, gives dikaiosunh as the new state of existence in God:

**"for you see, He made (or: formed; makes) the One not at any point knowing failure (sin; error; mistake) by intimate experience [to take the place of; to be] failure over us and**

**our [situation]** (or: He constructed [as] a sin [offering], for our sake, the Person who was not at that point having an experiential knowledge of missing the target or making a mistake), **to the end that we may be birthed** (come into existence being; come to be) **God's rightwised qualities** (God's right relationship with fair and equitable dealing which accords to the Way pointed out; God's justice; God's way it should be, with well-ordered living and right thinking; also: = participants in a covenant from

God), **within Him and in union with Him.**"

Take note of the Paul's bringing in an OT use of dikaiosunh in his arguments toward the folks at Corinth fulfilling their pledge to raise funds for the called-out folks in Jerusalem. In 2 Cor. 9:9 he quotes a verse from the Psalms [LXX]:

**"He scattered abroad and widely disperses; He gives to the ones who work hard for their bread, and yet are poor; His fairness and equity** (rightwised dealings and relationship which correspond to the Way pointed out; also = covenantal faithfulness)

**continuously remains and constantly dwells, on into the Age."** [Ps. 112:9]

Witherington refers to this verse as being "... where God is the one who gives to the poor and so demonstrates divine righteousness.... For both Paul and the OT, righteousness is not simply an inner quality of purity or a right heart. It also involves justice and generosity in deeds" (ibid. p 427). So God's *dikaioSunh* is here defined as provision for and care of PEOPLE. This is the Way (the Path to follow; the Road to walk) that defines the called-out, covenant community as it is led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14). As a final consideration for this

investigation, ponder the words in 1 Pet. 2:24,

**"Who, Himself, bore back up again our failures (our mistakes; our times of falling short or to the side of the target; our sins and errors) [Isa. 53:4, 12] within His body upon the tree (the wood; the stake), to the end that, being folks suddenly coming to be parted away from the failures (mistakes; errors; sins; misses of the target), we can (or: would; may) live in (or: by; for; with) the fairness and equity, in rightwised relationships, in the**

**Path of the Way pointed out**  
(or: = in covenant participation), **where 'you folks are** (or: were) **healed** (or: cured) **in the wound** (or: by the welt; in the bruise of the blow).'" [Isa. 53:5]

Dikaiosunh is the realm of the covenant of the Spirit, in which to live; it is the character and quality of Christ by which we live; it is the goal of rightwised relationships for which we live; and it is the ability of the Spirit with which we live. The NT's use of this word is primarily organic and relational. In Eph. 5:9, Paul associates it with goodness/virtue and truth/reality, putting

these three in the sphere of the FRUIT of The Light (other MSS read: of the Spirit), and again recall that he relates it to peace and joy "in union with the Holy Spirit" (i.e., in the covenant of the Spirit) as a quality of God's reign/kingdom/sovereign activity (Rom. 14:17). Dikaiosunh is the Way pointed out, and it is life that is centered in, and in union with, God's Spirit. It is the Christ life, the Anointed Path. This is what is meant by the term traditionally called righteousness or justice.

I want to end this study with John Gavazzoni having reminded me that Jesus embodied, lived and demonstrated dikaiosunh; in Acts we see it being

dispersed; in the letters we find it explained; and then in Revelation we see it consummated in the picture of a bride (humans) adorned for her husband (God) – which figures the union of marriage (1 Cor. 6:17), which then leads to the establishment of Family – the increase and growth of, and from, God (Col. 2:19). We see the goal of the narrative about corporate Adam in Rev. 21: a set-apart city, a new Jerusalem that descends from the midst of heaven, from God, and with God dwelling with humanity in a process that progressively is "making all humanity new" (Rev. 21:5; reading panta as masculine) – and we see the ethnic multitudes (the

nations) walking "**by means of her Light**" (Rev. 21:24).

## Galatians in Second Century Exegesis

As a final note on this letter, a concise discussion on the conflict between orthodox Christianity and gnostic Christianity in the second century is instructive, both for its historical perspective, and for our understanding of some contemporary non-orthodox Christians groups who maintain some perspectives in common with the Gnostics of that day. In her chapter on this epistle, Elaine Pagels presents the

Gnostic exegesis, and the response from Irenaeus:

"Paul intends in Galatians to distinguish his own pneumatic [i.e., "spiritual"] teaching of the gospel from the merely psychic [more commonly rendered: "soulish"] preaching of the other apostles; so Valentinian [one of the main schools of Gnostic thought in that century] exegetes claim. Irenaeus devotes the third book of his treatise to refute their exegesis, arguing that Paul's account in his letter to the Galatians agrees with the harmonizing account in Acts 15.

Irenaeus insists, indeed, that Paul's message agrees not only with that of the Jerusalem apostles, but also with the traditions of Israel. Yet the Valentinians make a plausible exegetical case of their interpretation, which contrasts the liberty that Paul, the pneumatic teacher, reveals 'to the Gentiles' [a Gnostic code word for 'the pneumatics'] (*Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus) with the psychic kerygma that Peter, who 'lacked perfect gnosis,' preaches 'to the Jews.'" (*The Gnostic Paul*, Pagels, *ibid.*

p 101, additions in brackets,  
mine)

She continues:

"The Valentinians claim that the other apostles – including Peter and Luke – preached another gospel.... [and] 'preached the gospel still in some way under the influence of Jewish opinions' (Irenaeus, *ibid.*).... [Irenaeus] calls such exegesis blasphemy, 'the madness of those who... have imagined that they themselves have discovered more than the apostles... that they themselves are purer in doctrine and more insightful than

the apostles' (ibid.)." (Pagels, ibid. p 102, brackets mine)

Valentinians cited Gal. 2:7 as one of their basis for there being two separate gospels that were proclaimed by the original apostles: "the evangel of the Uncircumcision... [and] of the Circumcision" (CLNT). Today we find the concept of "two gospels," with some similar theological conclusions, in the writings of A. E. Knoch (*Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*, Concordant Publishing Concern, 1968) and in the authors featured in *Unsearchable Riches*, a quarterly magazine by the same publisher. Pagels quotes the second century Theodotus as

saying "he willingly preaches 'in each of two ways,' in one way for pneumatics, and in another for psychics." (ibid. p 105)

In her discussion on Gal. 1:11-17, Pagels, quoting Paul where he referred to "the one who separated me from my mother's womb," says:

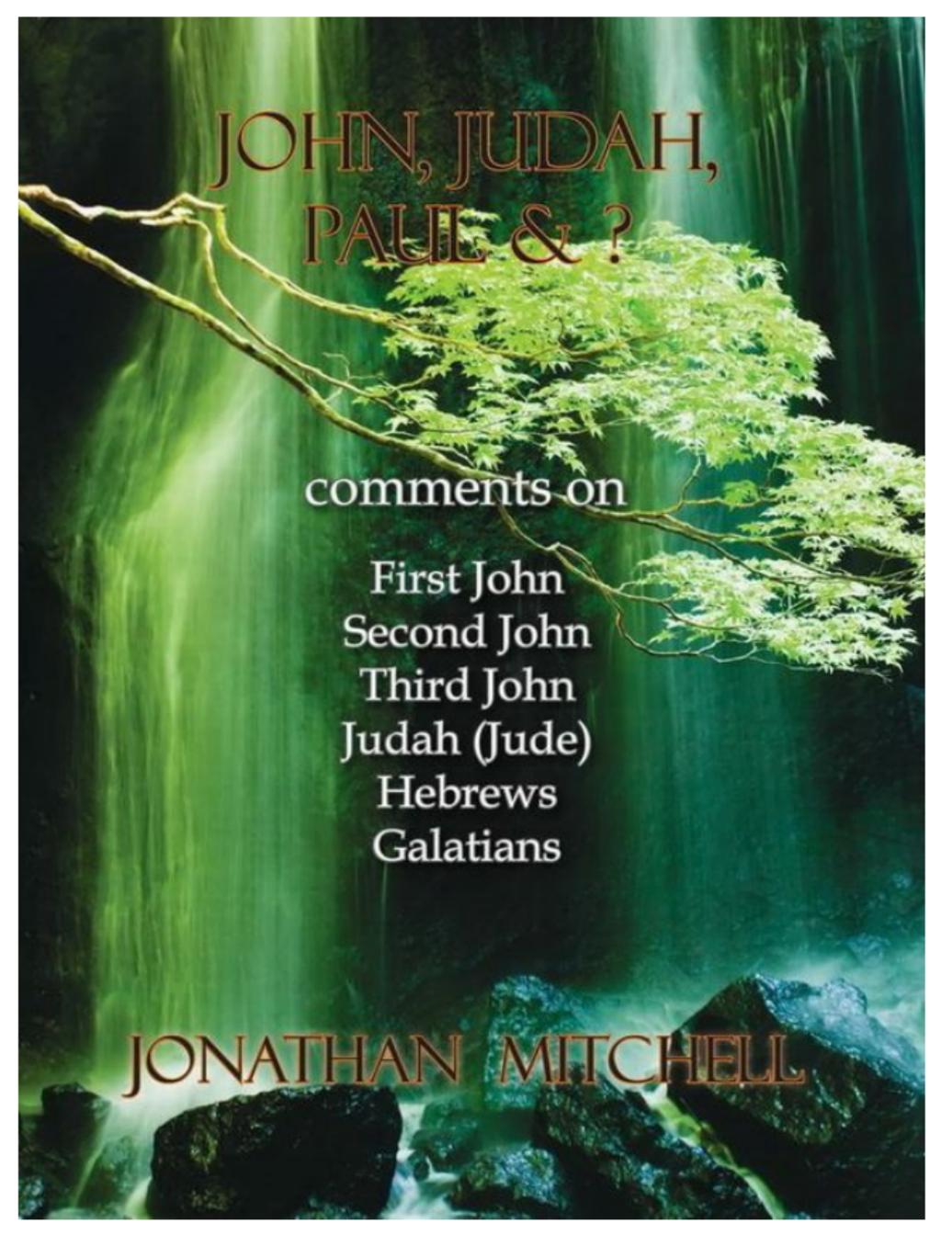
"Valentinian exegetes, citing 1 Cor. 15:46 ('the first anthropos [man] is psychic, the second pneumatic') answer that he separated Paul the psychic 'outer anthropos [man]' from the pneumatic 'inner anthropos.' (Irenaeus, ibid.) The 'old anthropos' must be 'put off' (cf.

Col. 3:9-10) in order to 'put on' the new, pneumatic anthropos.... Heracleon explains, the elect receive [the Son] *within* themselves (*en autois*) while the psychics receive him only externally *among* themselves (*par' autois*). (*Commentarium in Johannis*, Origen)" – Pagels, *ibid.* p 103; emphasis original, brackets mine.

Reasonings along these lines are not as foreign to many teachers in Christianity today as one might think. I suspect that early Gnostic exegesis was the source of the mystic tradition that has survived, even within orthodox Christianity. Our

personal horizons strongly color our interpretations. The horizons of our particular denomination, or of the seminary where we were schooled, and even the country in which we were reared, all affect how we read the NT writers. I owe this perspective on horizons to Michael R. Licona (*The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach*, InterVarsity Press, 2010). May we all remain open to new horizons, and lovingly consider the horizons of others, as we journey along the Way, in His Truth and His Life.

# COVERS



JOHN, JUDAH,  
PAUL & ?

comments on

First John  
Second John  
Third John  
Judah (Jude)  
Hebrews  
Galatians

JONATHAN MITCHELL



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