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**LET NO ONE DISQUALIFY YOU: A STUDY OF THE  
PARAENESIS OF COLOSSIANS AND ITS PLACE WITHIN  
THE ARGUMENT OF THE LETTER**

Allan R. Bevere

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Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Durham University  
1998



21 JUN 1999

LET NO ONE DISQUALIFY YOU: A STUDY OF THE PARAENESIS OF COLOSSIANS AND ITS  
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Allan R. Bevere

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

1998

The argument of this thesis is two-fold in nature-- the target of the argument of Colossians is a Judaism dismissive of the Gentile Colossian Christians and the recognition of that fact casts new light on the paraenesis of the letter and its integration into the argument of the epistle as a whole. The argument is set up in the introduction analyzing and critiquing recent dissenters to the Jewish nature of the philosophy and then the argument of the thesis is set in sequence.

Several arguments are made in the thesis in support of these claims. Significant parallels between Colossians and Galatians suggest similar concerns in both letters relating to Israel's identity as the people of God and how that relates to the Gentile believers in the church at Colossae and the churches of Galatia, and how those Gentile believers are to live. The writers of Colossians, while sharing a similar Jewish perspective with the Colossian philosophers on the relationship between identity and way of life, admonish the Gentile Christians to live in a way consistent with who they are. Nevertheless Paul and Timothy differ with the philosophers as to what constitutes the identity of the Colossian Gentiles as the people of God. In addition to the parallels drawn further themes are present in Colossians which strongly suggest the Jewish character of the

philosophy-- wisdom, election, death of Christ as the final return from exile.

Moreover, the apocalyptic background of 3:1-6, the Jewish moral concerns of the ethical lists (3:5-17), and the christological orientation of the *Haustafel* not only bolster the claim that the Colossian philosophy is Jewish in nature (this is less true of the house-codes explicitly, though there may be some implicit connections), but recurring themes in the paraenesis seen in the preceding argument lend support to the contention that the paraenesis is an integral part of the argument of the letter.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AJP	<u>American Journal of Philology</u>
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AnBib	<u>Analecta Biblica</u>
ANRW	<u>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</u>
ATJ	<u>Ashland Theological Journal</u>
BAGD	W. Bauer, <u>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</u> eds. W. Arndt, F. Gingrich, and F. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. Funk, <u>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).
BhTh	<u>Beiträge zur historischen Theologie</u>
Bib	<u>Biblica</u>
BJRL	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library</u>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BZNW	<u>Beihefte zur ZNW</u>
CBQ	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u>
CGT	Cambridge Greek Testament
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
DPL	<u>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</u> ed. G. Hawthorne, et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

ÉB	Études bibliques
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EQ	<u>Evangelical Quarterly</u>
EvTh	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
ExpT	<u>Expository Times</u>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FV	<u>Foi et Vie</u>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HR	<u>Harvard Review</u>
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theology
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u> ed. G. Buttrick (4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962).
Int	<u>Interpretation</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JETS	<u>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</u>
JSNT	<u>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</u>
JSNTS	JSNT Supplements
JSOTM	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Manuals
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review

JTS	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LTK	Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche
NCB	New Century Bible
Neot	<u>Neotestamentica</u>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	<u>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</u>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTS	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
NTT	New Testament Theology
ÖTKNT	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
OTP	<u>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</u>
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RevBib	<u>Revue biblique</u>
RevSR	<u>Revue des sciences religieuses</u>
RNT	Regenburger Neuen Testament
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBM	Stuttgarter biblische Monographien

SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SR	<u>Studies in Religion</u>
StTh	<u>Studia Theologica</u>
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TDNT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976).
TDOT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</u>
THNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TQ	<u>Theologische Quartalschrift</u>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TynB	<u>Tyndale Bulletin</u>
UBS	United Bible Societies
UNT	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentar
ZNW	<u>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
ZKT	<u>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</u>
ZTK	<u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### THE FOCUS OF THIS THESIS

The focus of this thesis is the paraenesis in Colossians. My concerns are two-fold. First, the "new perspective" on Paul, which has been at the forefront of Pauline studies in recent years, has been mainly concentrated on the two letters of Romans and Galatians. With very few exceptions advocates of the "new perspective" have not yet addressed the disputed Pauline epistles.<sup>1</sup> Since Colossians is by broad consent either the latest of the genuine Paulines or the earliest of the deutero-Paulines,<sup>2</sup> it seems very natural to inquire whether the "new perspective" sheds any further light on these later Pauline letters. Colossians is particularly important given the fact that it is the earliest of the deutero-Paulines and probably the closest to Paul, if not by Paul himself.

Second, the paraenetical material in the Pauline letters invites examination in light of the "new perspective." It was Dibelius, as we will discover, who championed the viewpoint that the paraenesis of the Pauline letters had no immediate relation to the specific situations of the letter, nor, therefore, to the preceding argument of the letters themselves. His argument has been quite influential. It is precisely this point of view I intend to question. Moreover, the only thorough attempt to study the Pauline paraenesis in light of the "new perspective" has been J. Barclay in his study on Galatians.<sup>3</sup> Here Colossians presents itself as one more test case since it is so closely Pauline and because

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<sup>1</sup>The first major commentary to do so is J. Dunn, Colossians NICTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). See also N. Wright, Colossians TNTC (Leicester: InterVarsity, Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup>E. Käsemann, "Kolossierbrief." RGK 3: 1728, states, "If authentic, as late as possible on account of the style; if not authentic, as early as possible."

<sup>3</sup>J. Barclay, Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethic in Galatians (Minneapolis: Portress Press, 1988).

the transition from teaching to exhortation (paraenesis) is clearer in Colossians than in any of the remaining Pauline letters (apart from Romans and Galatians). As will become clear later in the argument, Colossians is quite close to Galatians, not only geographically, but in situation as well.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to address these largely unaddressed matters in reference to the "new perspective" and the Pauline paraenesis in Colossians.

#### THE REVOLUTION IN PAULINE STUDIES: THE "NEW PERSPECTIVE"

Since the publication of E.P. Sander's book Paul and Palestinian Judaism in 1977, a revolution in Pauline Studies has taken place.<sup>4</sup> The revolution, commonly known as the "new perspective on Paul," has reinvigorated the discussion among Pauline scholars in reference to Paul's own understanding of the function of the law and the nature of Judaism, as well as contemporary interpretations of Paul, the law, and ancient Judaism.<sup>5</sup> It is not necessary to recount in detail the arguments of the "new perspective,"<sup>6</sup> but its major contentions can be summed

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<sup>4</sup>Of course, there were challenges to Protestant scholarly interpretation of Paul, the law and ancient Judaism prior to Sanders, but these protests went largely unheeded. See C. Montefiore, "Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St. Paul," JQR 13 (1900-1901): 161-217; G. Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," HTR 14 (1921): 197-254; K. Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," HTR 56 (1963): 199-215, reprinted in his Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (London: SCM Press, 1977), pp. 78-96. See also W. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," NTS 24 (1977-1978): 4-39, which was published around the same time as Sanders' book.

<sup>5</sup>For an excellent and concise account of scholarly interpretations of Paul and the Law from the Reformation to the present see, F. Thielman, Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 14-47.

<sup>6</sup>See E. Sanders Paul and Palestinian Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 1-24; J. Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians (Louisville: W/JKP, 1990), pp. 183-214; J. Barclay, Obedying the Truth, pp. 1-8; *Ibid.*, pp. 27-37, 41-43.

up as follows-- 1) that the characterization of first century Judaism as a religion of works-righteousness since the Protestant Reformation is unfounded and misrepresents ancient Judaism. 2) The phrase *ἔργα νόμου*<sup>7</sup> (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16) refers not to a belief in salvation by doing good works, but rather the "works of the law" denote the badges of identity that mark off Israel as distinctive from all the other nations--<sup>8</sup> the most significant of these "works" are circumcision, food laws, and festival and Sabbath observance. Such "works" did not give one a means of entry into the covenant, rather they were a way of maintaining the covenant.<sup>9</sup> They were what the law required for those inside the covenant.<sup>10</sup> 3) first-century Judaism's whole identity was built upon the notion that God had

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<sup>7</sup>For brief, but good summary of the different interpretations of *ἔργα νόμου* see, T. Schreiner, "Works of the Law." Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 975-979.

<sup>8</sup>J. Dunn, The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity (London: SCM Press, 1991), pp. 135-139.

<sup>9</sup>Already stressed by M. Limbeck, Die Ordnung des Heils: Untersuchungen zum Gesetzesverständnis des Frühjudentums (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1971), pp. 29-35.

<sup>10</sup>The closest Hebrew phrase to *ἔργα νόμου* is *מִצְוֵי הַתּוֹרָה* which refers to those obligations and interpretations which set apart the Qumran covenanters as distinctive (4QFlor. 1:1-7; 1QS 5:20-24). It is in 1QS 6:18 where *מִצְוֵי הַתּוֹרָה* refers to those works by which the members retained their membership in the community-- "When he has completed a year within the Community, the Many will be questioned about his duties, concerning his insight and his deeds in connection with the law." In addition see 4QMMT, "These are some of our regulations concerning the law of God which are part of the works we are examining and they all relate to [...] and the purity of..." (3, 5-6), and "also we have written to you some of the works of the Torah which we think are good for you and for your people, for in you we say intellect and knowledge of the Torah" (112-114). Unless otherwise noted all translations from the Dead Sea Scrolls are taken from F. Martínez, The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English 2nd ed., tr. W. Watson (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

freely chosen Israel, and made a covenant with them to be their God and they his people. In other words, the foundation of Israel's self-identity was the notion that God had lavished his *undeserved* grace upon the nation.<sup>11</sup> In no way did first-century Judaism hold to the idea that it had earned the favor of God. 4) Israel's understanding of itself as the chosen people of God was bound intimately with the Torah.<sup>12</sup> Given the above considerations a fresh reading of Paul is now possible apart from the Lutheran reading based on criticism of the selling of indulgences as a way of acquiring merit to earn one's way into heaven.<sup>13</sup>

It is certainly true that not all Pauline scholars have embraced the "new perspective,"<sup>14</sup> and indeed, some have virtually ignored it,<sup>15</sup> but it is not the

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<sup>11</sup>Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 85. Sanders states, "...the covenant was not earned, but... obedience to the commandments is the consequence of the prior election of Israel by God" (cf. *Berakoth* 2:2).

<sup>12</sup>E. Nicholson, God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 27; also Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>See Thielman, Paul and the Law, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>M. Hengel, The Pre-Christian Paul (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), p. 85f.; H. Hübner, "Was heisst bei Paulus 'Werke des Gesetzes'?" Glaube und Eschatologie W. Kümmel Festschrift (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), pp. 123-133; Idem., Law in Paul's Thought: Studies of the New Testament and Its World (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984); H. Räisänen, "Galatians 2:16 and Paul's Break with Judaism," NTS 31 (1985): 543-553; Idem., Paul and the Law WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983); S. Westerholm, Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and his Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). See also D. Hagner, "Paul and Judaism. The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate." BBR 3 (1993): 111-130, who erroneously argues that the "new perspective" takes "all vitality out of the doctrine" of justification by faith (p. 130).

<sup>15</sup>E.g. J. Fitzmyer, Romans AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), who includes Dunn's commentary on Romans in his bibliography, but does not engage him or anyone in sympathy with his position in a major way (except to support Dunn's position on the rendering of πίστις Χριστοῦ). The only reference to Dunn in the index is to his commentary in the bibliography (p. 772). The same is true of Wright (p. 793).

purpose of this thesis to respond to their criticisms, as that has already been done.<sup>16</sup> What is important at this point is to analyze briefly the work of several scholars who take the "new perspective" seriously, reject the Lutheran hermeneutical grid which has been imposed on Paul and seek to read him from a non-Lutheran perspective.<sup>17</sup> Of particular interest is the work from this perspective which has been done on Romans and Galatians.

#### J. Dunn and N. Wright-- Romans

It needs to be said that there are indeed some major differences between the two writers to be surveyed in this section. What is important here, however, are not the differences but the similarities between these two readings of Romans. These similarities far outweigh the differences. What is critical for this study is the emphasis both scholars place upon the Jewishness of Paul's theology in Romans.

#### *J. Dunn*

Dunn's major concern in reference to the law is its social function within first-century Judaism. In Paul's day the Torah was the foundational expression of Israel's unique place in the world among the nations. Thus, according to Dunn, Paul's major concern in Romans was that the Torah was too intimately identified

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<sup>16</sup>See particularly Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, pp. 206-214, 237-241.

<sup>17</sup>This does not mean, however, a rejection of the best insights of Luther and the Protestant Reformation. See J. Dunn, "The Justice of God: A Renewed Perspective on Justification by Faith." JTS 43 (1992): 21-22.

with ethnic Israel, and that Israel's distinctiveness was characterized by its national practices of circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance.<sup>18</sup> Paul saw these "ethnic constraints" as "narrowing the grace of God and diverting the saving purpose of God out of its main channel-- Christ."<sup>19</sup>

Starting with Sanders' insights on Paul and the law Dunn further demonstrates that Sanders did not follow his reasoning through adequately. This is why Sanders and also Räisänen are unable "to integrate Paul's treatment of the law in chap. 2 into the rest of his theology."<sup>20</sup> Whereas Sanders and Räisänen see contradictions in Paul's argument,<sup>21</sup> particularly in reference to the difficult exegetical dilemmas posed by certain passages (3:27-31;<sup>22</sup> 7:14-25;<sup>23</sup> 9:30-10:4;<sup>24</sup> 13:8-10<sup>25</sup>), Dunn takes note that these passages focus upon the issue of the law, and that given a correct understanding of the law in first-century Judaism, these passages "all hang together."<sup>26</sup> This can only happen when the social

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<sup>18</sup> Idem., Romans WBC 38 (Dallas: Word Books, 1988): 1:lxxi.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. lxxi-lxxii.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. lxvi.

<sup>21</sup> E. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 147; H. Räisänen, "Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law." Studia Biblica 1978, Vol. 3 JSNTSup 3 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), p. 307.

<sup>22</sup> Dunn, Romans, pp. 184-185.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 376-378, 409-410.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 576-577. Dunn's entire discussion on this section of the letter is quite illuminating (pp. 578-598).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 775.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, Romans, 1:lxvii.

function of the law is understood-- something Paul and his readers took for granted.<sup>27</sup>

In an attempt to clarify the argument of Romans from the "new perspective," Dunn makes several foundational affirmations: 1) the technical use of  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  can be translated as νόμος in contradistinction to some who have suggested otherwise;<sup>28</sup> 2) in this sense  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  refers to Israel's covenant obligations spelled out in the book of Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:8; 30:10; 32:46), and Paul interacts with Deuteronomy more in Romans than with any other book of the Pentateuch;<sup>29</sup> and 3) Paul employs νόμος in order to outline those obligations-- a usage completely in keeping with Hebrew employment of  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  (e.g. Rom. 2:12, 17-18; 7:12; 10:5; cf. 1 Kgs. 2:3; Ez. 7:6, 10, 12, 14, 26; Neh. 8:14; 9:14, 34; and Jer. 32:23).<sup>30</sup> Once these matters are understood, along with the notion of Israel's identity bound up with the  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  and its intimate connection to Israel's election and God's covenant with Israel as the chosen people of God, Paul's argument in Romans loses its confusion and so much of the contradiction that scholars, such as Räisänen, have accused Paul of perpetrating in the letter. Dunn even argues that the paraenesis (12:1-

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid. "The confusion and disagreement still remaining...strongly suggest that the role of the law, both within the Judaism against which Paul was strongly reacting and within the new perspective on Paul, has not yet been properly perceived."

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., drawing from S. Westerholm, "Torah, Nomos, and Law: A Question of Meaning." *SR* 15 (1986): 327-336. Against e.g. H. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (London: Lutterworth, 1961), p. 29; S. Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958; reprint 1979), pp. 47-48.

<sup>29</sup>E.g. pp. 603-604.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. lxvii, 95-96, 109, 385, 600-601.

15:6), so often considered to be beside the point of the argument of the letter,<sup>31</sup> is instead understood as a guide for living in keeping with the preceding argument. It is "the law redefined for the eschatological people of God."<sup>32</sup> Thus Romans is a reiteration of the covenantal theology of Judaism seen through the lens of Jesus Christ.

*N. Wright*

According to Wright, Romans is a "Jewish theology for the Gentile world, and a welcome for Gentiles designed to make the Jewish world jealous."<sup>33</sup> Wright makes very clear at the beginning of his discussion on Romans that Second Temple Judaism is the critical background against which Romans must be interpreted. The major foci of the symbolic world of Second Temple Judaism are to be found in the temple, Torah, the land, and racial identity.<sup>34</sup> The heart of the matter in Romans is the covenant faithfulness of God toward his covenant people, which is principally a question of God's righteousness itself.<sup>35</sup> God's faithfulness to Israel and to all people is to be found in his covenant faithfulness

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<sup>31</sup>E.g. M. Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), pp. 238-239; W. Schmithals, Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1975), pp. 83-85.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. lxxii, 705-706.

<sup>33</sup>N. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul." Pauline Theology, Volume III: Romans (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 30.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 32. See also Idem., The New Testament and the People of God (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 215-279, particularly, pp. 224-232; concurring with Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, pp. 18-36.

<sup>35</sup>N. Wright, The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 194.

in his Messiah, Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Thus Paul's discussion of ἔργα νόμου is not a discussion of moral effort, rather it "functions within the wider categories of 'works of Torah,'"<sup>37</sup> that is, the "badges of Jewish ethnic covenant membership."<sup>38</sup> Wright states,

...the covenant people now consists of a group that is demarcated not by the badges that signify Jewish ethnicity but by their faith/faithfulness/belief in Jesus, himself the faithful one. More fundamentally, he has argued that the creator god<sup>39</sup> has indeed been true to his covenant with Abraham, in that in Jesus the Messiah the covenant faithfulness which Israel should have offered, through which the dark world would have been enlightened, has now been put into effect.<sup>40</sup>

At the conclusion of this argument in chapter 4, Paul then, according to Wright, goes on to argue three sequential points from chapter 5 to the end of the letter: 1) just because the promises of the covenant, and the Torah itself, can no longer be understood in reference to ethnic Judaism, and 2) the Jews who have not believed are, momentarily at least, outside of the covenant, 3) it should not be determined that the Torah was a terrible thing (indeed it remains at the

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<sup>36</sup>Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," pp. 35-36. Wright translates πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive, along with R. Hays, "Adam, Israel, Christ." Pauline Theology, III, p. 75; Idem., The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11 SBLDS 56. (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 157-176. *Contra* Dunn, Romans, pp. 166-167; B. Dodd, "Romans 1:17-- A *Crux Interpretum* for the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate." JBL 114 (1995), pp. 470-473; Fitzmyer, Romans, p. 345.

<sup>37</sup>Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," p. 41.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>On Wright's use of the lowercase "g" in "god," see Wright, The New Testament, pp.xiv-xv.

<sup>40</sup>Idem., "Romans and the theology of Paul," p. 42.

center of his argument)<sup>41</sup> and that God has cut off Israel for eternity.<sup>42</sup>

What is critical for Wright is that one sees that Paul never rejected the cardinal Jewish doctrines of monotheism, election and eschatology. He did not abandon them, he defined and redefined them in light of Jesus Christ and the Spirit.<sup>43</sup> Paul's critique of Israel had nothing to do with merit but with "ethnocentric covenantalism."<sup>44</sup>

Wright, therefore, agrees with Dunn in at least two matters. First, Wright notes that his reading of Romans in particular (Paul in general) does not marginalize the Lutheran emphasis on the cross and justification by faith, rather in reality it gives "it its full measure."<sup>45</sup> Second, Sanders' reading of Paul in reference to covenantal nomism does not go far enough.<sup>46</sup> In spite of his critique of the Lutheran reading of justification, Sanders still uses justification primarily as a term that refers to how one is saved, how one enters into the covenant.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Idem., Climax, p. 195.

<sup>42</sup>Idem., "Romans and the Theology of Paul," p. 43. Also Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 66; Again, Dunn, "The Justice of God," pp. 21-22 (above, note 17).

<sup>46</sup>Moreover, Wright insists that Sanders is wrong to argue that Paul works from solution to plight, rather he works from plight to solution to a fresh analysis of plight (Climax, pp. 260-262).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, pp. 186-188; Idem., Romans, p. lxvi. In Sanders' subsequent work The Law, pp. 47ff., he broadens the concept of covenantal nomism from simply as a matter of "staying in" the covenant, but he still argues that Paul broke with the Law (See again, Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, pp. 186-188).

Wright argues that

'Justification' is not, for Paul, 'how people enter the covenant,' but the declaration that certain people are already within the covenant. It is the doctrine which says (cf. Gal. 2:16-21 with Rom. 14:1-15:13) that all those who believe the Christian gospel belong together at the same table. *It is the basis for that unity of the church, across racial barriers, for which Paul fought so hard*<sup>48</sup>

What is also of importance to this thesis is that, like Dunn,<sup>49</sup> Wright notes that when Paul is read against the background of covenantal nomism, the paraenesis in chapters 12-16 can be seen to be important and connected to the argument of the letter.<sup>50</sup> This is what I hope to demonstrate.

### *Conclusion*

The work of Dunn and Wright in reference to Romans has provided us with two important insights in reference to reading Paul and first-century Judaism: Primarily, they have located Paul within his Jewish background insisting that he cannot be correctly understood apart from that background, Romans being a case in point and secondarily, they have put forward the argument, in a general way, that the paraenesis of Romans, therefore, is not somehow beside the point of the letter but is part and parcel of the argument.

Of course, one would expect that the revolution in Pauline studies would not only provide a fresh reading of Romans, but of certain other Pauline letters.

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<sup>48</sup>Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," p. 66. The italics represent my emphasis.

<sup>49</sup>See above, pp. 20-21.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.

Attention, therefore, must now be turned toward Galatians.

J. Barclay-- Galatians

Dunn has written rather extensively on Galatians<sup>51</sup> and the "new perspective" as well, and it is not my intention to ignore his contribution here, but J. Barclay's work on Galatians, Obeying the Truth, is particularly helpful for two reasons, which are inextricably related: 1) Barclay's penultimate concern is Paul's attitude toward the law and Judaism; and 2) his analysis of this concern logically leads into his ultimate concern which is the paraenesis and its place in the argument of the entire letter.<sup>52</sup> Thus the significance of Barclay's study is that he concentrates specifically on the paraenetic material in Galatians, something not previously done.

Barclay rejects the notion that the major contention of Galatians is the Lutheran notion of salvation by faith alone and against the idea of earning it.<sup>53</sup> Believing Sanders to be right that the law functioned in a way that separated Gentile congregations from the Jewish lifestyle so connected to the current understanding of the covenant, Paul wrote Galatians in an attempt to defend the existence of the Gentile churches apart from the synagogue, in effect opposing those Jewish Christians who wanted the Christian movement to remain within the

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<sup>51</sup>See, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, pp. 108-264; The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians NTT (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Galatians BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1993).

<sup>52</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, pp. 1-8.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

social bounds and bonds of Judaism, that is, ethnic Israel.<sup>54</sup>

It is from this argument that Barclay analyzes the paraenesis. He concludes that the paraenesis develops out of and concludes Paul's earlier arguments in the letter and that it cannot be understood correctly when seen as an appendix to the letter.<sup>55</sup> While there may be material in the paraenesis common to wider Christian teaching, on which Paul is drawing, Barclay argues that the paraenesis is framed specifically to address the contemporary situation in the Galatian churches.<sup>56</sup> The exhortations, like the earlier arguments, are concerned only with the stature and obedience of Gentile believers.

The significance of this argument cannot be overstated; for the notion that the paraenesis of Galatians (and the other Pauline letters) is basically unrelated to the argument of the letter is still shared by a number of scholars. It is now to this that we turn.

#### Paraenesis as Appendix: M. Dibelius

It was Dibelius who first argued extensively that the paraenesis of the Pauline letters was unrelated to the previous arguments. In particular the paraenetic sections had no immediate relation to the specific situations of the letters. Paul was simply echoing the general requirements of early Christianity

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 5. See also G. Howard, Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology SNTSMS 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>55</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

which could not be understood to be specifically Christian.<sup>57</sup> Dibelius drew this conclusion from examining the paraenesis of Romans, 1 Thessalonians, and for the purpose of this thesis, Galatians and Colossians. His work has influenced many<sup>58</sup> (although his primary interest was the letter of James). Certainly there is diversity among scholars sympathetic to Dibelius' point of view, but in general there is a consensus that the Pauline paraenetic passages can stand quite well independently from the argument of his letter.

Important to Dibelius' argument was his definition of paraenesis as "sayings and groups of sayings very diverse in content, lacking any particular order, and containing no emphasis upon a special thought of pressing importance for a particular situation."<sup>59</sup> Such a definition, however, is very much debated,<sup>60</sup> and it is questionable whether it is possible to identify a particular genre as "paraenesis."<sup>61</sup> This does cast some doubts upon Dibelius' argument, but his work

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<sup>57</sup>M. Dibelius, Tradition, p. 238. See also E. Lohse, Theological Ethics of the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 132, who states of Paul's paraenesis in Romans, "No more, but also no less, is required of them than of any other responsible citizen."

<sup>58</sup>E.g. J. Becker, Galater (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1990), 4, 67; A. M. Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (London: SCM, 1961), pp. 52-57; E. Lohse, Colossians Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 154-157; F. Mussner, Galaterbrief TKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), p. 396; P. Vielhauer, Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1975), pp. 49-57; M. Wolter, Kolossier ÖTKNT 12 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1993), pp. 164-166.

<sup>59</sup>M. Dibelius, James (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 1-11, particularly, p. 3. Quoted in Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup>R. Schnackenburg, "Paränese." LTK 8 (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), pp. 80-82.

<sup>61</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 11; W. Schrage, Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese. Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Ethik (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1961), pp. 37-48. On my use of the term "paraenesis" see below pp. 78-80.

suffers from one major problem which is even more significant-- Paul's letters themselves do not indicate such a division between the argument specific to the context and the general paraenesis, nor is there even hint of a shift.<sup>62</sup>

This is what makes Barclay's study so important. He demonstrates that the issue in reference to Galatians and scholarly understanding is one of faulty interpretation of the law and first-century Judaism. Seen from the "new perspective" one gains a new perspective on the relationship between the paraenesis of Galatians and its integration into the argument of the entire letter.

#### Conclusion

Thus far doubts have been raised concerning scholarly interpretation of Paul in reference to the law and first-century Judaism, in particular the strand of Pauline scholarship which stands in the tradition of the Protestant Reformation. The work of Wright and Dunn on Romans suggests the "new perspective" on Paul sheds new light on Pauline interpretation of Romans. This discussion was then extended to include Galatians by looking at the work of Barclay. Not only does he argue coherently for an interpretation of Galatians from the "new perspective," in particular he demonstrates that given the "new perspective" one can now make much sense of the paraenesis of Galatians and its place in the argument of the whole letter.

I am now in a position to extend the discussion even further to another

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<sup>62</sup>See J. Drane, Paul: Libertine or Legalist? A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles (London: SPCK, 1975), pp. 84-88.

Pauline letter-- Colossians. Given the understanding of the "new perspective" in reference to the Torah and first-century Judaism, what light might this shed on the background of Colossians, its interpretation, and the place of the paraenesis in that interpretation?

## THE "NEW PERSPECTIVE" AND COLOSSIANS

### The Jewish Background of Colossians

Within the last five years there has been something of a resurgence of the background question in reference to Colossians, a question which simply has not been resolved.

A superficial glance at Colossians reveals that some of the same boundary markers mentioned in Romans and Galatians are also found in Colossians--circumcision (2:11; 3:11), dietary regulations (2:16, 21) and Sabbath and festival observances (2:16). Certainly these suggest that there is something Jewish in the background of the letter.<sup>61</sup> The fact that there has been a resurgence of the view that Colossians is addressed to meet a challenge to the Colossian church originating from the synagogue runs contrary to the main consensus of the 1950's and 60's that the Colossian philosophy is a form of syncretism or

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<sup>61</sup>As recognized even by those who argue that the background of the letter is to be found elsewhere than Judaism or in addition to Judaism. G. Bornkamm, "The Heresy of Colossians." Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies SBS 4 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 123-125; J. Lähnemann Kolossierbrief (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), pp. 23-28; Lohse, Colossians, pp. 2-3; P. O'Brien, Colossians WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1982), p. xxxviii; P. Pokorný, Colossians (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 113-114; H. Schenk, "Der Widerstreit gnostischer und kirchlicher Christologie im Spiegel des Kolossierbriefes." ZTK 61 (1964), pp. 391-403; in particular M. Barth, Colossians AB (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 10-16.

Gnosticism as expressed, for example, by Lohse.<sup>64</sup> The opposing view was expressed by F. Francis, as we will discover shortly, and has continued to increase in popularity since his time, though both views continue to be maintained with fervor with greater variety on the syncretistic side.

Thus we start by giving concurrence to the Jewish hypothesis. We will build on this hypothesis throughout the argument of the thesis. At the same time, however, it cannot be ignored that fresh modifications of the syncretistic postulate continue to surface. These recent revisions will be briefly described and critiqued before putting forward our own agenda.

It is not necessary to rehearse in detail the history of the debate over the nature of the Colossian "philosophy." That has been done quite well elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> What is necessary at this point is to consider briefly the work of F. Francis and three recent proponents of the Jewish background of the "philosophy." It is not my intention to ignore those who argue against this thesis. Recent dissenters will be discussed in due course, and certainly I will dialogue with contentious scholars throughout the course of the thesis. All that is necessary is a brief recounting of those who have argued that Colossians is best understood as a response to an argument which is quite Jewish in nature.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Lohse, Colossians, pp. 127-131.

<sup>65</sup>A good discussion is found in O'Brien, Colossians, pp. xxx-xxxviii.

<sup>66</sup>Outlining Francis' views only is not to ignore the contributions made by J. Lightfoot ("The Colossian Heresy." Conflict, pp. 13-59), and S. Lyonnet ("Paul's Adversaries in Colossae." Conflict, pp. 147-161) to the Jewish thesis in reference to Colossians. While Lightfoot and Lyonnet accept some kind of gnostic (former) or syncretistic influence (latter) on the Colossians, Francis argued that the nature of the Colossian philosophy can be located within Judaism

*F. Francis*

Francis was the first to argue that the solution to the problem of the Colossian philosophy was to be found in Jewish Christian mystical asceticism.<sup>67</sup> In his analysis of 2:18 and 23, he argued that *ταπεινοφροσύνη* denoted fasting and other bodily rigors, which could be found within the literature of Judaism and early Christianity.<sup>68</sup> Such asceticism was in character with Jewish apocalyptic literature in which one practiced self-denial in order to receive heavenly visions.

Moreover, Francis argued against Dibelius that the term *ἐμβατεύω* referred, not to some initiation into the sanctuary of an oracle, but rather it connoted the "entering into possession of" something.<sup>69</sup> When used with *ταπεινοφροσύνη* it refers to a heavenly entrance of some kind.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, Francis argued that *θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων* should be understood subjectively and translated as "the angels' worship" (of God), and not objectively as "the worship of angels." Thus *θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων* was the culmination of ascetic behavior which allowed one to enter into heavenly visions and thus worship God along with the angels. This ascetical-mystical piety is

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itself.

<sup>67</sup>F. Francis, "Humility and Angelic Worship in Col. 2:18." *Conflict*, pp. 163-195.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-171.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 171-176.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 173-174.

characteristically found in many Jewish and early Christian sources.<sup>71</sup>

Francis' argument is quite decisive. By taking what appears to be the major terminology in favor of a syncretistic background of the Colossian philosophy, and demonstrating its Jewish context, he quite effectively counters the syncretistic and gnostic theses that the Colossians were contemplating the worship of angels, although his argument is not without problems.

Three scholars benefitting from Francis' insights as well as from insights of the "new perspective"<sup>72</sup> have recently argued in favor of a Jewish background for the Colossian philosophy. Given this it should not come as a surprise that two of the three have already been discussed in reference to their treatments of Romans.

#### Recent Studies on the Jewish Background of Colossians

##### *N. Wright*

In his popular commentary on Colossians<sup>73</sup> Wright argues that Paul is responding to Jewish critics of the Colossian church. He summarizes the progression of his argument as follows: 1) There are elements present in the Colossian philosophy which are clearly Jewish in nature, and at the same time there are elements which appear to be more characteristic of pagan worship

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 187-181. See also A. Bandstra, "Did the Colossian Errorists Need a Mediator?" New Dimensions in New Testament Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 331.

<sup>72</sup>In reference to the influence of the "new perspective" I refer to Wright and Dunn in particular.

<sup>73</sup>See above note 1.

practices (i.e. θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων and ταπεινοφροσύνη). 2) While it is indeed the case that many elements of the philosophy can be understood within a non-Jewish framework, there are certain attributes which can only be understood as uniquely Jewish (e.g. circumcision). The dilemma this creates for those who would argue for a syncretism in the Colossian philosophy is that such a blend of pagan and Jewish elements has yet to be demonstrated.<sup>74</sup> 3) The quandary, therefore, is to discover a thesis which can make sense of the dispute in Colossians "both in outline and in detail." Moreover, such a hypothesis must also be able to explicate the significance of the Christ-hymn (what Wright refers to as a poem<sup>75</sup>) and the moral exhortations in chapter 3.<sup>76</sup>

The solution Wright offers is that the argument of Colossians is a polemic against Judaism. Such a polemic best makes sense of the centrality of Christ throughout the letter, the "redefinition of the cardinal Jewish doctrines of monotheism and election" (evident in the Christ-hymn)<sup>77</sup> and, very important for the purposes of this study, the parallels between Colossians and several passages in other Pauline letters (Rom. 7:1-6; 2 Cor. 3-5; Gal. 3-5; and Phil. 3:2ff.).<sup>78</sup>

Such a polemic also means, for Wright, that one need not postulate that

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<sup>74</sup>For a wonderful treatment on the complex nature of Jewish Hellenization see J. Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 60 (1995), pp. 89-120. See also M. Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians* (London: SCM Press, 1980), pp. 60ff.

<sup>75</sup>Wright, *Climax*, p. 99.

<sup>76</sup>Idem., *Colossians*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>77</sup>Idem., *Climax*, pp. 99-119, particularly pp. 107-113.

<sup>78</sup>Idem., *Colossians*, pp. 24-25.

Paul is disputing against false teachers within the Colossian church. This is a problem which has confronted the Christians at Colossae from without.<sup>79</sup> The criticism comes from the synagogue.

*T. Sappington*

In his significant work on Colossians, Sappington argues that the issue in the Colossian church is one of ascetical-mystical piety, specifically as it is found in Jewish apocalypticism.<sup>80</sup> Building on what he calls "Francis' pioneering work"<sup>81</sup> as well as the many advances in the last 25 years in the study of Jewish non-conformist literature, particularly Qumran, Sappington's interest in Colossians is related to the influence of the Jewish wisdom tradition on Jewish apocalyptic literature. Sappington argues that

...the error at Colossae [involved] the attempt to achieve supernatural experiences and to gain heavenly revelation or "wisdom" through certain ascetic practices....[A] detailed analysis of Jewish apocalypticism as a possible "background" for Colossians could yield significant results.<sup>82</sup>

In his study Sappington devotes himself to the analysis of certain passages

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 27. See the often quoted M. Hooker, "False Teachers," pp. 315-331.

<sup>80</sup>T. Sappington, Revelation and Redemption at Colossae JSNTSS 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), p. 19.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

from eleven Jewish apocalyptic documents.<sup>83</sup> To understand the nature of the revelatory experiences in Jewish apocalyptic Sappington considers the conceptual world view of the writers and their need for heavenly revelations, the achievement of such revelations, and the media by which they receive them.<sup>84</sup>

Important in reference to Colossians is Sappington's discussion of spatial dualism (Colossians 3:1-6), the qualifications for receiving heavenly revelations, such as fasting, emphasis on time and place, and sexual abstinence (possibly included in the reference to *κατειροφροσύνη*), and the media of revelations through visions, particularly in reference to one's participation with the angels in the worship of God.<sup>85</sup> Thus the problem at Colossae and the response of the letter to that problem is completely coherent within the framework of Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>86</sup> This position is reinforced by his analysis of the Christ-hymn and "its portrait of Christ in terms of [Jewish] Wisdom categories (1:15-20) and the explicit identification of Christ with Wisdom (2:2-3)."<sup>87</sup>

*J. Dunn*

Dunn echoes the view of Sappington. Colossians is a response to "a kind of

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<sup>83</sup>Daniel, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Jubilees, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, The Apocalypse of Abraham, The Testament of Abraham, The Apocalypse of Zephaniah, and the Testament of Levi.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 65, 67, 71, 74, 93.

<sup>86</sup>Unlike Wright and Dunn (see below) Sappington is inclined to believe that the source of the Colossian problem comes from within the church (Ibid., p. 15).

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

Jewish mysticism."<sup>88</sup> Dunn argues his point by analyzing the Jewish character of the letter. Prior to this, however, he points out the importance of realizing that the Lycus Valley contained a substantial Jewish population (Dunn estimates an adult male population of over 10,000),<sup>89</sup> and that from Josephus and inscriptions these Jewish communities in Asia Minor were quite concerned over the freedom to follow their laws, including Sabbath observance and food laws. From this Dunn is able to postulate, like Wright, that the source of the problem at Colossae comes from outside the church from the synagogue, and that the context of the matter is essentially Jewish in nature.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, to posit some kind of "heresy"<sup>91</sup> leaving the Colossian church in some kind of internal crisis is an overreactionary interpretation.<sup>92</sup>

From this Dunn takes note of the Jewish character of much of the letter. The phrases *τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων* (1:12) and *ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι* (3:12) express the theological viewpoint that the Colossian Christians participate in Israel's distinctive heritage. Circumcision is given prominent place (2:11), and notably, in the unity formula of 3:11 the distinction of *Ἕλληνας καὶ*

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<sup>88</sup>J. Dunn, "The Colossian Philosophy: A Confident Jewish Apologia." *Biblica* 76 (1995), p. 154.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155. Also J. Gnllka, *Kolossierbrief* HTKNT 10/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), p. 3.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157, 179.

<sup>91</sup>On the problematic use of this term in reference to Colossians see J. Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

Ἰουδαῖος is repeated with the phrase περιτομή και ἀκροβυστία.<sup>93</sup>

Further evidence of the Jewish character of the letter can be seen in 2:16 and 22 with its reference to basic features of Jewish identity-- food and drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths, as well as the prohibitive admonition Μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης (2:21), reflecting a concern for matters of purity (cf. TMos. 7:9-10).<sup>94</sup>

Dunn also takes up the discussion on the interpretation of ταπεινοφροσύνη, and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων, and argues in concert with Francis and Sappington.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, Dunn argues that τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, the phrase most suggestive of syncretism in the letter, while not referring exclusively to the Torah, is quite clearly connected to the Torah and there is certainly a link between its employment in Colossians and in Galatians 4:3 and 9.<sup>96</sup>

Thus Dunn concludes that the problem being addressed in Colossians is one of a "confident Jewish apologetic"<sup>97</sup> in which the synagogue promoted itself over against the Colossian church as having a sufficiency the Christians lacked. This was an apologetic which challenged the Colossian Christians' claim to share in the inheritance of Israel. One need not search elsewhere for the nature of the Colossian philosophy than the synagogues of Colossae.

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<sup>93</sup>Idem., "The Colossian Philosophy," pp. 160-162.

<sup>94</sup>See J. Ernst, Kolosser RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1974), p. 213; E. Lohmeyer, Kolosser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), p.128.

<sup>95</sup>Dunn, "The Colossian Philosophy," pp. 170-176.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-170.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

## *Conclusion*

Having surveyed the work of Francis and then built on that survey with a brief overview of the work of Wright, Sappington and Dunn, an initial case has been made for the Jewish character of the Colossian problem. Recent studies, however, have not unanimously come to this same conclusion. We must turn to this shortly, but first it is necessary to discuss the usage of some critical terminology, and then put forth the methodology operative in the thesis.

### THE PROBLEMATIC NOTIONS OF PURE JUDAISM AND OF SYNCRETISM

The scholarly disagreement over the argument of Colossians has rightly centered around the nature of the Colossian philosophy. One of the critical matters is the definition of the terminology employed. The meaning of essential nomenclature is often assumed and, therefore, not carefully defined.

Two terms in particular need to be clarified in this thesis. The first is "Judaism." It can no longer be maintained, as most scholars have recognized for some time, that the Judaism of the first century A.D., or of any other century for that matter, was a monolithic entity, unchanging in character, and free from non-Jewish influence.<sup>98</sup> There is no such thing as pure Judaism. It is important to note that when the term "Judaism" is used in this thesis it is not meant to denote a religion free of outside influences, whether cultic, cultural, political, or

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<sup>98</sup>Certainly M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Hellenistic Period (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 1-4, is worth noting here. See also the recent study by J. Barclay, Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), particularly pp. 4-9, 399-402.

social.

Yet, while it is true that pure Judaism did not exist in the first century A.D., if it ever did (just as there was no such thing as pure Hellenism), nevertheless it is still possible, in scholarly study, to point to something in the first century and rightfully call it Judaism. Clearly Jewish and non-Jewish writers in the ancient world were able to do that. It seems justified therefore for modern scholars to do the same.

By Judaism I mean a certain orientation, a certain way of life, a world view, and, most importantly, an identity in keeping with and faithful to the Torah, as any Jew would have understood (in various and diverse ways), as given by the covenant God to the people of Israel.<sup>99</sup> Even though there was great diversity among Diaspora Jews in the first century in reference to assimilation,<sup>100</sup> and how they understood and interpreted their identifying practices, nevertheless Jews were known as Jews, not only in their own group, but by non-Jews as well. With all the individual and corporate differences between Jews and Jewish communities and varying degrees of assimilation throughout the Roman Empire, Jews could indeed be differentiated from everyone else.

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<sup>99</sup>Note Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, p. 2, "the word [Judaism] means both political and genetic association with the Jewish nation and exclusive belief in the one God of Israel, together with the observance of the Torah given by him."

<sup>100</sup>Assimilation is here understood in its most commonly used sense of incorporation into a system or body of beliefs and practices, where one is made like or becomes similar to those from whom the beliefs and practices have their influence. See The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1:128.

This study operates on the assumption argued by others<sup>101</sup> that the heart of Jewish identity in the first-century Roman world was ethnicity, revealed in such practices as circumcision, food laws, and festival and Sabbath observance. Thus the term "Judaism" in this thesis does not refer to a Judaism untainted by outside sources. It refers to specific ethnic practices maintained by ancestral customs that marked certain persons as Jewish (e.g. Philo, *Mos.* 1:278; Josephus, *Ant.* 14:258, 263; 20:38; 3 Macc. 1:3). Judaism was ethnically recognizable by those within the group and those from without (Josephus *Ant.* 14:115, commenting on Strabo; Cicero, *De Provinciis Consularibus* 5:10; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.1-2; Augustine referring to Seneca in his *City of God* 6:11). In spite of varying degrees of assimilation throughout the Empire and even within the same geographical regions, Jewish communities managed to maintain their ethnic identity.<sup>102</sup>

The issue of Jewish identity also raises the problematic use of the term "syncretism." The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines "syncretism" as an "attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, esp. in philosophy or religion."<sup>103</sup> But as Levinskaya notes, the term is not defined uniformly in the various dictionaries, nor is it delineated

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<sup>101</sup>Barclay, *Ibid.*, pp. 402-413; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, pp. 183-203; Wright, *The New Testament*, pp. 215-279, particularly, pp. 226-232, 237-241.

<sup>102</sup>Barclay, *Jews*, p. 406 writes, "Thus with only occasional exceptions, all the Diaspora literature here analysed portrays Jews (past and present) as bound together by a common ethnicity."

<sup>103</sup>2:3210.

in the same way by scholars.<sup>104</sup> It is often used to denote any kind of outside religious and/or social contact. Feldman, for example, uses the term "syncretism" in an imprecise manner to refer to several different levels of Jewish assimilation to Gentile culture.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, syncretism is also employed pejoratively as a word which implies compromise.

The terminology of syncretism, therefore, is not necessarily helpful in nuancing the extent and quality of the interaction, whether cultural or religious, between Diaspora Jews and their Hellenistic environment. Circumcision, Sabbath observance, the use of magic, and attending the theater, should not be considered equally in any account of the extent of Jewish assimilation and the extent of the loss of Jewish identity.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps, most significantly the nomenclature of syncretism may not succeed in recognizing and may indeed gloss over the boundaries that marked a particular religion and social identity. It seems best, therefore, to employ the more sophisticated terminology of assimilation and its varying levels in any discussion of Jewish assimilation and acculturation.<sup>107</sup> This is particularly important given the basic agreement among scholars that Diaspora Jews generally

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<sup>104</sup>I. Levinskaya, The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 198. Levinskaya's treatment of syncretism and the brief history of its problematic usage is most helpful (pp. 197-203).

<sup>105</sup>L. Feldman, Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 65-69.

<sup>106</sup>Barclay, Jews, p. 87.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-102.

shared a concern over matters of identity, revealed in their ethnic and ancestral practices.<sup>108</sup>

This is not meant to suggest that "syncretism" is terminology which should always be avoided. I believe its most appropriate use can best be reserved for reference to very high levels of assimilation where Jews were so fully integrated into their surrounding social environment they had, more or less, abandoned the social and ethnic badges that preserved their distinctiveness, which may or may not have been accompanied by idolatry.<sup>109</sup> Yet, even here, caution must be exercised. Jews who were highly assimilated were not always assimilated in the same way. Moreover, it is not always clear how such assimilation was viewed by those who were so integrated, and by those, Jews and Gentiles, who were witnesses to it. How far a Jew could assimilate before he abandoned his Jewish identity was not universally agreed.<sup>110</sup> It is possible that those whom Philo criticized for allegorizing the badges of Jewish ethnic identity (*Mig. Abr.* 89-93)

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<sup>108</sup>Again, Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 1-4, 402-413; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 65-74; Levinskaya, *Acts*, pp. 1-17. Feldman writes, "...the cumulative effect of all the evidence is considerable in indicating a high degree of syncretism. And yet this was all at the level of folklore and hardly diminished the loyalty to Judaism of the Jewish possessors of these amulets (p. 69)." Barclay states, "...the patterns of life...in the Mediterranean Diaspora suggest that Jews were neither socially and culturally isolated nor simply blended into some social amalgam. While their boundaries may have been defined variously in differing circumstances, it was precisely the ability to maintain these boundaries while continuing everyday social contacts with non-Jews which was the peculiar achievement of Diapora Judaism (p. 329)."

<sup>109</sup>For the use of the term in this way see Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 87, 121, 132, 285, 333-335.

<sup>110</sup>P. Borgen, "'Yes,' 'No,' 'How Far?': The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults." *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995): 46-47, suggests that even the rabbis were not as strict concerning the interaction between Jews and Gentiles, as is often assumed.

believed those badges to be significant enough for their identity as Jews to redefine rather than dispense with them altogether.

In reference to Colossians, then, the question is whether or not some elements of the Colossian philosophy suggest something substantially syncretistic; a philosophy which was highly assimilated and where different elements were blended together and reconciled into a new kind of identity. Yet, is it not also possible that such "syncretistic" elements suggest a lower level of assimilation, which may, therefore, not be too helpful in identifying the philosophers apart from other evidence in the letter? This question motivates my thesis, and in particular, the first three chapters. In order to begin providing an answer, a discussion of methodology is necessary.

### Methodology

While the beliefs and practices of any group, religious or otherwise, are fundamental to its identity, not all of the convictions and conventions are revealing in reference to the identity of the group in question. It stands to reason, therefore, that not everything gleaned from Colossians will necessarily help in identifying the proponents of the Colossian philosophy.

For example, in his study Arnold clearly and astutely demonstrates that magic played a critical role in non-Jewish and Jewish religious practices in first century Asia Minor.<sup>111</sup> While this is an important observation, it does not, in and of itself, necessarily point to the identity of the advocates of the Colossian

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<sup>111</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 8-102.

philosophy. The inability to discover clear evidence from the letter has been precisely the problem for scholars regardless of whom they believe were the advocates of the Colossian philosophy.

Within recent years some scholars have pursued the task of reconstructing the situations that occasioned New Testament and other early Christian writings, through the methodology of "mirror reading."<sup>112</sup> It is not my task to delineate that methodology and its problems in detail. Rather I will simply outline the major considerations, highlight some cautions raised by those who have employed mirror-reading in interpreting the New Testament, and suggest how it is helpful in this study of Colossians.

First, it is with good reason that scholarly attention to Colossians has focused on 2:8-23.<sup>113</sup> It is here that the argument appears to be most directed against the proponents of the Colossian philosophy. This polemical material is the most important place to discover information about the target of the controversy.<sup>114</sup>

Interpreting the polemical section, however, is certainly not without its difficulties. The debate over the meaning of ταπεινοφροσύνη, θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων, τὰ

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<sup>112</sup>See J. Sumney, Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians JSNTS 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 77-120; J. Barclay, Colossians, pp. 48-54; "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case." JSNT 31 (1987), pp. 73-93; Obeying the Truth, pp. 36-45.

<sup>113</sup>DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae JSNTS 96 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), p. 41 writes, "...every reconstruction undertaken to date has rested primarily on evidence gleaned from ch. 2, where the letter writer warns his readers about specific beliefs and practices."

<sup>114</sup>Sumney, Opponents, pp. 97-101.

στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (to name only three) reveals the complicated and vague nature of the evidence. Moreover, it must not be assumed that the writer of Colossians always characterized his opponents in a way they would find acceptable. Whatever the nature of the practice that involved angels, would the Colossian philosophers have referred to it as worship?<sup>115</sup>

Even though the terminology which reveals the author's own bias perspective on the philosophy may not be the language his opponents would have accepted, it can still be instructive in illuminating the target of the letter. I think it unlikely that the Colossian philosophers would have agreed that their beliefs and practices could be rejected as κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων (2:8), nevertheless the terminology employed is rather significant (as I will suggest) and, connected with other clues, may betray something of the nature of the philosophy.

With all of its difficulties 2:8-23 still gives the best clues in deciphering the target and nature of the Colossian philosophy. Therefore, the best methodology should pay fundamental attention to the polemical section within the primary text of the letter itself.<sup>116</sup>

In this study of Colossians we begin with five parallels with Galatians (circumcision, Sabbath and special days, food laws, τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and the unity formula); the first four of which are found within the polemical core. The last one is outside 2:8-23, but it is highlighted precisely because of the mention

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<sup>115</sup>Barclay, Colossians, pp. 50-51.

<sup>116</sup>On the primacy of the primary text see Sumney, Opponents, p. 95-112.

of ἀκροβυστία, which is, I believe, a reference revealing the more specific nature of the circumcision referred to in 2:8-15.

Along with the evidence from the polemical core of the primary text, comes the issue of the use of parallels from secondary documents, in this case Galatians. Sumney highlights the major problem in the use of parallels: terminology is not always used in the same way in different letters, whether by different writers or by the same writer. Verbal correspondence is no guarantee that an apparently parallel passage can illuminate the context of the primary passage.<sup>117</sup> Sumney suggests that to assess whether given passages are truly parallel there must be at the very least the "same conceptual framework" (this includes the same terminology). After this is established "full interpretation of both passages" is critical in classifying passages as parallel.<sup>118</sup>

There is verbal and conceptual correspondence in the five parallels drawn in this thesis between Colossians and Galatians. This, of course, is not sufficient. Exegesis of the passages in question is necessary in order to establish the parallels. This I attempt to do. Sumney is correct to observe that the parallel passages (Galatians) should not determine the meaning of the passages in the primary text (Colossians).<sup>119</sup> They, can be used, however, to illuminate the meaning of the primary text. This is my intent in the thesis.

While drawing the parallels is critical to the argument of this thesis, to keep

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-92.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

the parallels from alone determining the target of Colossians, and to keep the methodology of mirror-reading from being employed arbitrarily,<sup>120</sup> other passages outside the polemical core will be analyzed. This is the purpose of the discussion of the Exodus motif in chapter three and the background of Colossians 3:1-4 examined in chapter four. This will also be important in later chapters in discussion of certain portions of the paraenesis. What I hope will emerge is a consistent employment of this methodology which will illuminate the target of the letter to the Colossians.

In concluding this discussion of methodology, two additional matters need to be addressed in reference to working assumptions. First, a minority of scholars have suggested that Paul's opponents in Galatia are not Jewish Christians but Gentile Christians who have been circumcised and are promoting it in the Galatian churches.<sup>121</sup> Two arguments in particular are made in support of this: First, and perhaps most important, the participle οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13 can be appropriately translated, "those who are undergoing circumcision," and suggests the opponents were Gentiles who had accepted the importance of circumcision. This might also be implied in 5:3. Second, the phrase ὑπὸ νόμον (3:23; 4:21; 5:18; cf. Rom. 6:14) is never expressed in Jewish writings to depict Israel's relationship to Torah, but is used instead by Paul to denote the Gentiles' relationship to the Torah prior to the coming of Christ. This can be seen in

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<sup>120</sup>G. Howard, Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology SNTSMS 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 7.

<sup>121</sup>The following arguments can be found in L. Gaston, Paul and the Torah (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp. 29-30, 81-82; J. Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (London: SCM, 1959), pp. 130-134.

Galatians in Paul's use of ὑπό νόμον in parallel fashion with other phrases that specifically refer to the Gentile situation prior to Christ. They were ὑπό παιδαγωγόν (3:25), ὑπό ἐπιτρόπους, ὑπό οἰκονόμους (4:2) ὑπό τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3).

Gaston in particular presents an intriguing argument, but his suggestion that the agitators in Galatia were Gentile Christians is problematic. First, he relies too heavily on the passive reading of οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13, since it can also be translated in the middle voice ("those for whom circumcision is necessary"),<sup>122</sup> making it quite doubtful that the opponents are Gentile believers. In addition, 5:3 may be simply understood, not as a reference to the opponents, but as a warning to the Galatians not to undergo circumcision.

More significant than 6:13, is the argument throughout the letter which indicates that the rivals are Jewish Christians. Paul refers to the Galatians in the second person and the opponents in the third person suggesting the troublemakers come from outside the congregation. At places the language of the letter indicates that Jews are the object of the assault. Paul affirms his own Jewish identity at the beginning of the letter (1:13-14), suggesting his opponents are Jewish. Paul's account of his relationship to the leaders of the Jerusalem church (1:12-2:14), especially emphasizing that it was decided that he was the one to take the Gospel to the "uncircumcision" (2:9), implies the opponents were Jews attempting to undermine that decision. The language Paul uses to refer to the opponents as wishing to "shut out" the Galatians (4:17), and boasting in the flesh

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<sup>122</sup>This critique follows, for the most part the discussions in Barclay, Obeying the Truth, pp. 42-43; Dunn, Galatians, pp. 9-11, 338-340; Idem., "The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," pp. 8-10.

of their circumcision (6:13), as well as Paul's reference not simply to the "circumcised," but to the circumcision" (2:7, 9), indicates Jewish Christian opponents.

Moreover, Gaston's argument that ὑπὸ νομῶν refers exclusively to Gentiles is questionable. It fails to explain 4:4 where the Son, a Jewish male, is born ὑπὸ νομῶν. It is also not clear that 3:10 refers exclusively to Gentiles.<sup>123</sup>

Moreover, to suggest that verses such as 3:23-24 and 4:1-3 refers only to Gentiles is strained. Paul does not argue in these verses that the law is irrelevant, but that it has served its purpose. He is placing his argument concerning the law and the coming of Christ in a salvation-historical continuity where the latter fulfills the former. This is true for Jew and Gentile alike. Of course, Paul's argument itself is problematic at this point in equating life "under the law" with life "under the stoicheia" (4:3), but the difficulties are not better explained by Gaston's approach.

In light of the evidence, the majority of scholarship has rightly believed that the opponents in Galatians are Jewish Christians.

The matter of Gentile Christian opponents is also a relevant question for Colossians. Though no one has raised the question in Colossian scholarship, given the similarities I am drawing between Colossians and Galatians, it is an appropriate question.

The evidence from the letter makes it difficult to sustain such a suggestion.

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<sup>123</sup>For differing views on how 3:10 applies to Jews see Dunn, Galatians, pp. 170-173; Thielmann, Paul and the Law, pp. 125-130. Wright, Climax, pp. 137-156.

First, one would think if the Colossian philosophers were Gentile Christians promoting circumcision, the tone of the letter would be more angry and terse, as in Galatians. In Galatians Paul was quite disappointed with the Gentile Christians because he believed that, from his own instruction, they should have known better than to submit to the works of the law. The same kind of response could reasonably be expected if the Gentile Christians were at work in Colossae.

Second, the dismissive attitude of the philosophers in Colossians 2:18 (μηδεις υμας καταβραβευετω) is reminiscent of Paul's statement in Galatians 4:17 where the Galatians are being shut out (αλλα εκκλεισαι υμας θελουσιν), excluded from sharing in the promises given to Israel because they do not keep the works of the law. This suggests a Jewish target of the letter.

Third, as in Galatians, the writers in Colossians refer to the philosophers in the third person, suggesting a group from outside the Colossian church, rather than Gentile Christians from within the church.

Fourth, and perhaps most significant, as with Galatians, though not as pronounced throughout the letter, the mindset of Colossians is thoroughly Jewish. Jewish covenantal distinction is evident in the argument of the letter (1:12, 21-22; 2:13, and 3:11-12). Important themes in the letter (1:9, 19, 25, 28; 2:2-3; 3:16; 4:5, 12), and the practices of the philosophers (2:16-18, 21) most easily fit within a Jewish framework.

Thus the idea that the Colossian philosophers were Gentile Christians who had accepted the mark of circumcision is quite problematic. It is understandable that no scholar has taken such a position.

The last matter to address in reference to working assumptions concerns the way I speak of the Colossian philosophy. Throughout this thesis I speak of the Jewish character and the Jewish nature of the letter. It can rightfully be suggested that the Jewish character of the argument of Colossians does not necessarily suggest that the target of the letter is Judaism. The Jewish character of much of the material may simply mean that the writer is a Jewish Christian and, therefore, responding in good Jewish fashion.

My response to this is two-fold. First, it is true that the Jewish character of Colossians does not in and of itself demonstrate a Jewish target. Nevertheless it is not unreasonable to suggest that the writer resorts to Jewish themes and contentions in order to refute a Jewish argument levelled against the Christians in Colossae. This would be a way of attempting "to beat the Colossian philosophers at their own game." I think this is particularly possible given the writer's terminology in 2:18 (μηδεις υμας καταβραβευετω), as I will indicate.

Moreover, the Jewish character of the letter of Colossians reveals, I think, more than the context and orientation of the writer. The Jewish elements of the letter are identity markers at the center of Jewish identity in the first century. This suggests that the character of the letter is more than a matter of the writer's Jewishness. It likely reveals something of the nature of the Colossian philosophy itself. This, of course, will have to be demonstrated.

Second, to highlight the Jewish character of the paraenesis indicates, I believe, more than a Jewish author. If Colossians is a response to Jewish critique of the Colossian church, the Jewish character of the paraenesis and its

integration into the argument of the letter as a whole, implies something more significant. The writer of Colossians, while presenting an argument against the necessity of the Gentile Christians' identification with the badges of Jewish ethnicity, nevertheless retains a fundamentally Jewish orientation throughout the letter, including the paraenesis. It is important to explore what this means. No Diaspora Jew concerned with his identity as a Jew, would have thought it possible to separate his moral life apart from what it meant to be a Jew (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4:114; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4:179-180;<sup>124</sup> *Legatio*, 3-5).<sup>125</sup> Yet, Colossians continues to affirm a Jewish understanding of the moral life exhorting the Gentile Christians to live their lives in this understanding, while insisting at the same time that they need not conform their lives to the badges of Jewish ethnicity found in the Torah from which the paraenetical instruction is given.

The emphasis in the letter on the supremacy of Christ (1:15-20; 2:9, 15, 17) is, therefore, important for the Colossians' identity as God's people, as well as how they are to live (3:1-2, 15, 17). So while the writer rejects the necessity of the Jewish ethnic badges for the Gentile Christians, he continues to retain a fundamentally Jewish perspective on the moral life, thus preserving the idea that who one is as a person of God cannot be separated from how one lives. Thus the

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<sup>124</sup>In *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV Philo writes, "But this nation of the Jews has no such allies by reason of the peculiarity of its laws and customs. And their laws are of necessity strict and rigorous, as they are intended to train them to the greatest height of virtue (179)."

<sup>125</sup>S. Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 184, observes, "...the study of the Torah needed to be done for its own sake... [y]et any study of the sacred which did not result in a sanctified way of living was deemed futile." See also Wright, *The New Testament*, pp. 237-238.

integration of the argument and the Jewish character of the letter from the badges of Jewish identity and Jewish themes to the nature of the moral instruction, suggest something more than simply coming from the hand of a Jewish author. This too we will have to establish. Before the argument proper, however, we must turn to those who have argued that the Colossian philosophy is something other than an argument with its origins in the synagogue.

#### Recent Dissenters

Some recent commentators want to continue the argument for a kind of syncretism in reference to the Colossian philosophy, although these scholars cannot quite agree on the exact nature of the syncretism. The significance for this study is that these scholars understand the target of Colossians to be directed somewhere other than the synagogue. So the task at hand is to analyze and critique briefly the four more significant works in favor of a syncretistic mix-- Schweizer, Wedderburn, DeMaris and C. Arnold. Following this we must devote some space to the work of T. Martin who argues quite creatively that Colossians is a response to the critique of Cynic philosophy.

#### *E. Schweizer*

As Sappington builds on the work of Francis so Wedderburn and DeMaris build on the work of Schweizer. Schweizer contended that Hellenistic philosophy was critical for understanding the riddle of the Colossian philosophy. Critical to Schweizer's view was the understanding of the *στοιχεῖα* as the four elements of

the universe.<sup>126</sup>

For Schweizer three features were critical to the identification of the Colossian philosophy: 1) the prohibitions concerning food, drink and festival observance; 2) ascetic practices related to the worship of angels; and 3) the problem of the στοιχεῖα and humanity's imprisonment by the στοιχεῖα to the world. Schweizer interpreted these features against the backdrop of Hellenistic philosophy seeing very little of a Jewish nature in them.<sup>127</sup> Thus the Colossian philosophy made sense within the major philosophical circles of the time, which included a pessimistic outlook because of the bondage of the στοιχεῖα, leading one to seek escape from this realm to the immortal, celestial one by means of ascetic practices.

Schweizer's analysis of the Colossian situation has had a major impact on the scholarship of Colossians. His treatment is more detailed and in-depth than any other scholar taking the position that a Jewish-Pythagorean background is the best explanation for the Colossian philosophy. His discussion of θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is careful and helpful. Schweizer is right to draw a connection between ταπεινοφροσύνη and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων.

Nevertheless, several problems must be noted. First, Schweizer enumerates the distinctive themes of the philosophers as follows: the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, flight from this realm to the realm above, dietary prohibitions, the worship of angels,

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<sup>126</sup>E. Schweizer, "Die 'Elemente der Welt' Gal. 4:3, 9; Kol. 2:8, 20." Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), pp. 245-259.

<sup>127</sup>Idem., Colossians (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), pp. 126-128.

abstinence from sexual intercourse, baptism, and ascent into heaven, possibly reflecting a mystery initiation.<sup>128</sup> The weakness in Schweizer's argument is that these distinctive features of the Colossian philosophy are not distinctively characteristic of Pythagoreanism.<sup>129</sup> They can be found elsewhere as well. There is no compelling reason, therefore, to prefer Pythagoreanism. As we noted above the best clues to discovering the identity of the Colossian philosophers are those characteristics which can be associated distinctively with a particular group of people and/or teaching. So while the identifying characteristics of the Colossian philosophy may look Pythagorean, there is nothing that can uniquely identify it as such.<sup>130</sup> Thus, even though Schweizer is likely correct that the Colossian *Haustafel* represents a kind of healthy worldliness, encouraging the Colossians to live in the world which Christ is reconciling,<sup>131</sup> it is probably not the case that the house-code represents a response to the philosophers' ascetic other-worldliness. At least in this respect, the *Haustafel* is not connected to the paraenesis and the argument of the letter. It is connected in other ways as Schweizer does note. This will be referred to again in chapter six.

Second, while Schweizer refers to the Colossian philosophy as Jewish-

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<sup>128</sup>E. Schweizer, Colossians (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), p. 133.

<sup>129</sup>See also R. DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae (Sheffield:JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 90-94, who argues that Schweizer is not critical enough of ancient sources claiming to represent Pythagoreanism.

<sup>130</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 32, n. 36, refers to Josephus, *Ant.* 15:371, who mentions the Essenes who lived a way of life similar to "those whom the Greeks call Pythagoreans." This suggests that the Jewishness of the Colossian philosophy could appear to be Pythagorean without being so in actuality.

<sup>131</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, pp. 213-220.

Pythagoreanism, he minimizes the Jewishness of the philosophy.<sup>132</sup> He contends that baptism mentioned in 2:12 is an importance element in the philosophy (wrongly I think), but rejects circumcision alluded to in 2:11 as instructive in identifying the opponents. He notes that περιτομή και άκροβυστία in 3:11 is an "explicit interpretation" of "Έλλην και Ιουδαίος, but believes something more than national concerns are at stake.<sup>133</sup> Schweizer enumerates in some detail the Old Testament and Jewish background of Colossians 1:12 and 3:12, and its identifying language for the people of Israel, but does not think it instructive for identifying the Colossian philosophers. He therefore misses or discounts unjustifiably the very features of the letter which give clearest indication of the Jewishness of the Colossian philosophy.

The work of Schweizer has presented a turning point of sorts in scholarly interpretation of Colossians, but his position must be judged as inadequate.

#### *A. Wedderburn*

Wedderburn also argues that the Colossian philosophy can be best understood as a sort of Jewish Pythagoreanism.<sup>134</sup> He attempts to demonstrate this by drawing on Elchasite teaching (early second century A.D.), in which

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<sup>132</sup>This is the first criticism DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 88-90, levels against Schweizer's position; although DeMaris incorrectly states that Schweizer fails to mention that the list of holy days in 2:16 follows the sequence of holy days found in the LXX (Schweizer, Colossians, p. 155).

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>134</sup>A. Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians." The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 3-12.

circumcision, asceticism, astrological concerns, and a belief in angels play a role. Wedderburn does not argue that the Elchasites were directly responsible for the situation in Colossae, but rather he suggests that they serve as an "instructive parallel in understanding the Colossian situation."<sup>135</sup> In contrast to Wright and Dunn who see helpful similarities between Colossians and Galatians, Wedderburn interprets the vast differences as an argument against a basically Jewish character of the Colossian philosophy. Most significant is that whereas in Galatians the opponents contended for the continuing validity of the Torah, the main entreaty in Colossians is made, not in reference to the law, but to visionary experiences.<sup>136</sup> Wedderburn does not reject the Jewish aspects of the philosophy, he simply does not see Judaism as sufficient to explain the nature of the Colossian problem.<sup>137</sup>

Wedderburn's study is valuable in that it is a more sober appraisal of Schweizer's position, recognizing more fully the difficulties in identifying the Colossian philosophy.

The same weaknesses in Schweizer's work can be identified in Wedderburn as well. We would simply add that the kind of blending in the teaching of Elchasai is not at all clear in Colossians. The social "spirit of give and take" which Wedderburn speaks of between Jews and their neighbors,<sup>138</sup> should not

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>137</sup> See in particular his comments on 3:11 (Ibid., pp. 10-11).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

necessarily be described as syncretism. As has been noted, Jews did interact with their neighbors in varying degrees without sacrificing their identity as Jews.<sup>139</sup>

*R. DeMaris*

One of the more recent and indepth treatments favoring the syncretistic nature of the Colossian philosophy is offered by DeMaris in a revised version of his doctoral dissertation.<sup>140</sup> Like Wedderburn, DeMaris is indebted to the work of Schweizer and believes it to be vital. DeMaris does criticize Schweizer for his inadequate account of the Jewish elements in the Colossian philosophy, but certainly agrees that the nature of the philosophy cannot be described simply as Jewish. For DeMaris the Colossian philosophers were "philosophically-inclined Gentiles drawn to the Jewish community and then to the Christian congregation by ideas and practices congenial to their view."<sup>141</sup>

Pivotal to the Colossian philosophy was the pursuit of divine wisdom through three things: 1) the order of the cosmos; 2) bodily asceticism that frees the mind for philosophical investigation; and 3) intermediaries between earth and heaven.<sup>142</sup> These major characteristics of the philosophy are clearly representative of first-century Middle Platonism. Thus, DeMaris argues that the

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<sup>139</sup> Again, Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 412-413; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 65-74.

<sup>140</sup> R. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-17.

Colossian philosophy is a peculiar mix of popular Middle Platonist, Jewish and Christian elements that center around the quest for wisdom.<sup>143</sup> While DeMaris does not deny the Jewish roots of portions of the philosophy, nevertheless the purpose of the philosophy lies beyond what are typically Jewish ends. Of particular interest is DeMaris' argument that the reference to θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων in 2:18 denotes the worship of demons,<sup>144</sup> certainly something completely rejected by Judaism. While there is a Jewish approach to certain elements of the philosophy, DeMaris concludes his study by claiming that Torah obedience is not a concern of the letter.<sup>145</sup>

DeMaris has presented a very precise study. On the whole he tries not to argue too much nor make the evidence say more than is reasonably possible. His second chapter, "A History of Scholarship on the Colossian Philosophy," is a concise and helpful survey of the scholarly debate surrounding the nature of the Colossian philosophy.

Of particular importance is his study of the epigraphical and literary data that reveal the complex relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Asia Minor, in which Gentiles found Judaism attractive and Jews associated with Gentiles on many and various levels of assimilation.

Critical and problematic to DeMaris' thesis is the Middle Platonism of the Colossian philosophy, which does not bear a clear relationship to the polemical

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

core.

The problems with his argument can be found in his exegesis of the so-called "polemical core" (2:8, 16-23). First, DeMaris' argument that ἐμβατεύω refers, not to "entering," but to "investigating" or "close scrutiny" is strained. It is based on an exceptional use of ἐμβατεύω (as DeMaris acknowledges) found in 2 Macc. 2:30 and Philo's *De Plantatione* 80. There is nothing in the surrounding context of the letter that would indicate such an unusual understanding of ἐμβατεύω.

Moreover, it appears that DeMaris needs this reading of ἐμβατεύω for his interpretation of the στοιχεῖα as "epistemological principles" rather than "elemental spirits."<sup>146</sup> Such an interpretation, however, disconnects the στοιχεῖα from the cosmic language surrounding the term (e.g. ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας, 2:10). The writer seems to connect the στοιχεῖα to the "principalities and powers." DeMaris makes reference to the evidence in support of this more accepted reading, but decides against it.

DeMaris argues that since Philo equates δαίμονες with ἄγγελοι (*Gig.* 16), Colossians 2:18 could reveal "a common feature of Greco-Roman religiosity."<sup>147</sup> Yet, it is not obvious how this makes sense within the "polemical core." DeMaris assumes that the writer of Colossians is correctly describing this aspect of the Colossian philosophy as the philosophers would have described it. In other words, DeMaris does not take into account the possibility that θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is not

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

a designation the Colossian philosophers would have accepted as an accurate description. Also DeMaris notes the connection made in Jewish and Christian angelology between angels and "principalities and powers," but simply rejects the connection in Colossians because the mention of ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι of 2:15 appear outside the "polemical core."

Moreover, DeMaris rightly recognizes the wide variety of connotations θρησκεία can have in ancient Jewish literature, and also notes that Jewish speculation about angels was common within first-century Judaism. Yet, he strangely concludes that 2:18 cannot point to Jewish influence because it refers to something beyond Judaism. Indeed, in the "Epilogue"<sup>148</sup> DeMaris makes reference to the Council of Laodicea's prohibition against angel worship in Canon 35 (not citing canons 29, 37 and 38), but fails to take note that it occurs in the larger context of interdiction against Christians "judaizing." DeMaris also suggests, without much argumentation, that the concern for purity (2:21) and severe treatment of the body (2:23) are practices which could have arisen within Judaism but the context of the polemical core "pushes the interpreter beyond what is merely Jewish."<sup>149</sup>

Thus a major weakness in DeMaris' case is his underestimation of the Jewish character of the Colossian philosophy.<sup>150</sup> In the midst of the ambiguity of the "polemic core" this is the one thing clearly present. Everywhere he references

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>150</sup> A criticism he ironically states is Schweizer's "most notable deficiency" (Ibid., pp. 88-90).

Colossians 1:12 and 3:12, he does not address the Jewish identity language present in these verses. DeMaris gives a place to Jewish influence in the Colossian philosophy, but it is simply too minimal.

So while DeMaris presents an important revision of Schweizer's argument, it nevertheless fails to convince.

### *C. Arnold*

One of the most significant arguments in favor of the syncretistic nature of the Colossian philosophy is that of C. Arnold.<sup>151</sup> His thesis is "that the beliefs and practices of the opponents at Colossae best cohere around a category of what might loosely be called folk religion."<sup>152</sup> The Colossian philosophy represents the kinds of beliefs held by common people in the area local to Colossae and reflects a blend of religious ideas.

The main argument of Arnold's thesis centers around his reading of *θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων* in 2:18 (he devotes almost the entire first third of the book to the subject).<sup>153</sup> He rejects the subjective genitive rendering in favor of the objective genitive. Through a very thorough analysis of the importance of magic

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<sup>151</sup>The Colossian Syncretism.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>153</sup>He writes, "The phrase "worship of angels" (*θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων*) in Colossians 2:18 provides one of our most specific clues about the nature of the competing teaching at Colossae. The expression has properly been at the center of the debate, although it has been variously interpreted" (p. 8).

in the cultic practices found in Jewish and pagan sources,<sup>154</sup> as well as an analysis of a whole host of "angel" texts in Judaism, and texts local to the Lycus Valley, Arnold concludes that *θηροσκειά τῶν ἀγγέλων* should be understood as a major syncretistic element of the Colossian philosophy in which angels were venerated; that is, the adherents of the Colossian philosophy invoked angels for protection and assistance.<sup>155</sup>

Along with the majority of commentators Arnold understands the *στοιχεῖα* to refer to evil spiritual powers working in the daily affairs of life in many ways. For Paul this included the Jewish law (only in reference to Galatians) and pagan religions.<sup>156</sup> While Arnold admits that the notion of *στοιχεῖα* as personal spiritualized forces was clearly present in the Judaism of the first century, he nevertheless regards this as a syncretistic element.

It is in the final third of his book that Arnold treats the "Jewish contribution" to the Colossian philosophy, and then in only one chapter of 32 pages.<sup>157</sup> He discusses the place of wisdom in the philosophy as well as what

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<sup>154</sup>Arnold follows D. Aune's, "Magic in Early Christianity." *ANRW* 2.23.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), p. 19, two-fold definition of magic-- "that form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution," and "goals sought within the context of religious deviance are magical when attained through the management of supernatural powers in such a way that results are virtually guaranteed." Arnold then moves beyond Aune's definition of magic to include an "identifiable form of charms and spells," which will also guarantee results provided one followed the prescribed ritual in detail and an assortment of specialized terminology, one of the most common being *θηροσκίω* or *ἐξοθηροσκίω* (p. 14).

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p. 101. Along with this is Arnold's support of the argument that *ἐμβρατεύω* was a technical term of the local mystery cults (pp. 109-120).

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>157</sup>Pp. 195-227.

appear to be the distinctively Jewish elements of Sabbath observance, festivals, new moon celebrations, and humility. Arnold does not believe circumcision played a role in the Colossian philosophy.<sup>158</sup> The dietary regulations in Colossians, while suggesting a Jewish element are best understood in the context of Gentile popular religion.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, for Arnold, the Colossian philosophy can best be described as syncretism. It contained elements of Judaism, and more importantly, elements of popular Gentile folk religion, the most significant being the magical veneration of angels for protection against the στοιχεῖα.

The major contribution of this book is found in its detailed discussion and analysis of magic and angel veneration, and the notable role they played in Asia Minor. Arnold is able to argue his case by referencing in detail evidence from an assortment of literary sources. He is able to demonstrate the important place of magic and angels in the Judaism of the first century. He also has an impressive breadth of knowledge of scholarly work in the area. Arnold's study is an important contribution to the continued debate over the nature of the Colossian philosophy.

Several problems must be briefly noted. First, is Arnold's discussion of

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<sup>158</sup>He argues, "...the mention of circumcision does not occur as part of the author's polemic against the dangerous teaching, but as part of his positive teaching about the implications of being 'in Christ.'" Moreover he states, "...based on the precedent of Galatians, one would expect Paul (or a Pauline disciple) to argue far more passionately and condemningly if the opponents were insisting on circumcision....the whole nature of the teaching of the opponents at Colossae is significantly different than what Paul frequently encountered in his opposition by Judaizers" (p. 196).

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., pp. 226-227.

θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων and 2:18 in general. Arnold mounts a formidable case against the subjective genitive reading, yet his argument that "the worship of angels" must refer to the veneration of angels contains some problems. He does not adequately draw the connection between θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων and ταπεινοφροσύνη. In addition, Arnold's "resurrection" of the Dibelius' thesis that ἐμβατεύων in 2:18 is a technical term for initiation into a mystery cult remains unconvincing in light of the evidence.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, Arnold's translation of θέλων ἐν as "insisting on" is weak. Arnold does not note that θέλων ἐν is a Hebraism more adequately translated "delighting in" or "exulting in."<sup>161</sup> Finally, given the importance of this verse in determining the nature of the Colossian philosophy Arnold fails to deal with the significance of καταβραβεύετω.

All of this does not necessarily deny that θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων may refer to the invocation of angels, but even with the evidence Arnold mounts for the practice and the importance of magic in Jewish documents of the region, it is not clear that some kind of syncretism is in operation at Colossae. Thus his argument for syncretism hinges not so much on θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων as it does on resurrecting Dibelius' reading of ἐμβατεύων. The matter of whether or not θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is objective or subjective is not the critical issue in determining the target of the letter, and may indeed be somewhat misleading. These matters will be discussed more thoroughly at the appropriate time.

In addition, there is no place in Colossians where one might get a hint that

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-123.

<sup>161</sup> See Lightfoot, Colossians (London: MacMillan, 1890), p. 193.

the author is condemning invocations and spells and the use of amulets. This must be inferred. This does not rule out the possibility, but neither is it confirmed.

Arnold's argument quite critically hinges on the use of magical texts much later than the time of the writing of Colossians. This is not necessarily a problem as long as other earlier evidence can be used to corroborate the argument. Arnold addresses the issue and quite rightly observes that magic was practiced prior to the first century.<sup>162</sup> Thus later magical papyri can be instructive in illuminating the magical practices of Asia Minor in the first century.

The problem, however, is two-fold. First, Arnold relies heavily on this later evidence, as opposed to bringing it in to validate evidence relatively contemporary with or prior to Colossians. Second, he rejects the Hekalot literature as instructive precisely because of its later date, thus revealing a biased selectivity of the evidence.<sup>163</sup>

Finally, while Arnold recognizes that there "is more than a modicum of Jewish influence"<sup>164</sup> in the Colossian philosophy, nevertheless he does not take sufficient account of the essentially Jewish elements of the philosophy. Arnold recognizes the Jewishness of Sabbath and festival observance mentioned in Colossians, but is content to assert that the Colossian philosophers adapted them for their own purposes, thus suggesting in their present form at the time of the

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<sup>162</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 17-20.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-57.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

letter, they cannot be described simply as Jewish.<sup>165</sup> Without assembling much of an argument Arnold, like DeMaris, suggests that the ascetic practices mentioned in chapter 2, particularly 2:23 (ἀπειθία σώματος) move beyond the typical practices of Judaism.

Perhaps most interesting is Arnold's comments concerning the place of circumcision in Colossians. He mistakenly states that there is only one reference to circumcision in the letter<sup>166</sup> completely neglecting any reference to 3:11. Arnold suggests that the Phrygian cult of Cybele<sup>167</sup> and the teaching of Elchasai<sup>168</sup> might be instructive for understanding circumcision in Colossians metaphorically. Arnold rightly notes that the metaphor περιτομή ἀχειροποιήτων marked the identity of the Colossians as being "in Christ,"<sup>169</sup> but fails to note that the terminology might also be, therefore, an implicit reference to the identity of the philosophers. The metaphor is employed as one of identity for the Colossians, suggesting that its antithesis might reveal something of the identity of the target. What identifying practices were the opponents advocating that made this metaphor appropriate? Here is where 3:11, completely ignored by Arnold, may be informative, as περιτομή was a synonym for Jew.

Arnold rejects the idea that circumcision was an issue in Colossians because

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-215.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 146-147.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

it was not part of the negative critique in the letter,<sup>170</sup> but again he fails to take note of his own observation that "spiritual circumcision" was an affirmation of the Colossians' identity "in Christ," thereby possibly reflecting in opposite manner, the identity of the philosophers. Interestingly enough Arnold takes note that ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός in 2:11 alludes to the same thing Paul refers to in Romans (6:6) and Galatians (5:24)-- letters in which circumcision and Jewish/Gentile identity issues play an important role. Arnold does not notice, however, that an important clue in determining the identity of the target may be found in 2:11 and in 2:13. Here language very similar to the language of 1:22-23, refers to the Colossians as Gentiles highlighted by the metaphor of circumcision. (also the reference to "mystery hidden" in relation to the Gentiles in 1:25-27). This further suggests Jew/Gentile identity issues are at stake in the argument.<sup>171</sup>

Finally, like DeMaris, Arnold fails to pick up on the language of Jewish identity in 1:12 and 3:12. He takes note of the exodus language in 1:12 and the similar language in 1QS 11:7-8 but simply observes that this refers to conversion as a "second exodus experience."<sup>172</sup>

Thus while Arnold presents a wealth of information in reference to the place of angel veneration and magic in Asia Minor, as well as positively advancing the

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<sup>170</sup>Ibid., p 196, 297.

<sup>171</sup>In his discussion of circumcision Arnold highlights the differences between Colossians and Galatians which make similarity of issues being addressed in the letters unlikely (Ibid., p. 196). This will be dealt with at the appropriate time.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

scholarly debate on Colossians, his argument that Colossians represents a kind of blended folk religion is not persuasive.

*T. Martin*

Perhaps the most creative and fanciful treatment of the Colossian philosophy of late has been produced by T. Martin.<sup>173</sup> Martin argues that Colossians is a response to a critique of the church and its practices by Cynic philosophers. Martin acknowledges that scholarship has not embraced use of Cynic documents for the illumination of the New Testament.<sup>174</sup> He believes, however, that he is able to avoid the pitfalls of previous attempts to draw on Cynicism for New Testament understanding by employing a precise method for identifying the opponents at Colossae and relying only on primary Cynic sources.<sup>175</sup>

Martin correctly notes that there is no indication that the Colossian opponents came from within the church. Rather, the problem stems from outsiders. Second, the unique characteristics of Cynicism can be found in Colossians-- ascetic prohibitions against the use of all things that perish when consumed (cf. 2:21-22a). Cynics did draw a sharp distinction between perishable

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<sup>173</sup>T. Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to Cynic Critique JSNTS 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>174</sup>The few exceptions, particularly in reference to Jesus and Cynicism are J. Crossan, The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), B. Mack, A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) and F. Downing, Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First Century Tradition JSOT Manuals 4 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988).

<sup>175</sup>Martin, Philosophy and Empty Deceit, pp. 15-16.

goods-- those produced as a result of human skill (τέχνη)-- and non-perishable goods-- those which are natural. Third, slavery was clearly forbidden in Cynicism. Thus the Colossian church may have come under strong criticism from Cynics over their ownership of slaves, hence the admonitions in the *Haustafel* (3:22-4:1). Fourth, and perhaps the most intriguing suggestion in Martin's study, is that the practices mentioned in 2:16-18 refer not to the opponents, but to the practices of the Colossians themselves, condemned by the Cynic outsiders. Thus these verses are a response to the Cynics who condemn the Colossians' celebration of Eucharist, their use of a religious calendar, their lack of humility and their submission to ministers of the Gospel (i.e. θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων).<sup>176</sup>

Martin concludes his study with the claim that the Colossian opponents possessed no Gnostic or mystical traits, and he also asserts, astonishingly that the Colossian problem exhibits no Jewish characteristics either.<sup>177</sup>

Martin is to be commended for his precise analysis of the vocabulary and syntax of the pertinent texts, particularly those portions of the second chapter which are quite obscure. It is ironical, however, that such precise attention to detail becomes elusive in Martin's translation of the key passages of Colossians. It is quite difficult to read the practices mentioned in 2:16-2:23 as a reference to the ritual of the Colossians themselves. Can "food and drink" in 2:16 really refer to the Colossians' practice of the Eucharist? Can "festival or a new moon or a Sabbath" refer to the Colossians own calendar? Can θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων refer

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., pp. 118-167.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

to the church's willing subjugation to its preachers?

The point is that Martin is unable in all of his analysis to draw linguistic parallels between Cynic conventions and condemnations, and those practices mentioned in Colossians 2. There is no real verbal correspondence between Cynic teaching and the argument of Colossians suggesting, therefore, that little conceptual framework is shared between Cynic philosophy and the Colossian philosophy.<sup>178</sup> As difficult as it is to translate the latter portion of chapter 2, it seems clear that the practices mentioned are not those of the Colossian church, but of the Colossian philosophers, as the consensus of scholarship has rightly concluded. Martin's translation, though creative, is questionable. His translation is crucial for his thesis, and it is a translation hard to sustain. One would also think that if Cynics were criticizing the Colossian church for their practices, more would be found throughout the letter specifically referring to those practices. It is difficult to place Martin's translation of 2:16-23 in the context of the rest of the letter.

Moreover, whereas proponents of some form of syncretism acknowledge some Jewish aspects of the Colossian philosophy, Martin denies any Jewish character whatsoever. This is a claim Martin needs to substantiate, but fails to do so.

#### Conclusion

To summarize our initial critique of the dissenters in question:

First, while the Jewish elements of the letter are clearly present, the

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<sup>178</sup> Again see Sumney, Opponents, pp. 87-92.

syncretistic aspects are more vague. A higher degree of speculation is necessary when arguing for syncretistic, Platonic or Cynic elements in the letter. Arnold is an important case in point. He clearly demonstrates that magic and the invocation of angels were not only an important part of pagan religious practices, but also of Jewish practices. This is also the case with his treatment of *στοιχεῖα*. Arnold shows that a belief in such personal forces is found in the Jewish documents of the time. It is not clear, therefore, that syncretism best explains the target of the letter, or that some type of syncretism detected would detract significantly from the affirmations of Jewish identity otherwise more clearly attested.<sup>179</sup>

Second, the Jewish elements present in the letter are marginalized by the

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<sup>179</sup>Arnold suggests that angel veneration within Judaism indicates syncretism within Judaism of the time (pp. 47, 59). But in his own study of angel veneration in Judaism L. Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), pp. 200-203, argues for caution in drawing hard and fast conclusions. First, the materials are clearly incomplete. Second, the magical texts from antiquity are not alone sufficient for considering the question of angel veneration within Judaism. Third, though some of the instances of angel veneration in Jewish documents take place within a cultic context, none of these instances can be firmly labeled as "cultic devotion" to angels. Fourth, questions of date, provenance and purpose of the relevant documents cannot be isolated by geography, specific time, or by character of a particular group in a particular time. Thus Stuckenbruck concludes, "[I]t would be hasty for one to speak of *the* veneration of angels in Early Judaism" (p. 201).

Moreover, Stuckenbruck argues that with all of the variety present in the "angelic veneration" texts within Judaism, they demonstrate "remarkable consistency" in respect to the fact that "[a]ngel veneration is not conceived as a substitute for the worship of God" (p. 201). Even within the polemical documents (what Stuckenbruck calls "the refusal tradition") the writers of the documents and their readers shared common ideas-- "the glorious appearance of angels, the genre of ascent to the divine throne, and an interest in, among other things, *the angelic worship of God*" (p. 203). Stuckenbruck concludes, "The polemical statements may be easily explained as a critique of ideas based on these shared traditions rather than of idolatrous practices by "outside" individuals or groups (p. 200). The idea that angel veneration within early Judaism suggests a significant degree of syncretism is tenuous at best.

authors we have just surveyed. DeMaris, for example, begins his argument highlighting the importance of the Jewish outlook of the Colossian philosophy, and then proceeds to ignore it almost entirely throughout the remainder of the book.<sup>180</sup> Arnold gives more attention to the Jewish elements but downplays their significance at certain points.<sup>181</sup> He rejects the inference that circumcision is an issue in Colossians, but he completely ignores 3:11 where the Greek/Jew distinction is highlighted again with *περιτομή και ἀκροβυστία* (cf. also 2:13).

What Arnold misses as well as the others who argue for a substantially syncretistic philosophy, is that these Jewish "elements" are not simply "contributions" to the Colossian philosophy, they comprise its very essence, especially in just this combination.<sup>182</sup> Circumcision, Sabbath, festivals, food laws, were foundational elements which gave Judaism its unique identity. All of these were crucial to Jewish self-understanding. One or two in isolation, but all four together speaks of a self-consciousness and confidently affirmative Judaism, whatever other practices the Colossian synagogue(s) in view might have developed. It seems remarkable, therefore, to conclude that while all of the major identity markers of first century Judaism are part of the Colossian philosophy, nevertheless, it is only one part of a kind of syncretism. The so-called "syncretistic" elements (*θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων* and *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*) can also be

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<sup>180</sup>DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 16-17.

<sup>181</sup>See, for example Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration and Christology, p. 114, n. 172.

<sup>182</sup>A. Segal, Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 34-35.

understood against a Jewish background. Thus the weakness of the syncretistic thesis is that it has to assume that the Jewish elements in Colossians are individual and fragmentary, whereas several of these elements in reality constitute a Jewish identity which was resistant to syncretistic influences that threatened such identity. This does not mean that elements of the Colossian philosophy fail to betray a certain level of Jewish assimilation. What I am suggesting is that the Jewish elements of the philosophy are so integrated with Jewish identity that the weight of this evidence indicates that the target of the letter can most appropriately be described as Jewish. Syncretism or an alternative is neither a necessary nor a preferred conclusion.

Third, the so-called "polemical core" (2:8, 16-23) is in places a thorny piece of material to exegete, but one intelligible aspect of the "core" is its Jewish terminology. Those who argue for a syncretism or philosophical background minimize the one obvious thing that might illuminate a passage which contains difficulties. DeMaris, for example, dismisses with little argumentation the Jewish aspects of the polemical core as referring to things that move beyond Judaism.<sup>183</sup> Martin spends a great deal of time making imprecise verbal connections between the practices mentioned in Colossians two and Cynic conventions, while rejecting, with virtually no argumentation, the scholarly arguments made for the Jewish nature of some of the practices mentioned.<sup>184</sup>

Fourth, too much attention is paid to implied parallels outside the Pauline

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<sup>183</sup>DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 58, 143.

<sup>184</sup>Martin, Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 206.

corpus and not enough thought is given to what appear to be direct parallels within the Pauline corpus itself. I speak here specifically of Galatians: the assumption evidently is that the respective contexts of both letters are so different that similarity of terminology does not indicate similarity of context. Thus the parallels between these two letters get a footnote at best. Arnold draws a parallel between the στοιχεῖα in Colossians and Galatians and concludes they refer to the same thing.<sup>185</sup> However, he fails to make the connection between the στοιχεῖα in Colossians and what are clearly elements of the law, and in the same way he misses the fact that the στοιχεῖα in Galatians are clearly associated with the law.

Fifth, the paraenesis of Colossians is, for the most part, all but left out of the discussion, implying its irrelevance in reference to shedding light on the nature of the Colossian problem. Such an omission neglects some very helpful material, not only in identifying the problem which is the concern of the letter, but also in articulating the integration of the argument from chapter 1 all the way through chapter 4. The exceptions to this are Martin who devotes a short chapter to the paraenesis at the end of his monograph, Arnold who devotes a very brief commentary of 3:1-4 near the end of his book, and Schweizer who has done the most work on linking chapters 3-4 with 1-2. I will deal with their contentions in due course. Nevertheless, it is necessary to give detailed attention to the paraenesis and its place in the argument of the letter, and how it assists

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<sup>185</sup> Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 183-184. See further his "Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Gal. 4:3, 9." NovT (forthcoming).

in revealing the target of the letter to the Colossians. The treatment of the paraenesis is important for what is theologically at stake in this thesis. This we now discuss.

#### ETHICS AS MORE THAN "DOING."

I believe that my approach to the notion of "ethics" will also set this study apart in some ways from other New Testament investigations. The reason is that I do not understand ethics as dealing first and foremost with questions of doing (as opposed to most New Testament scholars); rather the primary interest in reference to morality concerns questions of character-- not "What should I do?" but "Who should I be?"<sup>186</sup>

The bane of Enlightenment philosophy has been its virtually complete lack of attention given to matters of character and virtue in the midst of moral reflection.<sup>187</sup> Enlightenment philosophers believed that any account of character and virtue was historically bound,<sup>188</sup> that is, narrative dependent, and therefore,

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<sup>186</sup>See S. Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 116-134.

<sup>187</sup>A. MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), has become one of the classic critiques of Enlightenment philosophy and its marginalization of virtue.

<sup>188</sup>Wright, The New Testament, pp. 82-92, rightly notes that the Enlightenment philosophers reduced "history" simply to what actually happened; that is, historical fact free from interpretation. He states, "The great Enlightenment dream of simply recording "what actually happened" is just that: a dream. The dreamer is once more the positivist, who, looking at history, believes that it is possible to have instant and unadulterated access to "events."

relative.<sup>189</sup> The task of the Enlightenment in developing an "objective" account of morality meant by necessity the marginalization of accounts of character and virtue. Such "objective" accounts of morality also meant the development of an account of ethics without history.<sup>190</sup> Without history<sup>191</sup> one was left only with the development of moral theories, which could supposedly be understood apart from history; indeed such theories to be theories needed to transcend history. Since it was not possible to secure universal agreement on an "objective" account of morality, Enlightenment philosophy left the modern world with nothing more than relativism. This meant that "ethics" by necessity was left with nothing more than discussing the question "What should I do?" since matters of character and virtue were relegated to the relativity of history.

To react against the Enlightenment at this point is, therefore, a reaction against decisionism. Decisionism is the notion that morality is primarily a matter of making choices. It is not. Decision is not prior to everything else. Before

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<sup>189</sup>For a devastating critique of the Enlightenment view of history see *Ibid.*, pp. 31-144, particularly pp. 81-120.

<sup>190</sup>See my "Virtuous Liberals: An Essay on Virtue, the Liberal State and the Church as Alternative." *ATJ* 25 (1993): 60-63.

<sup>191</sup>Of course, the Enlightenment philosophers never would have expressed it in this way. They believed history to be important, but they thought it possible to give a reductionistic view of history--mere history without a point of view. Since that ultimately turned out to be impossible these philosophers and their successors had to resort, unconsciously, to the development of moral theories, which were supposedly free from a context and, therefore, historical constraint. This left history out of the moral equation. This meant that all moral judgments must be, by Enlightenment standards, relative. This is what Nietzsche understood so well, and, therefore, took his fellow philosophers' accounts of morality to their logical conclusion. See his *The Gay Science* (New York: Scribners, 1974). Also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 109-120. Thus Nietzsche becomes the modern philosophical alternative to Aristotle and the ancient traditions of virtue.

decisions can be made a whole host of things must be considered. One cannot know what it is to lie until one knows what it means to be dishonest. Since the Enlightenment ethics has primarily dealt with the question, "What should I do?" This is not and cannot be the first question. The first question in Christian ethics is, "Who should I be?" I cannot know what it is I am to do, until I know who it is I am to be. This, of course, does not mean that doing is irrelevant. It does mean that doing what is moral is not possible without being moral. The possibility of moral choice, of doing, is impossible apart from issues of character and virtue-- of being.

Thus ethics is not what one does after one gets his/her theology straight. Theology is not what one does first, followed by ethics. Christian ethics is a mode of theological reflection. It may have some different concerns and raise some different questions from systematic theology, but it is theology nonetheless. This integrated approach to Christian ethics, which puts significance on questions of character is important for understanding the paraenesis of Colossians.

This emphasis on character also explains my use of the term "paraenesis" instead of "ethics." In employing "paraenesis" I am not affirming the use of that term as much as denying the current usage of the term "ethics" as nomenclature which simply refers to matters of conduct. Thus emphasizing the "being" issues in reference to ethics makes it quite understandable that the Colossian paraenesis would commence with a discussion on virtues and vices. Among other things, it will help to explain the presence of the ethical lists near the beginning of the paraenetical section, and it will also give coherence to the participation language

(3:1-- in Christ) which is carried over into the paraenesis from the preceding argument. One must be reminded of who one is (indeed, the Colossians are reminded beginning in 1:1) before one can be admonished on what to do. Moreover, my insistence that a sharp line not be drawn between theology and ethics (again, ethics is a mode of theology), as most have done by dividing Paul's letters into two parts, consisting first of theological foundations followed by ethical argument,<sup>192</sup> will be explicated further when I argue that 3:1 does not mark a decisive shift from doctrine to moral argument. A transition from argument to exhortation begins with 2:16, and possibly even earlier in 2:6.

The significance of this for Colossians is intriguing, particularly as the argument relates to how Gentile believers "in Christ" are to live, and how the integration of theology and ethics in Colossians reflects a Jewish perspective in which obedience is not to be separated from identity as the elect people of God. Sanders has argued that obedience was the consequence of Israel's election.<sup>193</sup> In the Mishnah, for example, the intent of the heart was critical in observing the commandments, so that the quantity of what one did in fulfilling the commandments was less important than the attitude of one's heart in obeying them (e.g. *Berakoth* 2:1; *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 3:7).<sup>194</sup> Thus, who one was as part of the elect could not have been divorced from what one did. One's heart needed to be directed toward God (*Menahoth* 13:11) in keeping the commandments. Here

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<sup>192</sup>Thus I do not believe that the Pauline move from indicative to imperative marks a shift from doctrine to ethics. Ethics is more than command.

<sup>193</sup>Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, pp. 84-107.

<sup>194</sup>Noted by *Ibid.*, p. 108. See his other references on pp. 107-110.

we see an integrated understanding of who one was and what one did. Jesus apparently had the same kind of integration in mind in Mark 7:14-23.<sup>195</sup> Indeed, in verses 21-23 Jesus refers to certain deeds (πορνεία, κλοπή, φόνος, μοιχεία) as coming from the heart, thus failing to draw a sharp distinction between being and doing (cf. Mt. 5:21-22; 27-28).

The writer of Colossians shares this same kind of Jewish perspective in the paraenesis admonishing the Gentile Christians to live in a way consistent with who they are (3:1-4; 9-10; 12-15). Thus while the disagreement between the writer of Colossians and his opponents centers around what constitutes the Colossians' identity as God's people (participation in Christ as opposed to covenantal nomism), nevertheless both share a fundamentally similar perspective on the integration between identity and ethics. As the people of Israel were to obey the regulations of the Torah because they were the elect, so the Colossians are live lives in keeping with what it means to be God's chosen ones (3:12) in Christ (2:6).

#### MAJOR QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given what has been discussed thus far in reference to the "new perspective" on Paul, the nature of the Colossian problem and the scholarly

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<sup>195</sup>For differing views on the extent to which these sayings, particularly 7:15, can be traced to Jesus see R. Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963, p. 105; J. Gnllka, Markus EKK (Zürich: Benziger, 1978), pp. 277-278; H. Hübner, "Mark 7, 1-23 und das 'Judisch-Hellenistische' Gesetzes Verständnis." NTS 22 (1975-1976): 319-345; N. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (London: SCM, 1967), p. 150; E. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 266-268; B. Witherington, The Christology of Jesus (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), pp. 63-65.

neglect of the Colossian paraenesis, as well as the recent studies by DeMaris and Martin in particular, this study will attempt to answer the following questions--

What is the significance of the very obvious Jewish themes in Colossians in reference to the problem being addressed in the letter? Five important motifs in Colossians are also found in Galatians. Does Galatians in certain respects shed light on the nature of the Colossian problem? What is the significance of the other Jewish motifs in Colossians (e.g. wisdom and Israel) and what do they reveal in reference to the nature of the Colossian philosophy? What is the importance of the Jewish terminology (e.g. κατοικήσαι, 1:19; περιπατέω, 2:6) in the letter? Is there a relationship between the Jewishness of the letter and the probably large, established Jewish community in Colossae?<sup>196</sup>

More importantly in reference to the paraenesis-- Is the paraenesis simply formal material inserted at the conclusion of the argument proper? If the paraenesis is an appendix to the argument, why do the themes in chapters 1 and 2 appear again in chapters 3 and 4 (e.g. participation in Christ, 3:1, 3, 13, 15,

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<sup>196</sup>The evidence suggests a significant Jewish population in Asia Minor and in the Lycus Valley. This is not only attested to directly by some texts, but the mention of gold confiscated from Jews for taxes, the regular payment of the temple tax to Jerusalem by Asian Jews, and the issues raised in reference to the Asian Jews own religious practices, such as Sabbath, also imply a substantial Jewish population in Asia. (cf. Acts 2:9-10; Philo, *Legatio*, 245, 281; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:147-153; 14:185-267; 16:160-178; Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28:68). There is also a consensus among scholars that the region contained a tangible Jewish presence. See the thorough discussions in Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 259-281; Levinskaya, *Acts*, pp. 138-152; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-1987), 3:17-36 P. Trebilco. *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* SNTSMS 69 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, pp. 196-197; F. Bruce, "Jews and Christians in the Lycus Valley." *BibSac* 141 (1984): 4-8; DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, pp. 123-125; Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 21-22; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 69-74; and Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 9.

17, 18, 20; circumcision, 3:11; wisdom, 3:16; thanksgiving, 3:16, 4:2; Israel 3:12)? What is the significance of the apocalyptic background of 3:1-6 and its place in the paraenesis? If the nature of the Colossian problem was indeed Jewish how has that affected the paraenesis? What is the significance of the Jewish aspects of the paraenesis?

In answering these questions I hope to demonstrate the following thesis-- that the Galatian parallels and several further features of the letter confirm that the target of the Colossian philosophy is Jewish and this sheds new light on the paraenesis and its place in the argument of the letter as a whole.

#### PROGRESSION OF THE ARGUMENT

The argument of the thesis will proceed as follows-- Chapter 2 will be devoted to an indepth analysis of the parallels between Galatians and Colossians: circumcision, Sabbath and special days, food laws, τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and angels, and the unity formula (Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). Close examination will highlight features not fully appreciated in earlier studies. The purpose of this is to demonstrate that there are some fundamental similarities between these two letters, although I certainly do not deny there are differences. To my knowledge, even though scholars have taken note of the parallels between Colossians and Galatians, no one has approached the nature of the Colossian problem in quite this way. Prior to this I will devote some space to the disparities between Galatians and Colossians, as well as raise the authorship question.

In chapter 3 I will further highlight the Jewish nature of the Colossian

problem by investigating the Israel motif. It is clear that the background of more than a few passages reflects very important concepts in first-century Judaism: wisdom, the Exodus, and walking (*περιπατέω*) in the Lord.

Chapter 4 will begin the major discussion on the paraenesis of Colossians. In analyzing the apocalyptic background of the first 6 verses of chapter 3, I intend to demonstrate not only its connection with the argument it follows, but also with what it precedes. This will demonstrate the passage's integration into the argument of the letter as well as continue to demonstrate the Jewish nature of the Colossian problem.

Chapter 5 will continue the discussion of the paraenesis with an inquiry into the ethical lists (3:5, 8, 12-15). I will discuss the background of the lists and their place within the overall argument. I will also raise some question as to how to understand the function of the ethical lists in the letter, and how the lists relate to the "new perspective."

Chapter 6 will conclude the investigation of the paraenetical material in which I will argue that D. Balch<sup>197</sup> is correct in his assessment that the background of the *Haustafeln* in the New Testament stems from a concern for household management (*οικονομία*) in the Christian home, which was also the worshiping house. I will, however, briefly contest Balch's argument that there are no Jewish examples of *Haustafel*-type instruction. Such teaching was important in Jewish circles as well. I will also place the Colossian *Haustafel* in the context

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<sup>197</sup>D. Balch, Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter SBLMS 26 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

of two issues of concern in the letter, both separate issues and yet related-- unity and worship. I will also raise the question of the relationship between the *Haustafel* and the "new perspective."

Finally in the conclusion I will review the major points of the argument and draw it together offering my contention one last time-- that the paraenesis of Colossians is part and parcel of the entire argument of the letter, and cannot be understood adequately apart from the Jewish character of the Colossian philosophy, and the argument targeted against the synagogue.

I will concentrate on the main body of the letter since the concluding section (4:2-6, apart from the wisdom reference in 4:5) has little immediate relevance to the discussion.

## II. THE BADGES OF IDENTITY

### PARALLELS BETWEEN GALATIANS AND COLOSSIANS

I have initially set out my contention that the Colossian problem is Jewish in character, and I have also suggested that more needs to be made of the relationship between certain similar elements found in the letters to the Colossians and Galatians. There is little doubt that in the scholarly discussion of the Colossian philosophy there has been a surprising neglect of some important dimensions of the letter which might shed some light on the nature of the philosophy-- namely the parallels between Colossians and Galatians. Commentators have indirectly noted individual points of parallel between the two letters in footnotes, of course, but the number of parallels and the cumulative effect of all the parallels have not been noted. I intend to take note of these important parallels in this chapter. I will draw parallels in five areas between the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians: 1) Circumcision, 2) Sabbath and special days, 3) food laws, 4) τὰ στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου and angels, and 5) the denial of social and ethnic distinctions in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11. The cumulative effect of these parallels will further strengthen the position that the Colossian philosophy is essentially Jewish.

Before the parallels can be analyzed, some space must be devoted to two interrelated issues: the authorship of Colossians and how that may be related to the differences between Colossians and Galatians.

## THE AUTHORSHIP OF COLOSSIANS AND THE COLOSSIAN/GALATIAN DISPARITY

More controversial than the debate over the target of Colossians is the question of its writer. No decisive arguments have been given to settle the matter. Any scholarly claim made for the authorship of Colossians is not completely satisfying. The problem of Colossian authorship is compounded in this thesis in that I have and will continue to suggest that the situation in Colossae was similar to the situation in Galatia. If Paul was the writer of Colossians then why the dissimilarity with Galatians?<sup>198</sup> If Colossians is deutero-Pauline, but Pauline in character, then why did the author not utilize more closely the argument Paul employed in Galatians?<sup>199</sup> If Colossians were written by an associate of Paul, why would Paul give that person such a free hand in a composition that would bear his name?<sup>200</sup> Would it not be reasonable to assume that if the predicament in Colossae were analogous to the crisis in Galatia, Paul would have responded in Colossians with basically the same argument he puts forth in Galatians?

It is not possible nor necessary to rehearse in detail the authorship debate.

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<sup>198</sup>A question which Wright, Colossians, pp. 31-34, fails to address.

<sup>199</sup>Those who accept Colossians as deutero-Pauline have generally argued that the situations in Colossae and Galatia were different. Hence the variations in the arguments of the two letters. See Wedderburn, The Theology of Colossians, pp. 3-11.

<sup>200</sup>A question raised by Barclay, Colossians, p. 35, and Wright, Colossians, p. 31.

That has been done.<sup>201</sup> What is necessary, however, is a discussion of authorship as it relates to the argument of the letter and how that compares and contrasts with Galatians.

#### Timothy as the Writer of Colossians

It would be much easier for my thesis simply to accept Colossians as deutero-Pauline. The differences between Colossians and Galatians could simply be explained as differences in authorship. It is indeed possible to make a partial case in that respect in suggesting Timothy is the writer. Since he was a travelling companion and fellow missionary with Paul, however, more needs to be said. If the target of the two letters was similar, would Paul have approved a Colossian argument so different from Galatians?

While any position on authorship must be tentative, it seems to me that the internal evidence of the letter best explains Timothy as the writer.<sup>202</sup> The style of Colossians is different from the style of the undisputed letters of Paul. This difference cannot be accounted for simply by reference to vocabulary, although this is surely part of it.<sup>203</sup> This implies the letter itself is not from Paul's own hand, though the style is not so different that a Pauline hand can be confidently

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<sup>201</sup>For detailed treatments see, J. Lähnemann, Der Kolosserbrief. Komposition, Situation und Argumentation SNT (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), pp. 12-28; O'Brien, Colossians, pp. xli-xlix.

<sup>202</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, pp. 15-24, gives the most detailed argument for the Timothy hypothesis.

<sup>203</sup>M. Kiley, Colossians as Pseudepigraphy (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), pp. 51-59; Lohse, Colossians, pp. 84-91; W. Schenk, "Der Kolosserbrief in der neueren Forschung (1945-1985)", pp. 3327-3338.

rejected.<sup>204</sup>

At the same time, however, pseudonymity has its problems. The personal greetings in 4:7-17 are clearly related to the Colossian church. It is easier to explain such references as coming from Paul rather than a deutero-Pauline writer. While it is impossible to rule out the use of such personal greetings to make the letter appear more authentic, when the references in Colossians are compared with the greetings in Philemon 23-24, it is more difficult to explain them as the work of an observant and meticulous imitator who endeavored to hide his pseudonymity, than as a reference to an authentic situation.<sup>205</sup>

The difficulty is intensified with the other subtle similarities and differences between the two letters. Both letters are from Paul and Timothy (Col. 1:1; Phm. 1). Philemon does not mention Tychicus, Colossians does not mention Philemon, and both letters refer to Archippus (Col. 4:17; Phm. 2). How possible is it that Colossians could be a product of such a skilled and sophisticated imitator who in his letter manages to emulate Paul so well and in such a free-flowing way, making use of the authentically Pauline Philemon?<sup>206</sup> Or perhaps it is better to

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<sup>204</sup>The theology of Colossians also suggests different writers, but it is not so great that authenticity can be excluded. See O'Brien, Colossians, pp. xliv-xlix. Wright, Colossians, 32-34, believes the weight of the argument against Pauline authorship of Colossians is centered on the question of theology. Barclay, Colossians, pp. 25-29, states, "...it is plausible to argue that some aspects of the theology of Colossians have moved too far from Paul to be credited to him. But it is harder to prove such a claim" (p. 29).

<sup>205</sup>Barclay, Colossians, p. 24.

<sup>206</sup>The use of Philemon by the author of Colossians as a way to give the effect of Pauline authorship is suggested by A. Lindemann, Kolossierbrief ZBK (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1983), 72, 75; Lohse, Colossians, pp. 175-177; and M. Wolter, Kolossier ÖTNT (Gersloh: Mohn, 1993), p. 216-217.

ask which is less probable: that such a sophisticated Paulinist wrote Colossians, or that the letter was written in an authentic Pauline setting?

Given the differences which intimate a writer other than Paul, and given the problems of deuterio-Pauline authorship, I agree with Schweizer that the most plausible solution to the problem of authorship is Timothy as the writer of the letter at Paul's request. The letter itself indicates this, and as Schweizer has stated, it has "every appearance of being a genuine Pauline epistle."<sup>207</sup>

Moreover, Colossians 1:1 claims Paul and Timothy to be involved in the writing of the letter. The pair are also mentioned in the genuine 2 Corinthians (1:1) and Philemon (1). In addition, and closely related to the previous observation, is the signature of Paul in 4:18 giving the letter his authority; a practice found in three other genuine Paulines (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Phm. 19).<sup>208</sup> And again I would simply suggest that the close relationship between Colossians and Philemon is best explained by a situation in which both letters were written in Paul's lifetime.

The authentic Pauline context of Colossians does not suggest pseudonymous authorship. At the same time, however, the different style and somewhat dissimilar theology of the letter suggests that the letter did not come from Paul's own hand. The evidence, therefore, though not completely clear, nor without its problems, points in the direction of Timothy as the writer. Three objections to

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<sup>207</sup> Schweizer, Colossians, p. 15.

<sup>208</sup> Note also Schweizer's observations concerning Colossians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 10:1 (Ibid.).

this hypothesis must now be considered.

The first objection is raised by Wright,<sup>209</sup> who uses Mozart's *Requiem* completed by Süssmaier after Mozart's death as an example of the difficulty in distinguishing between the master and the student steeped in the teacher's habits and thoughts. It is precisely this kind of observation that leads to the affirmation that Colossians is clearly Pauline. At the same time, however, the differences in the style and theology of Colossians in relation to the genuine Paulines have been generally noted by scholars, including Wright, even though he judges them not to be significant in rejecting Pauline authorship. Given the similarities and differences the evidence for authorship points to Timothy rather than Paul. These differences combined with the evidence just outlined lead to a consideration of Timothy as the writer.

Related to the first objection is the second: is it believable that Paul would have permitted a co-worker to write a letter in his name, particularly with theological emphases different from his own?<sup>210</sup> Surely this would not have been his first choice. But what if the imprisoned Paul found himself in a situation where he was unable to write or dictate a letter? Paul received word of the problems in Colossae. A response was necessary but he was unable, for whatever reason, to dictate the letter or have first-hand input into its composition. In such a situation Paul would have no option but to trust a companion, familiar with his thinking, to draft a letter after he outlined his general concerns to the

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<sup>209</sup> Colossians, p. 31.

<sup>210</sup> Barclay, Colossians, p. 35.

writer. Such a situation cannot be proven, nor ruled out. It would be one way, however, to explain why Timothy would have written a letter that Paul allowed to bear his name.<sup>211</sup>

The third and most significant objection to the Timothy hypothesis is particularly germane to this thesis. If the source of the problem in Colossae was similar to the one in the churches of Galatia, how is it that the argument of Colossians is different from Galatians?

Timothy as the writer explains the dissimilarity in part. This is a particular problem for Wright who argues that the letter is from Paul's hand and that the sources of the problems in Colossae and Galatia were similar.<sup>212</sup> Yet, this does not answer the question as to why Paul would have given his blessing to such a different argument.

Here is where an important distinction must be made. The contention in this thesis is not that Colossians and Galatians are addressing the *same* problem (Jewish Christians), rather the suggestion is that the source of the problem is *similar* (Jews, but in Colossae from outside the church). If the Colossian philosophy had its origins from without, the argument of the letter would reasonably take a different approach from Galatians, where the opponents were from within the community of faith. The problem in Colossians centers around the synagogue and its dismissive attitude (*μηδεις υμας καταβραβευετω*, 2:18) toward the

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<sup>211</sup>Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 40, suggests that if Paul had *chosen* to leave the composition of Colossians to Timothy, while deliberately attending to the letter to Philemon, it might further signal that Paul saw the Colossian situation as no immediate and serious threat.

<sup>212</sup>Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 27, 31-34.

pretensions of the Colossian Gentile believers, who claim to have a share in the inheritance of Israel, without following the requirements mandated in the Torah. In Galatians the dilemma was a virulent Jewish *Christian* evangelism persuading the Galatian Gentile believers of the necessity that they conform their identity and behavior to the Torah, in particular the badges of Jewish ethnic identity (1:7-9; 5:2-4). The parallels that will be drawn point not to the same problem, but to a similar source of the problem: the Colossian synagogue disqualified the claims of the Colossian Christians to Jewish heritage; whereas Galatian Jewish Christians demanded circumcision of the Gentile Christians.

In addition, the contrast in the tone of the two letters must not be neglected. The tone in Galatians is one of crisis. The troublemakers are pressuring Paul's converts to convert again. In Colossians the tone is more relaxed.<sup>213</sup> The angry and troubled statements found in Galatians (1:6, with no typical Pauline thanksgiving; 1:8-9; 3:1-5; 4:11, 16-20; 5:12) are absent from Colossians. The calmer references to circumcision in Colossians (2:11; 3:11) come not because the Colossians are being pressured into circumcision as in Galatians (5:2-3).<sup>214</sup> In Colossians the references to circumcision are a response to the synagogue which had dismissed the Colossians' claim as the people of God

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<sup>213</sup>Not many have followed Hooker's thesis, but Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 4, notes the calmer polemic.

<sup>214</sup>The exact nature of what the opponents were requiring of the Galatians is not agreed upon by scholars. For somewhat differing perspectives see H. Brinsmead, Galatians: A Dialogical Response to Opponents (Chico: scholars Press, 1982), pp. 139-161; R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation." *NTS* 17 (1970-1971), pp. 198-212; W. Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 38;

because they were not of the circumcision. This would explain the dual reference to Jewish identity in 3:11 and the affirmation in 2:11 that the Colossians were indeed God's people given a special kind of circumcision in Jesus Christ. The threat in Colossae is a dismissive attitude on the part of the Colossian philosophers (μηδεις ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύτω-- 2:18).

In short, the Jews of Colossae dismissed the claims made by the Gentile Christians that they shared in the inheritance of Israel. In Colossae the problem was more of an issue of apologetics than of threatening apostasy as found in Galatians.

In consequence, therefore, it is somewhat simplistic to dismiss the genuine Pauline connection of Colossians because the targets of both letters are similar. The source of the threat was similar (Christian Jews in Galatians, Jews in Colossians), but the threat itself and Paul's response were not exactly the same.

To sum up, I do not believe that the Timothy hypothesis is integral to this thesis, but it does help explain some of the features of the letter to the Colossians, so I use it simply as a working hypothesis. While the Timothy hypothesis must remain tentative, it seems to me that most of the dilemmas in reference to the authorship of Colossians, both internal and external, are better and more easily explained as Timothy writing at the request of Paul. Thus the style of the letter is that of Timothy, and yet it is certainly Pauline theology,<sup>215</sup> as interpreted and advanced by Timothy. I will, therefore, refer to the writers

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<sup>215</sup>W. Schrage, The Ethics of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 244, states that Colossians is "fully on a level with the heights of genuinely Pauline thought."

throughout this thesis in three different ways: "Paul," "Paul and Timothy," or simply "the authors."

Having suggested why the arguments of the two letters are different, it is now appropriate to draw in detail the parallels between Galatians and Colossians, in explicating the nature of the Colossian philosophy.

### CIRCUMCISION

#### GALATIANS 2:1-10, 12; 5:1-12; 6:15 AND COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

In Paul's day circumcision had become one of the most important visible marks of the people of God, the nation of Israel. It was fundamental to Jewish identity.<sup>216</sup> Jewish scholars have simply assumed that circumcision was considered to be a badge of Jewish identity.<sup>217</sup> By the second century B.C. it was regarded by both Jews and Gentiles as essentially Jewish (cf. 1 Macc.1:14-15; 60-61; 2 Macc. 6:10), even though other nations practiced it in some form as well. "[T]he acceptance of circumcision is the acceptance of Judaism."<sup>218</sup>

Circumcision is an issue that runs throughout the letter of Galatians, although it is not always explicitly mentioned through the argument of the letter. It is also present in the argument of Colossians chapter 2. The first task in this chapter is to analyze the issue of circumcision in Galatians; followed by an

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<sup>216</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 217.

<sup>217</sup>J. Neusner, Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 69ff.; S. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew." HTR 82 (1989), 13-33.

<sup>218</sup>Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary," p. 26.

attempt to show that the very same issue is also present in Colossians.

#### Galatians 2:1-10

In this passage Paul continues his chronological account, that commenced in 1:11, of his calling and ministry. According to Betz it is the second part of the *narratio* begun in 1:12.<sup>219</sup> The entire *narratio* is a defense of the claim Paul makes in 1:12, that his gospel is not of human origin as he states, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτό, οὐτε ἐδιδάχην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Circumcision is first mentioned in 2:3. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί, Ἕλλην ὄν, ἠναγκάσθη περιτεμῆναι. This verse does not necessarily begin a digression away from the narrative as has been suggested, nor is it an "afterthought."<sup>220</sup> Circumcision is one of the critical issues in reference to Paul's gospel and Titus provides a good example for Paul's argument; for it appears that the question of Paul's authority is directly related to his insistence that circumcision not be required of the Gentiles. Not even the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem put pressure on Titus to be circumcised.<sup>221</sup> It was the ψευδαδελφοί.

In 2:7-9 Paul refers to the Gentiles as "the uncircumcision" and to the Jews

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<sup>219</sup>H. Betz, Galatians Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 63.

<sup>220</sup>BDF, p. 448.

<sup>221</sup>The phrase ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί, Ἕλλην ὄν, ἠναγκάσθη περιτεμῆναι is ambiguous. It may mean, "Far from their requiring the circumcision of Gentile believers, not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised." It may also be interpreted, "Not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised; he was circumcised indeed, but on his own initiative (or on Paul's)." F. Bruce, Galatians NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 112.

as "the circumcision." Circumcision or the lack thereof was the most significant mark of identification that separated Jew from Gentile in Judaism<sup>222</sup> (cf. also Tit. 1:10).<sup>223</sup> This nomenclature denotes the people. This is an ethnic term.<sup>224</sup> Paul is not simply arguing in his defense that the leaders in Jerusalem considered his mission to the Gentiles as valid. They were not debating the question of whether or not the Gospel had been made available to the Gentiles. It is the content of Paul's gospel to the Gentiles that is the actual bone of contention. In other words, Paul was proclaiming the Gospel to the Gentiles who are and remain the uncircumcision, not requiring that they be circumcised making them part of "the circumcision." For Paul circumcision is not necessary to the gospel.<sup>225</sup>

#### Galatians 2:12

The incident at Antioch is mainly concerned with table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, and this will be discussed in greater detail at the appropriate time, but 2:12 has relevance for the issue of circumcision in Galatians. Here Paul refers to his opponents as τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς. Again "circumcision" is used as a term of identity referring to Jews, but it may also imply something of the message of Paul's opponents-- that is, circumcision as a necessary part of the gospel, even for Gentiles. If circumcision was understood

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<sup>222</sup>Dunn, Galatians, p. 107.

<sup>223</sup>H. Hahn, "Circumcision." NIDNTT Ed., C. Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:309.

<sup>224</sup>E. Burton, Galatians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 97.

<sup>225</sup>D. Guthrie, Galatians NCB (Greenwood: The Attic Press, 1974), p. 81.

as an identity marker then it is not unreasonable to argue that the dispute between Paul and his opponents had an essentially racial and national character.

#### Galatians 5:1-12

This passage which follows the Hagar/Sarah allegory concentrates essentially on the matter of circumcision, "the pivotal issue" in Galatians.<sup>226</sup> Paul emphatically rejects any notion that Gentile Christians must undergo circumcision. Circumcision is not necessary for the Gentiles in the living of their faith.<sup>227</sup> Indeed the Gentiles must not submit to circumcision at all. From the perspective of the *ψευδαδελφοί* circumcision was crucial if the Gentiles were to participate as God's people. It was the pivotal issue because it was the commencement of law obedience expected for the covenant people. It was the first act of covenantal nomism.<sup>228</sup> Justification in Judaism had just as much to do with maintaining the covenant as initiation into the covenant.<sup>229</sup> To accept circumcision as the mark of initiation meant accepting the yoke of the law as the way one lived faithfully in the covenant. Thus Paul's statement in 5:3-- *μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι*. What is not in mind here is the legalistic notion of having to keep the whole law.<sup>230</sup> This kind of

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<sup>226</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 94.

<sup>227</sup>R. Longenecker, Galatians WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), p. 226.

<sup>228</sup>Dunn, Jesus Paul, and the Law, p. 246.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid.

<sup>230</sup>Hübner, Law in Paul's Thought, pp. 36-39.

individualistic reading of the text is a misreading. What Paul has in mind is the doing of the law not as a way to enter the covenant but as the responsibility of those already in the covenant. To do the law is to adopt a Jewish way of life.<sup>231</sup>

Thus Paul's point here is not that if one is circumcised one must now work to earn salvation; rather Paul is highlighting the consequences of circumcision--one is no longer a Gentile but a Jew, in every aspect of life. In 5:4 Paul views circumcision as contrary to the gospel. Not only should the Gentiles not be circumcised in order to enter the family of Abraham, but to do so would have the opposite effect: circumcision would cut them off from Christ. The *ἐλπίς δικαιοσύνης* is not found in circumcision or in any of the "works of the law," but *ἐκ πίστεως*.

Paul drives his point home in verse 6: *ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*. Bruce's comment here is noteworthy: "In the old order the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision was of great importance; in the new order it had lost all relevance."<sup>232</sup> In Judaism this terminology delineated those who belonged in the covenant and those who remained outside of it. For the Christian such terminology had lost its meaning. Paul's opponents were concerned with something that was "without theological foundation."<sup>233</sup> What did matter for Paul in the life of the Christian was *πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*. Paul is not contending for salvation by faith against salvation by works. Faith includes believing the gospel

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<sup>231</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 266-267.

<sup>232</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 232.

<sup>233</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, p. 263.

and obeying the truth.<sup>234</sup> Faith is not passive. It has a moral aspect.<sup>235</sup> For Paul faith should "work through love." Paul is fighting against the very notion that the people of God are to be identified as circumcision. Rather the people of God are identified by faith in Christ. It is a faith that is manifest, not in the cutting of the flesh, but in love. The proclamation of circumcision was antithetical to the proclamation of Christ crucified.<sup>236</sup> The people of God now have a new badge of identity. All are children of God διὰ πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3:26).

#### Galatians 6:15

According to Longenecker, Galatians 6:11-16 features three subjects that Paul has previously highlighted: 1) the motivation of Paul's opponents from Paul's perspective (vv.12-13); 2) the centrality of the cross (v. 14); and 3) the nature of a proper Christian lifestyle as an expression of faith (vv. 15-16).<sup>237</sup>

Paul levels the charge against his opponents that they preach circumcision to the Gentiles only in order to boast. It is not a boasting based on works righteousness, that is, good works, but one based on national pride. They want to brag about the circumcised Gentiles who are related to Israel by virtue of

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<sup>234</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 236.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid.

<sup>236</sup>The charge alluded to in 5:11 that Paul is preaching circumcision may very well be a misunderstanding on the part of Paul's opponents of his circumcision of Timothy as Dunn suggests in Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 174. The reference to Paul's own experience of persecution weakens the view presented by F. Mussner, Galaterbrief HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), p. 359, that Paul is introducing a hypothetical situation.

<sup>237</sup>Longenecker, Galatians, p. 301.

circumcision.<sup>238</sup> But Paul will not brag over the things that are irrelevant in God's scheme of salvation. It is the cross of Christ in which Paul boasts.<sup>239</sup> It is the cross that makes salvation possible apart from circumcision. "In the old order of the law, where the distinction between Jew and Gentile was of fundamental importance, it mattered greatly whether a man was circumcised or not; now it is totally irrelevant."<sup>240</sup> The cross makes a new creation possible (v.15), where Jew and Gentile participate in the covenant as God's people, where circumcision and uncircumcision come together as one by virtue of faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is the means through which the promise and inheritance of Abraham are preserved.<sup>241</sup>

#### Conclusion

Circumcision was the most important and fundamental mark of Jewish identity in the first century. "The circumcision" was a synonym for "the Jews," as was "the uncircumcision" a synonym for "the Gentiles." It was a badge of identity that separated Jew from Gentile. Paul refers to his opponents as οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς (2:12).

In the context of Galatians circumcision is the critical issue in Paul's explication of his gospel. He rejects any notion that the Gentile Christians must

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<sup>238</sup>N. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith." *TynB* 29 (1978), pp.61-88.

<sup>239</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, p. 318, rightly points out that whether δι' οὗ refers to the cross of Christ or to the person of Christ is of no significance. For Paul Christ is always the crucified savior. His person and his work cannot be separated.

<sup>240</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 273.

<sup>241</sup>Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p. 248.

undergo circumcision to become part of the people of God (3:25-26). Indeed, circumcision is contrary to the gospel (5:4). The hope of righteousness is not found in circumcision, but *διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. In Christ the old order had lost all relevance. Circumcision marked the people of God in the old order. In that order circumcision and uncircumcision were of great importance. Christ, however, has ushered in the new order, the new creation (6:15). In the new order circumcision has lost all relevance. In Galatians Paul is fighting against the notion that the people of God are to be identified as "circumcision." Unlike his opponents, Paul does not boast in circumcision but in the cross of Christ (6:13-14). It is the cross that makes salvation possible apart from circumcision.

#### Colossians 2:8-15

Beginning in 2:8 Paul warns the Colossians to beware (*βλέπετε*) of those who attempt to lead them astray (*ὁ συλαγωγῶν*) *διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*. As has already been suggested and as we will see in greater detail, this "philosophy" is clearly connected to circumcision, dietary prohibitions, special holidays and the Sabbath. Circumcision is the main concern for the moment.

O'Brien remarks that Paul's unanticipated introduction of the subject of circumcision (2:11-13) into the argument is unusual.<sup>242</sup> Paul often correlates the theme of union with Christ with death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6; 7:1-6; 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:3-9; 4:7-14; 5:14-17; 7:3; 13:4; Gal. 2:19, 20; 6:14, 15; Eph. 2:5, 6;

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<sup>242</sup>O'Brien, Colossians p. 114.



Phil. 3:8-11; Col. 2:20; 3:1-4, 9, 10; 1 Th. 4:14; 5:10), but not circumcision. Nevertheless circumcision is connected in some way to the "philosophy," even though no prohibition of circumcision is explicitly mentioned. One must ask why circumcision is referred to if it is not in some way an issue?<sup>243</sup> The very reference to "circumcision without hands" must be meant as a contrast to "circumcision with hands." Moreover, the circumcision/uncircumcision theme reappears in 3:11. This characteristically Jewish language must not be ignored as Martin ignores it.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, while Martin correctly argues that the philosophers were "outsiders" causing the problem at Colossae, he is not right to refer to the philosophy as an opposing tradition.<sup>245</sup> The language of Colossians 2:17-- ἡ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων-- suggests not an opposing tradition, but a tradition that is no longer adequate compared to what the Colossians have in Christ.

Verse 11 begins, ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετιμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ. Lohse contends that unlike the churches in Galatia circumcision was not considered a sign of the covenant, but instead was a sacramental rite of initiation into the community and salvation.<sup>246</sup> In addition the phrase ἀπέκδοσις τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός implies the

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<sup>243</sup>Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: MacMillan, 1890), p. 181.

<sup>244</sup>Martin, Philosophy and Empty Deceit, pp. 164, 195, 197, 198, 200, 202. In these pages Martin treats the passages having to do with circumcision, yet completely ignores the subject. See particularly p. 206.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>246</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 102.

practices of the mystery cults.<sup>247</sup> There are, I believe, two problems with this perspective. First, Lohse fails to produce any evidence that circumcision is connected to any rite of initiation into any mystery cult. He refers to the syncretistic phenomenon of the *ἐταιρεία τῶν Σαββατιστῶν*, a group who observed Sabbath and food regulations, but rejected circumcision.<sup>248</sup> One must question whether this one source is sufficient to establish his claim. Moreover, this source involves Lohse in an anachronistic argument. Lohse's contention simply lacks the necessary evidence. Second, how is it that Lohse can distinguish between circumcision as a sign of the covenant and circumcision as a rite of initiation into the community? Barclay writes that Paul's opponents in Galatia asserted "that the only way for the Galatians to secure their identity as members of God's people and recipients of his promises [intimately connected to the covenant] was by accepting circumcision..."<sup>249</sup> It is true that there is no explicit mention of the Colossians being persuaded to accept circumcision, and the situation in the Colossian church does not seem to be as dire. Nevertheless it seems to be the case that circumcision, as understood in Judaism, is part of the Colossian philosophy. The dismissive attitude on the part of the synagogue toward the Colossian church, as opposed to an attitude of persuasion, would explain the calmer tone of the letter, and the lack of explicit concern over the Colossians' possible acceptance of circumcision. Paul and Timothy, write, not to dissuade the

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., n. 58.

<sup>249</sup> Barclay, Obeying the Truth, pp. 54-55.

Colossians from accepting circumcision, but to remind them it is not necessary.

The first part of verse 11 is reminiscent of Romans 2:28-29:

οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαίος ἐστίν, οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομὴ· ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὐδ' ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

This concept of spiritual circumcision is entirely in keeping with the Hebrew Prophets. In Jeremiah we read,

This is what Yahweh says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh and remove the foreskins of your heart, men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest my wrath go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds" (4:3-4; cf. Ezek. 44:7; 1QS 5:5).

For Jeremiah the evidence of circumcision, that one was a member of the covenant community, was obedience to the covenant. This fits well with Romans 2:25-- περιτομὴ μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης· ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖς, ἡ περιτομὴ σου ἄκροβυστία γέγονεν. One can have circumcision as a badge of covenant identity and yet live as the uncircumcision outside of the covenant. Again Jeremiah speaks to this.

"Look, the days are coming," declares Yahweh, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised-- Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the sons of Ammon, and Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart" (9:25-26).

Jeremiah does not suggest that the rite of circumcision will one day be replaced by περιτομὴ καρδίας.<sup>250</sup> Rather the point he makes is that circumcision as a sign of the covenant is of no value apart from obedience to the covenant. Paul

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<sup>250</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 115. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, p. 297.

goes one step further, however, and rejects circumcision as necessary at all for the Gentiles (Gal. 6:15). This also appears to be the case in Colossians; but as we will see Colossians reflects this same kind of connection in Jeremiah between the covenant and obedience to it.

Arnold rejects the idea that circumcision was advocated by the Colossian philosophers, since it does not appear in the letters polemic.<sup>251</sup> Arnold correctly states that the language of circumcision in the letter is identity language referring to the Colossians standing "in Christ."<sup>252</sup> He even notes that of the entire Pauline corpus only Colossians relates baptism to circumcision.<sup>253</sup> This is a significant observation. Such a metaphor of identity may very well reveal something of the identity of the target. Arnold, however, does not seem to think this identity metaphor is significant. He does not raise the question as to what identifying practices were advocated by the Colossian philosophers that would make the identifying metaphor of circumcision appropriate.

In the LXX *χειροποιήτος* designates idols and false gods (Lev. 26:1, 30; Is. 2:18). It is a word used to contrast the living God of the Hebrews over against the pagan gods made with human hands, who are literally "nothings" (*אֵלִיל*, Is. 10:11; *הַבֵּל*, Jer. 2:5; 8:19; 14:22; 16:19f.).<sup>254</sup> In the New Testament *χειροποιήτος*

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<sup>251</sup>Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, p. 297.

<sup>252</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>253</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 296, n. 59.

<sup>254</sup>*A Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament* eds., F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint 1951), p. 47; H. Preuss, "אֵלִיל" TDOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:286-287; K. Seybold, "הַבֵּל; הָבֵל" TDOT (1978),

denotes the reverse of the work of God (Acts 7:48; 17:24; Heb. 9:11, 24).<sup>255</sup> Thus ἀχειροποίητος refers to that which God has created (Mk. 14:58; II Cor. 5:1). Περιτομή ἀχειροποίητη is set as the antithesis of physical circumcision, and it is a circumcision done in Christ. But what is the exact nature of this spiritual circumcision? Two phrases in 2:11 need to be considered: ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός and ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Does the "stripping off of the body of flesh" refer to the believers who have been "circumcised without hands" or does it refer to "the circumcision of Christ?" The absence of a noun or a pronoun (αὐτοῦ) in the phrase suggests strongly that it pertains to the subject of the clause-- περιετήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποίητη. If it does refer to ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ the missing αὐτοῦ is a glaring oversight.<sup>256</sup> Nevertheless, there are those who argue that the "putting off of the body of flesh" refers to τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.<sup>257</sup> The important point to be made here is that the "circumcision of Christ" is a "summary

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3:316.

<sup>255</sup>Lohse, "χειρ." TDNT (1984), 9:436.

<sup>256</sup>G. Caird, Paul's Letters from Prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) in the Revised Standard Version (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 193. C. Moule, Colossians CGTC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 95, suggests that the identification of the baptized with Christ was so intimate that designating a pronoun was out of place.

<sup>257</sup>Moule, Colossians, p. 96. M. Harris, Colossians EGGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 103, certainly misses the point when he translates the last part of 2:11, "...when you stripped off your fleshly nature in Christ's circumcision." The believer is not doing the "stripping." It is done to the believer, just as circumcision, just as baptism. However, this phrase is to be understood in Colossians, its connection to circumcision and baptism forces it to be passive. Believers do not strip themselves of the "body of flesh," but have it stripped off.

expression"<sup>258</sup> of these two phrases which have just preceded. The "circumcision of Christ" is a metaphor for his death.

The "circumcision of Christ" then, likely refers to his crucifixion,<sup>259</sup> although Pokorný does point out that Jesus' death is not described as circumcision elsewhere.<sup>260</sup> Nevertheless 1:22 lends itself to this understanding: *νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου*. So it is possible here that as circumcision--the cutting off of the foreskin-- is a seal of the covenant, so Christ's death-- his cutting off-- is the seal of the new covenant. In Jesus' death his fleshly body was stripped away.<sup>261</sup>

Whatever the relationship of the phrases in verse 11 to each other, one thing is clear. *Περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ* is meant as a contrast to the Jewish rite of circumcision.<sup>262</sup> This spiritual circumcision, this initiation into the covenant, took place for the Colossians *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*, as stated in verse 12. Circumcision was the mark of the Jew and the covenant people. It bore witness to one's nationality.<sup>263</sup> "As a Jew, Paul had believed in the solidarity of the racial people of God."<sup>264</sup> Colossians in no way rejects the solidarity of God's people. What is

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<sup>258</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 158.

<sup>259</sup>F. Bruce, Colossians NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 235.

<sup>260</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, pp. 124-125.

<sup>261</sup>G. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 152-153; Wolter, Kolosser, pp. 130-131.

<sup>262</sup>Against Lohse, Colossians, p. 102. See H. Carson, Colossians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 66.

<sup>263</sup>J. Eadie, Colossians (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1884), p. 148.

<sup>264</sup>Wright, Colossian, p. 107.

rejected is solidarity defined in racial terms. The people of God are a people, but they are no longer marked by a rite tied inextricably to one racial group. This text implies that those who have received this circumcision "without hands" need no other. This further suggests that the Jewish rite of circumcision is unnecessary and unimportant for faith in Christ and the membership of the people of God.<sup>265</sup>

Circumcision is a "stripping away" of part of the flesh as a sign of incorporation into the people of the covenant, the people of Israel. Spiritual circumcision is also a "stripping away" τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός, but it is total and complete when one responds in faith. It is a spiritual metamorphosis. Verse 12 should not be taken to mean that baptism is the fulfilment of circumcision, nor should the two be seen as parallel (baptism is to the New Testament what circumcision is to the Old Testament). Rather Paul is contrasting the rite of circumcision performed by human hands with the circumcision of the heart performed by God, which takes place when one participates in Christ's own circumcision-- his death. This comes about not in the rite of baptism itself, but διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν. There is no suggestion in this passage that the actual rite of water-baptism makes one a Christian.<sup>266</sup> Jewish circumcision is set aside not because of baptism, but because

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<sup>265</sup>R. Meyer, "περιτέμνω." TDNT, 6:83.

<sup>266</sup>J. Lähnemann, Der Kolosserbrief. Komposition, Situation und Argumentation. SNT (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), pp. 121-122. It is more likely that ἐν ᾧ καὶ in 1:12 refers to Christ, rather than baptism, as in verse 11.

the "circumcision of Christ" has come in its stead.<sup>267</sup>

It could be said, however, that like circumcision for the Jew, baptism for the Christian is a mark or badge of identity, but unlike circumcision in Judaism baptism is not a badge identifying with an ethnic people. Circumcision signified a spiritual reality. This is why the prophets could admonish Israel on its failure to keep the covenant, as such a failure was a rejection of one's circumcision, a sign of the covenant. For the Christian, baptism signifies a spiritual reality as well. Failing to remain in Christ (2:6) is a rejection of one's baptism and all that it means. But baptism has no connection to any ethnic people. Baptism does not signify that one is a Jew or a Gentile, but that one is a Christian. Thus the Colossians are reminded that they already have a metaphor signifying their identity as the people of God-- baptism. They do not need circumcision to be the people of God, nor do they need it to live as the people of God.

Paul goes on to remind the Colossians in 2:13, *καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας [ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν....* This was their way of life as Gentiles before coming to faith in Christ.<sup>268</sup> Now that they are in Christ this way of life has been abandoned, even though the Colossians are still Gentiles. Their uncircumcision was made circumcision not with a rite done by human hands but by God who made them alive together with Christ, forgiving their trespasses

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<sup>267</sup>J. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 152-158 discusses the relationship and the lack thereof between circumcision and baptism in Colossians.

<sup>268</sup>E. Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser, und an Philemon (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964), section 3, p. 114.

(χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα). Previously they were Gentiles outside the covenant, but now they are Gentiles inside the covenant, or at least, they are now Gentiles who participate in the promise (cf. Gal 4:28). The promise now includes both Jews and Gentiles. Thus the use of the first person plural in verses 13 and 14 may be intentional. This sounds very much like Ephesians 2:11-14:

So then, remember that at one time *you* Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision"-- a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands-- remember that *you* were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus *you* who were once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is *our* peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between *us*.

This parallel with Ephesians (along with several others cited below) is not to be ignored. It suggests the Jewish identity issues in Ephesians are also present in Colossians. It is generally agreed among scholarship that the writer<sup>269</sup> of Ephesians made rather substantial use of Colossians in its composition (Col 1:1-2/Eph. 1:1-2; Col. 1:4/Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:25-27/ Eph. 3:7-9; Col. 2:13/Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:19/Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 3:12/Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:16/Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:22-4:1/Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 4:7-8/Eph. 6:21-22).<sup>270</sup> A principal concern of Ephesians is the

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<sup>269</sup>On the authorship of Ephesians and the differing views of scholarship see M. Barth, Ephesians AB 34 (New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 36-50; R. Brown, The Churches the Apostles Left Behind (New York: Paulist, 1984), pp. 47-60; R. Collins, Letters That Paul Did Not Write: The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Pseudepigrapha (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), pp. 132-170; D. Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), pp. 479-508; A. Lincoln, Ephesians WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), pp. lix-lxxiii.

<sup>270</sup>See Lohse, Colossians, p. 4, note 2.

relationship of the Gentile believers to Israel, the temple and the law.<sup>271</sup> While it cannot be determined whether the author of Ephesians knew the occasion that prompted the writing of Colossians, he clearly found the language of the letter congenial in expressing his convictions concerning the identity issues in the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Moreover, these concerns are verbalized without employing the phrase "works of the law," which is also absent from Colossians.

Indeed the parallel in Ephesians is even closer if Colossians 2:14 refers to the law of Moses, for Ephesians 2:15 goes on to state, "He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two." For Paul circumcision of the Gentiles stood in the way of that inclusive humanity. Christ made it a reality and circumcision could play no part in it. At one time it had a critical place in the covenant, but it was God's intention that one day its place would end. For Paul that day had arrived. This is affirmed in 3:11: ὅπου οὐκ ἔστι Ἕλληνας καὶ Ἰουδαίους, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία...ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός.

It is important to note that in several places Paul refers to circumcision in Colossians (2:11, 13; 3:11; 4:11). This indicates that the issue was a matter of some importance in the letter. In particular Paul goes out of his way in 3:11 to add περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία to a formula already identifying "Jew and Greek" (Ἕλληνας καὶ Ἰουδαίους). Why would he do this if circumcision was not an issue?

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<sup>271</sup>See A. Lincoln, "The Theology of Ephesians." The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters, pp. 105-108.

## Conclusion

The argument of Colossians 2 reveals that circumcision is an important issue in the letter. The fact that the references are mixed into the context of warnings against other Jewish practices lends support to the idea this circumcision is Jewish. Contentions that circumcision in Colossians refers to some Hellenistic or syncretistic rite<sup>272</sup> lack sufficient evidence. Spiritual circumcision (2:11), the circumcision of the heart is a Hebraic notion as revealed in the Hebrew prophets, and is a Pauline idea as well (Rom. 2:28-29). The evidence of circumcision, that one was a member of the covenant community, was obedience to the covenant. One can have circumcision as a badge of Jewish identity, as a badge that one was inside the covenant community, and yet live as the uncircumcision outside the covenant. According to Jeremiah circumcision was of no value apart from obedience to the covenant. Like Galatians, Colossians goes one step further than Jeremiah and rejects circumcision as necessary at all for the Gentile believers (Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:11).

Colossians 2:11 is difficult to decipher, but as I have argued it is likely that τῆ περιτομῆ τοῦ Χριστοῦ refers to Christ's death, although there are those who have connected it to baptism.<sup>273</sup> Whatever the meaning it seems clear that περιτομῆ ἀχειροποιήτω is a contrast to the Jewish rite of circumcision.

Spiritual circumcision for the Colossians took place διὰ τῆς πίστεως. Spiritual

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<sup>272</sup>Lohse, Colossians, pp. 101-102.

<sup>273</sup>J. Lähnemann, Der Kolosserbrief. Komposition, Situation und Argumentation. SNT 3. (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), pp. 121-122.

circumcision is a total and complete stripping away when the believer responds in faith (it is more efficacious than circumcision where only a *part* of the flesh is removed). Colossians contrasts the rite of circumcision performed by human hands with the circumcision of the heart performed by God, which takes place through faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead (2:12). In Christ the circumcision performed with human hands is now unimportant in relation to the people of God. Jewish circumcision has been set aside and the circumcision of Christ has come in its stead.

Thus the first parallel drawn between Galatians and Colossians appears to stand on firm ground.

#### SABBATH AND SPECIAL DAYS

##### GALATIANS 4:10 AND COLOSSIANS 2:16

By the time of Jesus and Paul, Sabbath and other special days and feasts had become marks of distinction associated with the people of Israel and a critical sign of a Jew's faithfulness as a member of Israel.<sup>274</sup>

The king then issued a decree throughout his empire: his subjects were all to become one people and abandon their own laws and religion. The nations everywhere complied with the royal command, and many in Israel accepted the foreign worship, sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath (1 Macc. 1:41-43; cf. Is. 56:6; Jub. 2:17-33, 50:6-13; and Josephus, *Ant.* 11.346).

In Jubilees the seasons and festivals are ordained "as feasts for a memorial

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<sup>274</sup>Wright, The New Testament, p. 233.

forever" (6:23-29; cf. 6:17-22, 35; 16:28-29; 49).<sup>275</sup> Whether or not the Sabbath had its origins outside of Israel is not relevant for this study.<sup>276</sup> What is pertinent is the fact that in the first century A.D. Sabbath was a distinctively Jewish practice (Ex. 31:16-17; Dt. 5:15; Is. 56:6; Jub. 2:17-33; 50:6-13; CD 10:14-11:18).<sup>277</sup> With this in mind we can now move into Galatians and Colossians.

#### Galatians 4:10

In context verse 10 seems connected to verse 9. Ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροῦς καὶ ἐνιαυτοῦς partially defines τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα. Betz has argued that at the time of the letter the Galatians had not yet begun to observe these special days,<sup>278</sup> but Bruce maintained that the Galatians had indeed adopted the Jewish calendar.<sup>279</sup> It seems clear that the Galatians are contemplating the observance of circumcision and the Torah, so it is logical to assume that these special days are also Jewish in nature. Others have argued differently. Schmithals contended that the opponents in Galatians were Jewish Christian Gnostics and the list in 4:10 was not prevalent in orthodox Jewish

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<sup>275</sup>J. Gunther, St. Paul's Opponents and their Background: A Study in Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teaching (Leiden: Brill, 1973), p. 92.

<sup>276</sup>See H. Dressler, in From Sabbath to Lord's Day ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 22-23; and H. Rowley, "Moses and the Decalogue." BJRL 34 (1951-1952): 81-118.

<sup>277</sup>Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, pp. 29-30.

<sup>278</sup>Betz, Galatians, p. 217. Also Mussner, Der Galaterbrief, pp. 301-302.

<sup>279</sup>Bruce, Galatians, p. 205.

literature (whatever orthodox means), but occurred in gnostic sources.<sup>280</sup> But the list is very similar to the one found in Genesis 1:14.

Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, γενηθήτωσαν φωστῆρες ἐν τῷ στερεώματι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς φαῖσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τοῦ διαχωρίζειν ἀνά μέσον τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ ἀνά μέσον τῆς νυκτός· καὶ ἔστωσαν εἰς σημεῖα, καὶ εἰς καιροὺς, καὶ εἰς ἡμέρας, καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτούς.

The first type of observance in 4:10 has to do with days (ἡμέρας). It is very likely that the Sabbath is primarily in mind, but special observances of a day's length are also possible.<sup>281</sup> μῆνας may refer to events that recur on a monthly basis, for example the new moon (Num. 10:10; 28:11; 1 Chr. 23:31; IQS 10:3). καιρούς is to be paralleled to the great feasts of Judaism-- Passover, Tabernacles, and Pentecost (Lev 23:1). These are observances not limited to one day.<sup>282</sup> Finally, ἐνιαυτούς could denote sabbatical years (Lev. 25:1-7),<sup>283</sup> the year of Jubilee,<sup>284</sup> and Rosh Hashanah.

The observance of these special Jewish days and celebrations fits very well into the context of Galatians where the issues of circumcision and law play an important role in the letter. These special days like circumcision and Torah

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<sup>280</sup>W. Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 44. I am somewhat baffled by Betz's apprehension to ascribe 4:10 as a reference to Jewish observances primarily, even though he does present what I think are convincing parallels that definitely refer to a Jewish context. See Galatians, pp 217-218, especially note 51 on 218.

<sup>281</sup>The discussion of these terms in 4:10 closely follows Longenecker, Galatians, p. 182; and Bruce, Galatians, p. 206.

<sup>282</sup>G. Delling, "καιρός." TDNT, 3:461.

<sup>283</sup>Dunn, Galatians, p. 228, believes this to be unlikely.

<sup>284</sup>Schoeps, Paul, p. 77.

observance in general were considered in Judaism and outside of Judaism to be distinctively Jewish.<sup>285</sup> Barclay suggests that Paul's language in 4:10 is deliberately ambiguous because in reference to calendar observance, he sees a point of comparison between Judaism and the pagan worship practiced formerly by the Galatians.<sup>286</sup> The ambiguity is a way of accentuating the similarities between the two, and thus arguing that keeping the Jewish calendar is a relapse into their former way of life.<sup>287</sup> The emphasis does remain, however, on the Jewish calendar.<sup>288</sup>

#### Conclusion

In Paul's time Sabbath and the special days and feasts prescribed in Judaism had become marks of distinction (like circumcision) connected with the people of Israel. Sabbath was a distinctively Jewish practice and the Galatians had apparently adopted the Jewish calendar to some extent. How long they had been observing it before Paul's letter to them is unclear. That these calendar observances are associated with the Sabbath, makes their Jewish nature very possible. The Jewish nature of these special days corresponds well with the

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<sup>285</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 149.

<sup>286</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, pp. 63-64.

<sup>287</sup>Ibid. Bruce suggests that even though these observances are Jewish in nature, the acceptance of the Jewish calendar by Gentile Christians could entice them once again into their pagan astral associations (Galatians, p. 206).

<sup>288</sup>Ibid., p. 62. Barclay writes, "...we must take account of the fact that in 4:21 Paul addresses the Galatians, λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε; this address and the allegory which follows it would be completely valueless if none of the Galatians were seriously concerned to listen to and submit to the law."

context of Galatians where circumcision and the law are important in the argument of the letter.

Once a Gentile is in Christ, the observance of the Jewish calendar is tantamount to a relapse into pagan worship.

#### Colossians 2:16

Verse 16 begins *μη ουν τις υμωσ κρινετω*. The identity of those making the judgments is of critical importance. Several considerations make it likely that *τις*<sup>289</sup> refers to Jews of the Colossian synagogue. First, new moon and Sabbath observance are clearly Jewish. Food and drink scruples do not necessarily have to be understood in a Jewish way, but there is no doubt that in the Judaism of the first century A.D. they were important identity markers for the people of Israel, and a significant issue in the early church as well (Acts 10:14; 1 Cor. 8-10; again Gal. 2:1-10). Third, the parallels in terminology between Colossians 2:16 and Romans 14:14, 20, where the issue is clearly one of Jewish dietary regulations, cannot be ignored. Both *βρωσις* and *ποσις* are employed in the discussion in reference to Jewish Christian scruples over dietary matters (also 14:17). Moreover, Romans 14:5-6 deals with feast days, which were inextricably tied to issues of food and drink. Even more significant is the presence of the verb *κρινω* (14:3-4) employed to refer to the more scrupulous Jewish Christians passing judgment on the Gentile Christians who were less inclined to observe

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<sup>289</sup>*Τις* can be indefinite, but as Dunn *Colossians*, p. 171, notes, with the present imperative and the specificity of the issues over which the Colossians are being judged, it is likely that a specific group of people are in mind.

regulations they believed unimportant.<sup>290</sup>

Since the Colossian church was Gentile and there is nothing in the letter to suggest an internal division between Jews and Gentiles in the church, it is likely that the "judging" was coming from the synagogue in Colossae against the Colossian Christians who claimed to share in Israel's inheritance without "taking on all that was most distinctive of that heritage,"<sup>291</sup> particularly in their worship.

The focus of the discussion of verse 16 in this section will center upon the last part: ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων. This is a typical list of Jewish holy days found in the Old Testament.

But this shall be the obligation of the prince regarding the burnt offerings, at the festivals, the new moons, and the Sabbaths, all the appointed festivals of the house of Israel (Ezek. 45:17).

I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals (Hos. 2:11).

Following on the heels of a discussion of spiritual circumcision it would appear that these celebrations are Jewish in nature. Such rituals as previously mentioned separated the Jew from his/her Gentile neighbor.<sup>292</sup> There are commentators who suggest, however, that while these festivals are Jewish in nature, they are not being observed in Colossae (or under consideration for observance) as marks of distinction or as signs of God's election. These holy

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>292</sup> Wright, Colossians, p. 119.

days are kept for the sake of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.<sup>293</sup> These elements or astral powers guide the course of the stars and govern the order of the calendar.<sup>294</sup> Humanity is subjected to these powers and must serve them by conformity to food laws and special days and times.<sup>295</sup> If this was indeed the case then the issue in Colossians would not be one of participation in Jewish practices, for as Lohse himself states, "A Jew would find it impossible to participate in such worship."<sup>296</sup>

I am not convinced, however, that this view is correct. Much of the argument hinges on the identification of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, and I shall deal with this shortly. Three arguments can be made, however, at this point in the discussion: First, this passage comes in the context of a discussion over "spiritual circumcision," which has affinity with the discussion of circumcision in Galatians. Second, this passage is a typical list of holy days found in the Old Testament, circumcision, food laws (ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει), and the festival calendar, which are completely in line with the ritual lifestyle of Judaism.<sup>297</sup> Moreover, since Sabbath is clearly a Jewish holy day, its association with new moons and festivals, likely mean that they too are Jewish (cf. 1 Chr. 23:31; 2 Chr.

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<sup>293</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 139; Lohse, Colossians, p. 115.

<sup>294</sup>O'Brien, Colossian, p. 139.

<sup>295</sup>Lohse, Colossians, pp. 115-116.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid.

<sup>297</sup>P. Benoit, "Qumran et le Nouveau Testament." NTS 7 (1960), p. 287.

2:3-5; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Is. 1:13-14; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11; 1 Macc. 10:34).<sup>298</sup> Indeed, the use of the plural σαββάτων here is commonly Jewish.<sup>299</sup> While alcohol, particularly wine, was not prohibited (Dt. 7:13; 11:14; cf. Mk. 14:23-25; Jn. 2:1-11) in Judaism, Jews could and did become quite scrupulous avoiding meat and wine offered in libation to pagan gods (cf. Dan. 1:3-16; 10:3; Est. 4:16-17; TReu. 1:10; TJud. 15:4 Jos. As. 8:5).<sup>300</sup> Third, if these practices listed in 2:16 are somehow syncretistic in nature or non-Jewish ascetical practices, it is difficult to understand why Paul would state that these things were ἅ ἐστιν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων. Nowhere is it argued in the New Testament that Christ is the fulfilment of Gentile religious and ascetical customs. The eschatological character of this phrase as well as the initial verses of chapter 3 should not be underemphasized.

Arnold recognizes that the phrase ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων in 2:16 is clearly Jewish, but then simply asserts that "the teachers of the 'philosophy' adapted [my emphasis] Sabbath observance from Jewish tradition."<sup>301</sup> He also suggests that the Colossian observance of Sabbath and the new moon bore many similarities with Elchasite teaching. His argument is based mostly on conjecture, except for his appeal to the Jewish mystical traditions regarding Sabbath. He particularly notes Qumran but simply decides it is doubtful whether that kind of communal and liturgical mysticism was what the advocates of the philosophy were

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<sup>298</sup> J. Aletti, Colossiens ÉB (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), p. 193.

<sup>299</sup> Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 192.

<sup>300</sup> Dunn, Romans, 2:827.

<sup>301</sup> Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 214-218.

teaching. Yet, in these very same texts which Arnold cites (4QShirShab and the 4Q400 texts) there is reference to angelic worship. The parallels here are simply too strong to ignore.

### Conclusion

Colossians 2:16 is a typical list of Jewish holy days found in the Old Testament (Ezek. 45:17; 46:3; Hos. 2:11). In the context of the discussion this is the most logical conclusion. The suggestion that they are not falls short for the reasons mentioned above. Moreover, since the Colossians are being discounted as heirs of Israel's heritage by the synagogue for their failure to observe these special days, we have a further parallel with Galatians 4:10 where a similar problem is revealed; except the Galatians have already begun to observe such days. There is nothing in Colossians which suggests this is the situation in the church at Colossae.

### FOOD LAWS

#### GALATIANS 2:11-18 AND COLOSSIANS 2:16; 2:21-22

Food laws prescribed in the Torah were an obvious mark of Jewish identity. Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain admonitions concerning unclean foods in and of themselves as well as foods offered to idols (Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 11; 17:10-14; Dt. 12:16, 23-24; 14; 15:23).<sup>302</sup> It is Daniel in exile who refuses to contaminate

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<sup>302</sup>See Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, p. 130.

himself with a diet in violation of the Torah.

The king assigned a daily allowance of food and wine from the royal table.... Now Daniel determined not to contaminate himself by touching the food and wine assigned to him by the king, and he begged the master of the eunuchs not to make him do so (Dan. 1:5, 8; cf. 10:3).

Judith is worth mentioning as well,

Holophernes then commanded them to bring her in where his silver was set out, and he ordered a meal to be served for her from his own food and wine. But Judith said, "I will not eat any of it, in case I should be breaking our law. What I have brought with me will meet my needs" (Jud. 12:1-2; cf. Tob. 1:10-12; 3 Macc. 3:4; Est. 14:17; Jos. As. 7:1; 8:5; Josephus, *War* 2:138-139; 1QS 6; 1QSa 2).

The Jewish diet was also known as a mark of Jewishness to the Gentiles (Philo, *Legatio*, 361; Plutarch *Quaest. Conviv.* 4.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1-2).

#### Galatians 2:11-18

Concerning this passage and its relationship to food laws Dunn asks the appropriate questions:

What was the nature of the table-fellowship that Peter enjoyed with the Gentile believers? What was involved in it? What precisely did he withdraw from when the men from James arrived?<sup>303</sup>

Did Peter and the other Jews more or less relinquish the laws regulating table-fellowship?<sup>304</sup> Could it be instead that the Gentile Christians in Galatia were already observing some of the basic food laws required by the law (such as

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<sup>303</sup> Idem, Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 130.

<sup>304</sup> Bruce, Galatians, p. 128; Longenecker, Galatians, and Guthrie, Galatians, p. 85.

abstinence from pork and proper procedure as far as slaughter was concerned),<sup>305</sup> making it possible for the Jewish believers to eat with Gentile believers in an environment less rigorous in respect to the law, but one falling short of abandonment of all the regulations of table-fellowship?

The evidence is strong that Judaism was attractive to many Gentiles in the Roman world and that they kept the law and followed its regulations in varying degrees (Josephus, *Ap.* 2:280-282; *Ant.* 20:38-48; *War* 7:45; Philo, *Mos.* 2:41-43; Dio Cassius, 60:6.6; 67:14.1-3; Juvenal, *Satires* 14:96-106; Suetonius, *Domitian* 12:2; Plutarch, *Cicero* 7:6). The practice of Gentiles following Jewish regulations was common enough that certain non-Jewish dietary practices could be mistaken as Jewish (Seneca, *Letter* 108:22). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that it was somewhat common for Gentile Christians to have been God-fearers<sup>306</sup> prior to their acceptance of Christianity and were already in the habit, prior to their conversion, of regarding the dietary laws to some extent. Along with this it was uncharacteristic, as we have seen, for Jewish believers to abandon the law completely, given its boundary-marking characteristics for them as God's people. This included table-fellowship with Gentiles (Dan. 1:8-16; Tob. 1:10-13; Jud. 12:1-20; 1 Macc. 1:62-63; 3 Macc. 3:4; Jub. 22:16; Aristeas 139, 142; Acts 10:14; 11:2-3; 15:20, 29; 1 Cor. 8-10; *Baba Qamma* 7:7; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5:5).<sup>307</sup> It is likely that the "men from James" wanted stricter adherence to the laws concerned with dietary

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<sup>305</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, p. 154.

<sup>306</sup>On the varying degrees by which Gentiles were obedient to the regulations of Judaism, see Cohen "Crossing the Boundary."

<sup>307</sup>*Ibid.*, p.152.

and ritual purity,<sup>308</sup> but it is unclear how lax the observance of those laws had become.

Given the evidence for Gentile attraction to the law, and the Jewish concern over issues of ethnic boundaries, it is probably the case that the cause of the Antioch incident did not take place over a complete disregard for the dietary and purity laws.<sup>309</sup> At the same time, there appear to have been serious breaches of the law in Antioch. This explains Paul's face-to-face criticism of Peter-- "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live as Jews?" (Gal. 2:14; cf. Jub. 6:35; 15:33-34; Pss. of Sol. 1:8; 8:13). It must be recognized here that this is Paul's interpretation of Peter's behavior, but it is reasonable to assume, that both men had enough common ground to agree, for the most part, what it meant to live like a Jew, and by abandoning certain regulations, live like a Gentile (cf. Acts 10:9-16, especially v. 14; 22:3; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:4-6).

As we have seen the Judaism of the first-century was concerned with defining the limits of table-fellowship.<sup>310</sup> The observing of these limits, we have

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<sup>308</sup>How long Peter ate with the Gentile believers before the "men from James" arrived is not clear. See Mussner, Galaterbrief, p. 137.

<sup>309</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul, and the Law, p. 152, suggests that a complete abandoning of the law by some Jewish Christians at Antioch, would have surely met with protests by other Jewish Christians, of which there is no record. While such objections are not mentioned in Galatians, such protest could have prompted the visit of the "men from James." Nevertheless, the visit could equally have been prompted by a concern for more scrupulous observance of the law, amidst some laxity.

<sup>310</sup>J. Neusner, The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3:297.

also noted, varied from Jewish community to Jewish community.<sup>311</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that even among the Jewish communities of the Diaspora it was expected that good Jews would follow the halakic explanations of the purity laws (*Hullin* 1:2).<sup>312</sup> This may have been true of Antioch as well. While there certainly was social interaction between Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, more scrupulous Jews would generally avoid table fellowship with Gentiles, (*Jub.* 22:16; cf. *Makkoth* 2.3; *Oholoth* 18.7; again Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1-2).<sup>313</sup> Jews who were more Hellenized, however, might feel free to participate with Gentiles in table-fellowship within certain limits.<sup>314</sup> It is likely that the early church wrestled more intensely with this dilemma as more and more Gentiles entered the church (cf. Acts 11:2-3).

Whatever the exact nature of the table-fellowship at Antioch, the dispute finds its heart in 2:14 in Paul's rebuke of Cephas: Εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις Ἰουδαῖζειν. Here Cephas is told that he lives like a Gentile in matters of table-fellowship. Again, this does not necessarily mean that Peter has abandoned entirely the laws regulating table-fellowship. What

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<sup>311</sup>Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews," pp. 90-91.

<sup>312</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 140.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>314</sup>It is at this point that Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews," p. 103, places Paul quite high on the assimilation scale into Gentile culture, while at the same time drawing the line in reference to "personal participation in 'idolatry.'

the "men from James"<sup>315</sup> wanted was stricter observance of the food and purity laws. This effectively meant that unless the Gentiles decided *Ἰουδαΐζειν*,<sup>316</sup> the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians could not have table-fellowship together. This could and likely would compel the Gentile believers to judaize, that is, to embrace Jewish customs and laws to the extent that Gentile believers would be accepted into the table-fellowship.<sup>317</sup>

One reason that Peter may have withdrawn from table-fellowship with Gentiles was that he was told that such behavior was not Jewish, and as a Jew he ought to live like one. He had abandoned the ancestral faith. Indeed, his lifestyle in Antioch hindered the evangelization of other Jews.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>Why these "men from James" went to Antioch is much debated. Had they heard about the table-fellowship in Antioch, or were they sent (or did they come on their own initiative) simply to communicate some general concerns over the expression of the faith? Are these men to be equated with the *ψευδαδελφοί*? See W. Schmithals, *Paul and James* (Naperville: Allenson, 1965), p.66ff.; Schoeps, *Paul*, p. 67f.

<sup>316</sup>For the use of the term "judaize" see Esther 8:17 (LXX); Plutarch, *Cicero* 7.6; Ignatius, *Magnesians* 10.3; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.22.5; Josephus, *War* 2:454.

<sup>317</sup>It seems to me that the debate over whether or not these meals were celebrations of the Lord's Supper is somewhat misplaced. If the Lord's Supper occurred in the context of an entire meal, then to raise barriers that prevented Jews and Gentiles from celebrating together certainly struck at the heart of the unity of God's people. The main dilemma, however, was not the Lord's Supper, but the ordinary meal where barriers were being raised that excluded the Gentiles, which also hindered the unity of God's people. For this discussion see, H. Schlier, *Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965), p. 83; Burton, *Galatians*, p. 104; Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 129; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 107.

<sup>318</sup>Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 79. Bruce gives a hypothetical paraphrase of the argument the men from James may have presented, "News is reaching us in Jerusalem that you are habitually practicing table-fellowship with Gentiles. This is causing grave scandal to our more conservative brethren here. Not only so: it is becoming common knowledge outside the church, so that our attempts to evangelize our fellow-Jews are being seriously hampered" (*Galatians*, p. 130).

Paul saw this withdrawal from the table as inconsistent with the gospel. Peter and his Jewish brothers were not on the right road.<sup>319</sup> In complying with the demands of the church in Jerusalem, if indeed it was the church in Jerusalem or merely certain men claiming such authority, Peter built a wall of separation between the Jewish and Gentile believers. It was a wall that denied the Gentile Christians full membership into the church; it denied their status as true believers, unless, of course the Gentiles were to Judaize, which meant becoming more like Jews. In so doing the covenant prerogatives would continue to remain in the hands of ethnic Israel.<sup>320</sup>

In Paul's view such an attitude continued to place the Gentile believers in the category of "sinners" (ἁμαρτωλοί). The phrase ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί may very well have been employed by the "men from James" as a reference to the Gentile believers. The term would raise questions in the minds of those Jews having table-fellowship with the Gentiles. Should they eat with sinners, that is, Gentiles who do not possess the law (Ps. 27:3; 54:3; 91:7; 100:8; 124:3; 128:3--LXX; Tob. 13:8; Jub. 23:23-24; 4 Ez. 4:23), or more importantly, who do not follow the halakic rules?<sup>321</sup> The very concept of "sinner" in reference to the Gentile Christians meant for Paul, that his Jewish brothers had missed the point of justification by faith. His argument in 2:15-18 and beyond is that in Christ God has justified the

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<sup>319</sup>J. Winter, "Another Instance of ὀρθοδοδεῖν." HTR 34 (1941), p. 161f.

<sup>320</sup>There must have been a power struggle involved in this discussion. With the flood of Gentiles coming into the church, requiring the "works of the law" from the Gentile believers kept the power in the hands of the Jewish Christians, who were becoming more and more of a minority all the time.

<sup>321</sup>K. Rengstorf, "ἁμαρτωλός." TDNT, 1:332-333.

Gentiles through faith, even though they remain Gentiles. They remain Gentiles, but in Christ they are no longer "sinners."<sup>322</sup> Justification by faith is not simply the way one enters the covenant, it is the way one lives in the covenant.<sup>323</sup> Therefore, circumcision, and table-regulations were not to be required of the Gentiles. The inheritance of Abraham now belonged to the Gentiles also (3:14).

### Conclusion

Food laws as prescribed in the Torah were an obvious mark of Jewish identity in the first century A.D. The issue of table fellowship in Galatians was not one of complete abandonment of all the laws regarding table fellowship. It appears that the "men from James" wanted stricter adherence to the laws concerning food and ritual purity. As more and more Gentiles entered the church, the more important became the issue of the identity of the people of God. Food laws figured into that identity.

The limits of table fellowship were different from community to community. They were generally more relaxed in Hellenistic Judaism. Devout Jews, however, basically avoided table fellowship with Gentiles. In demanding stricter devotion to the food and purity laws, the "men from James" were building a wall between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Unless the Gentile believers judaized there could be little or no table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

For Paul this was inconsistent with the gospel, for it denied the Gentiles

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<sup>322</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 88.

<sup>323</sup>Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, pp. 158-159.

full membership in the church. The covenant privileges remained in the hands of ethnic Israel. The Gentile Christians remain *ἁμαρτωλοί*. This misses the point of justification by faith. In Christ the Gentiles are justified by God through faith as Gentiles. They are no longer *ἁμαρτωλοί*.

Colossians 2:16 and 2:21-22

My concern in Colossians 2:16 is Paul's statement, *Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει*.<sup>324</sup> More than a few scholars have argued that this is not a reference to the Old Testament dietary laws. O'Brien takes this position because there are no prohibitions in the Old Testament, except in a few cases (Lev. 10:9; 11:34, 36; Num 6:3), with reference to drinks.<sup>325</sup> Certainly Jews were not the only ones to observe dietary regulations.<sup>326</sup> Moreover, the dietary prohibitions are viewed by others as some sort of ascetical practice designed as a prelude to a divine revelation, or forbidden because of the belief in the transmigration of souls, or practiced because of a dualistic world view.<sup>327</sup> It is, perhaps, Lohse who presents the strongest argument against a Jewish background for these dietary prohibitions, as well as circumcision and the special days: There seems

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<sup>324</sup>Lohse's claim, *Colossians*, p. 115, that *βρώσις* and *πόσις* should be distinguished from *βρώμα* (1 Cor. 3:2; 6:13; 8:8, 13; 10:3; Rom. 14:15) and *πόμα* (1 Cor. 10:4) is tenuous. Harris is correct when he argues that metonymy can make *βρώσις* equivalent to *βρώμα* and *πόσις* equivalent to *πόμα* (*Colossians*, p. 118).

<sup>325</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 138.

<sup>326</sup>Wolter, *Kolosser*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>327</sup>Lohse, *Colossian*, p. 115; Pokorný, *Colossian*, p. 143; Martin, *Colossian*, pp. 90-91; Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption*, p. 162.

to be a complete absence of debate over the Mosaic law in Colossians, and the word νόμος is not found in Colossians at all.<sup>328</sup>

I do not think, however, that Lohse is right. The term itself may be absent, but all the most critical features of the law we have been discussing and will continue to discuss are present in the letter.<sup>329</sup>

The comments concerning food and drink come in the context of circumcision and the observation of special days and the Sabbath, which I have already argued are primarily Jewish in nature. This lends support to the claim for a Jewish background to the food and drink issue mentioned as well. The Colossians are being judged (κρίνω) for their negligence in observing these dietary regulations. This emphasizes the importance such a diet played in Jewish identity in the Diaspora.<sup>330</sup> There may indeed be only a few references to drink in the Old Testament, but a few are all that is necessary. Moreover, O'Brien fails to call attention to the Mishnah (*Hullin* 8:1f.) where a Jew is prohibited from drinking milk while eating meat. This surely must have been a problem for a Jew in a Gentile context. It is also likely, as I have already mentioned that this reference to drink bears similarity to Romans 14:21 (note also the use of the term κρίνω in Romans 14:3-4) where the issue is probably one of drinking wine offered in libation to Roman gods before being sold in the market (cf. Dan. 1:3-16; 10:3;

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<sup>328</sup>E. Lohse, "Christologie und Ethik im Kolosserbrief." Apophoreta Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), pp. 157f.

<sup>329</sup>See Wright, Colossians, pp. 25-26; Dunn, Colossians, p. 33.

<sup>330</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 172.

TReu. 1:10; TJud. 15:4).<sup>331</sup> Indeed, Diaspora Judaism was quite concerned over whether both food and drink had been offered to the gods. In addition strict observance of the Mosaic law could be viewed as ascetical, especially in light of Qumran.<sup>332</sup>

Moreover, Eusebius makes this comment in his *Ecclesiastical History* about James the Lord's brother: οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐκ ἔπιεν οὐδὲ ἔμψυχον ἔφαγεν. Abstinence from wine and meat could also be a gesture of repentance (TReu. 1:10; TJud. 15:4).

Colossians 2:21, Μὴ ἄψη μὴδὲ γέωση μὴδὲ θίγης<sup>333</sup>, certainly has an Old Testament flavor. There is a particularly striking passage in the Testament of Moses (first century A.D.<sup>334</sup>):

They, with hand and mind, will touch impure things, yet their mouths will speak enormous things, and they will even say, "do not touch me, lest you pollute me in the position I occupy..." (7:9-10).

This verse also reflects the teaching of the rabbis.<sup>335</sup> *Makkoth* 3:7 notes:

If a Nazirite drank wine throughout the day he is liable (for scourging) only on one count. If they said to him (as often as he proposes to drink), "Do not drink! Do not drink!" and he drank

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<sup>331</sup>Idem., Romans, 2:827.

<sup>332</sup>W. Davies, "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit." The Scrolls and the New Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 167f; P. Benoit, "Qumran and the New Testament." Paul and Qumran (Chicago: Priory, 1968), p. 17.

<sup>333</sup>It may be that these are the words used by those tempted to submit to some form of the law or Paul may be expressing some sarcasm. Lohse, Colossian, p. 123; O'Brien, Colossians, p. 149.

<sup>334</sup>J. Priest, in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha ed., J. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 2:920-921.

<sup>335</sup>See Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 201.

(nevertheless), he is liable on each count. If he contracted uncleanness because of the dead throughout the day, he is liable (for scourging) on only one count. If they say to him, "Do not contract uncleanness! Do not contract uncleanness!", and he (nevertheless) contracted uncleanness, he is liable on each count."

The point to be made here is that these passages show that such concerns in these very terms were a feature of the Judaism of this period. Thus I agree with Wright: this type of regulation can easily be seen in the context of Judaism and there is no reason to look elsewhere for its background.<sup>336</sup> Both DeMaris<sup>337</sup> and Arnold<sup>338</sup> acknowledge that these practices could reveal a Jewish problem but they think the context of the letter suggests otherwise. Yet they never explain why they believe this to be the case. Indeed, Arnold spends most of his discussion on dietary regulations dealing with Jewish mysticism.

Verse 17 states, ἃ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων. It has been argued that this may be a reference to Plato's distinction between realm of ideas and the world of the shadows (for Philo's use of σκιά see *Leg. All.* 3:100-103; *Plant.* 27; *Abr.* 119-120),<sup>339</sup> but τῶν μελλόντων, which suggests an eschatological designation is missing from Platonic philosophy and philosophy influenced by Plato (cf. *Rep.* 514a-518b; Philo, *Post.* 112; *Decal.* 82; *Plant.* 27; *Somn.* 1, 206; *Leg. All.* 3:96). In Hebrews, however, we do find a similar statement about shadows in reference to the law:

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<sup>336</sup>Wright, *Colossians*, p. 126.

<sup>337</sup>DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, p. 58.

<sup>338</sup>Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, pp. 210-214.

<sup>339</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 116.

Σκιάν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων (10:1).<sup>340</sup> Colossians 2:17 is not a reference to timeless metaphysical ideas, rather it is about a divergence between the two aeons.<sup>341</sup> The "shadow" is the foreshadowing of what is to come.<sup>342</sup> This does not mean that no Platonic notion is present here. Nevertheless it has clearly been modified eschatologically and christologically.<sup>343</sup>

Moreover, it is difficult to understand why Paul and Timothy would refer to non-Jewish ascetical practices as "a shadow of things to come." Nowhere in the New Testament do we find the idea that Christ is the fulfillment of Gentile religious and ascetical customs. Paul never suggested that Christianity has made Judaism irrelevant. Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism, which represented the shadow of what God intended.<sup>344</sup> The language of fulfillment, the language of eschatology is very Jewish.<sup>345</sup> Christ the σῶμα (reality, substance) has come. The things that foreshadowed Christ are no longer to be considered as norms in the

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<sup>340</sup>On the differences between Philo and Hebrews see R. Williamson, Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews ALGHJ 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 142-159.

<sup>341</sup>Schulz, "σκιά" TDNT, 7:398.

<sup>342</sup>Lähnemann, Kolossierbrief, p. 136.

<sup>343</sup>Dunn, Colossians, pp. 176-177.

<sup>344</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 119.

<sup>345</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 144. I think Pokorný's discussion inadequate when he recognizes briefly the eschatological nature of 2:17, but then continues to argue as if it makes no difference in understanding the nature of the problem at Colossae.

living of the faith,<sup>346</sup> whether these are dietary laws, Sabbath and other special days, or circumcision.

Finally the phrase τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων (2:8 and 2:22) is critical to the context of this whole discussion. These words are reminiscent of Jesus in Mark 7:8 where the subject of debate is the ritual washing of hands and utensils: ἀφέντες τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κρατεῖτε τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Isaiah 29:13 is also worth quoting (cf. Mk. 7:6-7):

The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far away from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote...

In addition Titus 1:14 is striking: μὴ προσέχοντες Ἰουδαίκοις μύθοις καὶ ἐντολαῖς ἀνθρώπων ἀποστρεφόμενων ἀλήθειαν.

Both Hellenistic and Jewish thought made use of the word παράδοσις. The traditions were passed along just as carefully in Greek philosophy as in Jewish thought. The tradition in Gnosticism was passed along by means of secret rites.<sup>347</sup> While the examination of this word alone will not assist us much in determining the nature of the tradition, the fact that Paul refers to the tradition as τῶν ἀνθρώπων signals something more significant. It is a phrase known in the Gospels and the Old Testament, and not in Hellenistic and gnostic sources.<sup>348</sup> An

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<sup>346</sup> A. Bandstra The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 92.

<sup>347</sup> G. Delling, "λαμβάνω." TDNT, 4:12.

<sup>348</sup> In Lohse's discussion of the Hellenistic and Greek use of the word "tradition" not once does he refer to a source that uses the phrase τῶν ἀνθρώπων. It seems to me that the entire phrase is much more significant than the word

crucial weakness in Martin's Cynic thesis is that he ignores this phrase, likely because it is absent from Cynic sources.<sup>349</sup> Yet, it is as important as the reference to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Martin makes much of the latter phrase, but ignores the former.

All of these things: circumcision, Sabbath and special days, dietary and purity laws "are destined to perish with use." This is also reminiscent of Mark 7:18-19:

"Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean).

The authors of Colossians had more in mind than food regulations, but the two passages are similar in that they argue that these practices are "merely human (cf. I Cor. 6:13). These things will perish because they will be rendered useless in the using,<sup>350</sup> but they will also "wear out in time."<sup>351</sup> This is eschatological language as well; another confirmation of the Jewish nature of the Colossian "dilemma."

Martin argues that the phrase reveals Cynic critique of those things not naturally produced.<sup>352</sup> It can hardly be contended, however, that Cynic

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"tradition" by itself. The full phrase is a better guide to the context. Colossians, pp. 95-96.

<sup>349</sup>Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit.

<sup>350</sup>Moule translates this phrase "destined to perish in the course of using them up." Colossians, p. 108.

<sup>351</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 126.

<sup>352</sup>Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, pp. 65-73.

terminology on this subject provides a close verbal parallel with Colossians 2:22. In Cynicism, perishable goods are those goods which depend upon human skill (τέχνη). This is not the language of Colossians. Moreover, Martin wants to make the Cynic connection between the matter of perishable goods and slavery, but again Colossians makes no connection.

### Conclusion

Colossians 2:16 is best seen as a reference to Jewish dietary regulations. Indeed, the character of the verse is strongly Jewish. The authors' comments concerning food and drink come in the context of circumcision, the keeping of special days, and Sabbath, which as I have argued, are also best understood as Jewish in nature. The reference to asceticism in 2:18 can also be seen as a reference to the strict observance of regulations in the Torah. Colossians 2:21 has an Old Testament flavor and can be viewed as well in the context of Judaism. There is no need to look elsewhere for the context. It is also difficult to understand why the author would refer to non-Jewish ascetical practices as "a shadow of things to come." This language of fulfillment is very Jewish in character. Finally the phrase τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων fits well into a Jewish context as a reference to, at least, certain prescriptions in the Mosaic law. There is both Old and New Testament evidence to suggest this.

## ΤΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ AND ANGELS

GALATIANS 4:3, 9; 3:19 AND COLOSSIANS 2:8; 2:20; 2:18

The Colossian "philosophy," this human tradition, is also referred to in the phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Most commentators translate this phrase "the elemental spirits of the universe."<sup>353</sup> It is of considerable importance in determining the nature of the situation in Colossae. Three major interpretations have been argued.<sup>354</sup>

First, the view of the majority of scholars in the twentieth century is that the στοιχεῖα are spiritual beings who control the world and the universe. These cosmic powers are to be worshiped as they preside over the elements of the universe (Orphic Hymn 66:4).<sup>355</sup> These cosmic powers were associated with heavenly bodies and exercised control over human beings directing the course of the stars and thus the order of the calendar.

The second position views the στοιχεῖα simply as the basic elements of the world in general<sup>356</sup> or the four basic elements: earth, water, air and fire (Philo

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<sup>353</sup>The different interpretations of the στοιχεῖα need not be rehearsed here. For a survey of the varying interpretations see Mussner, Galaterbrief, pp. 293-297; O'Brien, Colossians, pp. 129-132; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 164-168.

<sup>354</sup>There is a variety of interpretation within each of these three positions, but the classification of these positions into three groups is still valid, and I think helpful.

<sup>355</sup>Dibelius, Kolosser, p. 27-29; H. Brinsmead, Galatians: Dialogical Response to Opponents (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 120-127; Schlier, Galater, pp. 190-193; G. MacGregor, "Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of Saint Paul's Thought." NTS 1 (1954): pp. 21-22.

<sup>356</sup>W. Wink, Naming the Powers (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 69; G. Dellling, "στοιχείον." TDNT, 7:672-678.

*Quis Her.* 134; *Cher.* 127; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:183 Diogenes Laertius 7:136-137).<sup>357</sup>

This position has the most lexical evidence in its support.<sup>358</sup>

The third approach contends that the στοιχεῖα are principles of religious instruction.<sup>359</sup> The disagreement among those who hold this position is whether the principles are Jewish or a mixture of Jewish and Gentile teaching.

#### Galatians 4:3, 9; 3:19

In Galatians the στοιχεῖα obviously have some relationship to the law. In verse three of chapter four, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι, Paul repeats the fundamental ingredients of his argument concerning Israel under the law in 3:23-25: God's people were kept under the custody of the law while they were minors,<sup>360</sup> that is, before the coming of Christ (4:4).

The vast majority of scholars understand the στοιχεῖα in Galatians as the

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<sup>357</sup>E. Schweizer, "Christianity of the Circumcised and Judaism of the Uncircumcised: The Background of Matthew and Colossians." Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 1976): 245-260.

<sup>358</sup>Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 165.

<sup>359</sup>Burton, Galatians, pp. 215-216; W. Carr, Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase *hai archai kai hai exousiai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 75-76; Moule, Colossians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp.90-92. This was the commonly held view among the Church Fathers. See A. Bandstra, The Law and the Elements, pp. 5-12.

<sup>360</sup>Longenecker, Galatians, p. 165.

elemental powers of the universe, the rulers of planetary spheres<sup>361</sup> or the angelic powers who mediated the law.<sup>362</sup> It was a commonly held belief in the first century Greco-Roman world that cosmic forces influenced the daily lives of people.<sup>363</sup> What is important to note is that the association of the στοιχεῖα with celestial beings and their influence in human affairs was common in the Judaism of the time.<sup>364</sup> Philo states that the spirits in the air

subordinate governors under the ruler of the All, so to speak the ears and eyes of the Great King which see and hear everything. Other philosophers call them δαίμονες, but the sacred word calls them ἄγγελοι (*Somn.* 1:140-141).

Such personal and cosmic reference to these "powers" can be found in many extant documents (Dt. 4:19; Jdg. 5:20; Job 38:7; Dan. 8:10; Jub. 2:2; Wisd. 7:17f.; TSol. 8:2-4; TAb. 13:11; Philo, *Aet.* 107-109; *Op.* 73; *Plant.* 12; 1 En. 43:1-2; 75:1; 80:6-7; 86; 2 En. 19:1-4; cf. Rom. 8:38-39; 2 Pt. 3:10, 12).<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup>E.g. Betz, *Galatians*, pp 204-205; A. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 8; L. Belleville, "'Under Law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11." *JSNT* 26 (1986), pp. 53-78; Schlier, *Galaterbrief*, p. 192.

<sup>362</sup>E.g. B. Reicke, "The Law and the World According to Paul." *JBL* 70 (1951), pp. 259-276; Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, p. 45.

<sup>363</sup>J. Blinzler, "Lexikalisches zu dem Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus." *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus 1961* AnBib 17-18 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 2:429-443; Schweizer, "Elemente der Welt," pp. 456-464.

<sup>364</sup>See J. Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology During the Hellenistic and Roman Period." *ANRW* 2.20.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 926-950.

<sup>365</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, p. 205, rightly notes that it is a mistake to distinguish between personal and impersonal forces in reference to the στοιχεῖα as Paul probably knew of no distinction.

Stuckenbruck cautions, however, against the notion that Paul himself might have believed in these cosmic beings.<sup>366</sup> Some Jewish writers clearly rejected the idea that such στοιχεῖα actually existed. It is, therefore, possible to suggest that Paul is employing in his argument a "traditional Hellenistic Jewish polemic"<sup>367</sup> that presented Gentiles as idolaters who worshiped the στοιχεῖα as deities, which in fact did not exist (Gal. 4:8; cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Wisd. 13:1-3; Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 2-4). Given this understanding of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, just what is Paul's point in connecting these "powers" to the law? Several observations can be made.

First, it is obvious from 4:3-5 that the law is in view. The Gentiles' slavery to the στοιχεῖα (v. 3) is parallel in Paul's analogy to Israel as under guardians and trustees (4:2, ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους, ὑπὸ οἰκονόμους), that is, ὑπὸ νόμον (4:23-25).

Second, and related to this is that τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, while connected to the law, are nevertheless to be identified as something different from the law. In 3:23 Paul writes, "Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith should be revealed." His remarks in 4:3 concern the same issue: "So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου." Then in verses 4 and 5 Paul again directly mentions the law:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

Then in verse 8 Paul refers not to enslavement under the law, but to the enslavement the Gentiles had in their worship of pagan idols before coming to

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<sup>366</sup>Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, pp. 106-108.

<sup>367</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

faith (cf. Dt.32:21). Paul's connection of the στοιχεῖα to the Galatians' pagan past, links the law and the Galatians' former idolatrous practices. Paul's clear implication in this is that turning to the law is tantamount to a return to their former paganism.

Moreover, the relationship between calendar calculation and astronomy in Judaism<sup>368</sup> comes into play when Paul asks the Galatians,

νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ, πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα, οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεῦειν θέλετε;(4:9).

Paul is connecting the pre-Christian religious experience of the Gentiles with the pre-Christian religious experience of the Jewish people by referring to the former as enslavement, and the latter as protective custody (3:23). It is not correct that Paul points to Israel's observance of the law as enslavement. No where does Paul suggest this. What Paul claims is simply that as Gentiles the Galatians' practice of the law is a return to their enslavement to the στοιχεῖα (4:8-10).<sup>369</sup> In this sense then, "observing the special days, and months, and seasons, and years" (4:10), although Jewish in nature, is a return to their pagan ways before Christ.

A previous implicit connection between the law and the στοιχεῖα is made in 3:19 with the phrase διαταγεῖς δι' ἀγγέλων. The meaning seems to be straightforward. In 3:19-22 Paul attempts to answer the question, Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; While there is no explicit reference in the Masoretic text to angels "ordaining the

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<sup>368</sup>L. Hartman, "Humble and Confident: On the So-Called Philosophers in Colossians." StTh 49 (1995), pp. 30-31.

<sup>369</sup>As does Longenecker, Galatians, p. 179.

law," the LXX reading of Deuteronomy 33:2 clearly connects angels to Mt. Sinai.

Καὶ εἶπε, Κύριος ἐκ Σινᾶ ἦκει, καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἐκ σηεῖρ ἡμῖν, καὶ κατέσπευσεν ἐξ ὄρους Φαράν, σὺν μυρίασι Κάδης, ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ (also Jub. 1:27-29; 2:1; 6:22; 30:12, 21; 50:1).

Psalm 68:18 (LXX 67:18) was also connected to the angels and the law in later rabbinic thought. Moreover the same idea is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2). There is clear evidence to suggest then the belief in Paul's day that the angels assisted in the mediation of the law and that this tradition was meant to reinforce the glory of the giving of the law at Sinai (Dt. 33:2 LXX; Jub. 1:29-2:1; Philo, *Somn.* 1:142-143; Josephus. *Ant.* 15:136; again Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2).<sup>370</sup>

It is not the case, therefore, that in 3:19 Paul denies the divine origin of the law,<sup>371</sup> nor does his reference to the angels' mediation of the law demonize it.<sup>372</sup> The role of angels in the giving of the law was, in actuality, viewed quite positively (Dt. 33:2-4; Jub. 1:29-2:1; preface to the Apoc. Mos.;<sup>373</sup> Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2; Josephus, *Ant.* 15:136; Philo, *Somn.* 1:142-143). Having just affirmed the notion that the covenant with Abraham was given directly by God (3:18), the reference to the law's mediation by God through angels and Moses suggests, not that the law is of human origin, or even worse, evil; rather the point is and will

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<sup>370</sup> See T. Callan, "Pauline Midrash: The Exegetical Background of Gal. 3:19b." *JBL* 99 (1980): 549-567.

<sup>371</sup> J. Drane, *Paul: Libertine or Legalist?* (London: SPCK, 1975), pp. 34, 113.

<sup>372</sup> Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 24-36.

<sup>373</sup> Noted by Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 191 and Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 111, note 159.

continue to be in chapters three and four, that the law is not able to do what the promise can. The idea that the law was mediated through angels, as opposed to being given directly by God suggests this. Here, Paul begins his argument for the temporary status of the law.

The reference to the law's mediation through angels, begins the answer to the question in the first part of 3:19-- Τι οὖν ὁ νόμος? The first part of Paul's answer affirms this temporary status-- τῶν παραβάσεων χάρις προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπηγγέλται-- which is the main thrust of his entire answer (3:23-4:10). Thus Paul's major point in referring to the mediation of the law is to contrast the giving of the law through mediaries (the law's "indirectedness"<sup>374</sup>) with the giving of the covenant directly to Abraham by God. The reference to God's oneness in 3:20 (ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἐστίν) is likely an appeal to the essential Jewish conviction of monotheism (cf. Paul's argument in 1 Cor. 8, particularly v. 6).<sup>375</sup> The law was given by more than one. God who is one directly gave the promise to Abraham. Therefore, unlike the promise given to Abraham which has been fulfilled in Christ, the law was not given directly by God and, therefore, it was not meant to be a permanent arrangement.<sup>376</sup> Paul's argument does not devalue the law as some have suggested.<sup>377</sup> It simply speaks of its temporary status.

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<sup>374</sup>Wright, Climax, p. 172.

<sup>375</sup>Betz, Galatians, p. 172, note 87.

<sup>376</sup>See Theilmann, Paul and the Law, p. 279, note 54.

<sup>377</sup>G. Kittel, "ἄγγελος." TDNT, 1:83; Burton, Galatians, p. 189; Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 145; Fung, Galatians, p. 163. Longenecker, Galatians, p. 140, suggests that the opponents in Galatia may have referred to the law's mediation by angels as confirmation of God's approval of the law. There is nothing in the letter that

Wright's claim that Paul's mention of the one seed in 3:16 refers to one family goes beyond the intent of the argument in 3:15-18.<sup>378</sup> Paul clearly states the "one seed" refers to Christ. Thus the connection more to the point seems to be that since the one God made the promise directly to Abraham and his one seed, which is Christ, the promise should be viewed as immutable because it is given directly by God, and not transitory as is the law, since it was given through mediators (more than one).<sup>379</sup>

So how is the temporary status of the law mediated through angels related to the Galatians' former enslavement to the στοιχειά? Dunn argues that in making reference to the law's mediation through angels, Paul presents the law as Israel's guardian angel. In so doing he refutes the notion that Israel, which placed itself under this mediated law, is different from the other nations. The law thus becomes a kind of guardian angel over Israel, equivalent to the στοιχειά, which exercised control over all the nations.<sup>380</sup>

It is certainly the case that Israel viewed the other nations as under the authority of guardian angels, while God reserved Israel for himself (Dt. 32:8-9;

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might indicate this. I think it more likely that this is Paul's reference in the course of his argument to make his point of the law's temporary status, contrasted with the permanent condition of the promise made to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ.

<sup>378</sup>Wright, Climax, pp. 162-170.

<sup>379</sup>The fact that the "one seed" of Galatians 3:16 does not refer to one family does not deny the possibility that 3:29 may do so. See Hays, Echoes of Scripture, p. 121.

<sup>380</sup>Dunn, Galatians, pp. 191-192; Idem., Letter to the Galatians, pp. 91-92; Idem., Jesus, Paul, and the Law, pp. 254-251; Idem., The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 142-143.

Sir. 17:17; Jub. 15:30-32; 1 En. 20:1-7). Nevertheless, Dunn's position has problems. First, Galatians makes no connection between the law mediated through angels, and the other nations under the power of guardian angels. There is a difference between the notion of guardian angels in Jewish theology and the idea that the law itself is a guardian angel. Yet, the law itself is never referred to as Israel's guardian angel in any ancient documents. This would have to be an argument Paul himself is striving to make. While this is possible it is not at all clear in Galatians that this is the point Paul is attempting to demonstrate. Second, if some direct connection is to be made between the notion of guardian angels and the στοιχεῖα, then why does Paul not specifically make the connection? There is no mention of ἄγγελοι after 3:19.<sup>381</sup> Second, since Paul's emphasis on the indirectness of the law is not meant to cast the law in a negative light, but only to highlight its inadequacy, it is difficult to see why he would equate the law given through angels with the στοιχεῖα, a notion he would not have viewed with favor.

So then, what is the connection between the angels and the στοιχεῖα in Galatians? The connection is most probably soteriological.<sup>382</sup> Whereas the law's indirectness makes it inadequate for the Gentiles' salvation (cf. 3:21), so too the Galatians' devotion to the στοιχεῖα prior to their conversion was salvifically deficient. In effect Paul is saying to the Galatians that the law is not going to save them. If they take up the yoke of the law, therefore, it is tantamount to a

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<sup>381</sup> See Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, p. 110.

<sup>382</sup> Sanders, The Law, pp. 68-69.

return to their former way of life under the στοιχεῖα, because the law is as useless to them for their salvation as the "weak and beggarly" (4:9) στοιχεῖα, when they in their ignorance, oriented their lives around them.

Thus, the connection between the ἄγγελοι and the στοιχεῖα in Galatians serves as a reminder to the Gentile Christians that the law cannot do for them what the στοιχεῖα could not do for them. The law does not have the power to make alive (3:21), nor do the στοιχεῖα have the power to do so. This is why they are "weak and beggarly" (4:9). To turn to the law, therefore, is the same as turning away from the Gospel (1:6). The Galatians submission to the law is analogous to a return to paganism.

#### Colossians 2:8; 2:20

I have suggested, along with the majority of commentators, that the στοιχεῖα in Galatians are a cosmic reference to principalities and powers-- although it does not necessarily follow that Paul believed in their existence-- and that the Galatian Gentiles' submission to the law of Moses, particularly the "works of the law," according to Paul, is equivalent to the Galatians' return to their pre-conversion idolatry, in that the law is soteriologically inadequate. The matter now before us is how this squares with Colossians. It has already been argued that the law plays a role in Colossians and that the nature of the Colossian "philosophy" is basically Jewish with its references to circumcision, food laws and the observance of the Jewish calendar. It seems to me, therefore, that a plausible case can be made that the στοιχεῖα in Colossians carries much the same meaning

as in Galatians. DeMaris and Arnold<sup>383</sup> observe the parallel between the *στοιχειά* of Galatians and Colossians, but neither think of it as a significant connection. In this they fail to draw conclusions in keeping with some of their important insights.

First as in Galatians, it does seem natural to understand the *στοιχειά* in a close relationship with the Jewish elements mentioned in Colossians. In 2:8 Paul warns the Colossians not to be "taken captive" (*συλαγωγῶν*) "through" (*διὰ*) "philosophy and empty deceit." Jewish apologetics did indeed make use of the term *φιλοσοφία* in commending their ways to non-Jews.<sup>384</sup> Josephus refers to the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes as different "philosophies" within Judaism (*Ant.* 18:11; *War* 2:119; cf. also Philo, *Mos.* 2:211-216; 4 *Macc.* 1:1-2).<sup>385</sup> The point here is that the term in and of itself really does not give any specific information as to the nature of the philosophy in question. It is, therefore, quite a mistake to connect this term to some form of Greek or Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>386</sup> The use of the term itself is simply too vague.

What does give the word *φιλοσοφία* more specificity is the important phrase *τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων*. As previously mentioned, Mark's account uses the very

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<sup>383</sup>DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, p. 54; Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 183-190.

<sup>384</sup>Dunn, The Colossian Philosophy, p. 156-157, although as Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 177 notes, Paul himself made little use of the term for his own theology.

<sup>385</sup>O. Michel, "*φιλοσοφία, φιλόσοφος*." TDNT, 9:187.

<sup>386</sup>As does DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, p. 49.

same phrase (7:8; cf. Is. 29:13), where dietary and purity regulations are specifically singled out for criticism. This certainly adds weight to the idea that the "philosophy" the Colossians are confronting is Jewish in character. Even DeMaris<sup>387</sup> admits that this phrase has its background in early Christian literature (see also Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9) although he surprisingly goes on to argue that it tells us nothing of the nature of the Colossian philosophy.<sup>388</sup> Here DeMaris appears to have his argument backward. He thinks the term φιλοσοφία reveals something of the nature of the Colossian philosophy, although its wide usage in Hellenistic and Jewish literature precludes such a conclusion. On the other hand, he recognizes that τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων clearly has its foundation in early Christian literature and its critique of Torah-obedience, but "this qualification tells us nothing about the Colossian philosophy." Can DeMaris seriously mean this?

The Jewishness of the philosophy is confirmed even further in 2:20-22. In fact this passage parallels Galatians 4:9-10 in several respects. There Paul having just asked the Galatians why they would turn again to the στοιχεῖα reveals that they are keeping a calendar that is in all likelihood Jewish. So in Colossians 2:20 when the authors ask why the Colossians continue to submit to the στοιχεῖα, verses 21 and 22 immediately touch upon prohibitions which have a Jewish ring to them, and Paul and Timothy once again affirm that such regulations are "simply human commands and teachings." This is all the more significant

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<sup>387</sup> DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 49-51.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

considering that this passage is preceded by a discussion of spiritual circumcision, food regulations and calendar keeping, which includes the Sabbath.

Second, and even more important, as in Galatians there is a suggestion that the στοιχεῖα reflect a state of immaturity or a state of inadequacy. After 2:8 the author reminds the Colossians that they came to fullness (πλήρωμα) in Christ (cf. Gal. 4:3-4 πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου). In 2:17 these regulations that the authors oppose are referred to as σκιά τῶν μελλόντων and in Colossians 2:22 they are φθορὰν τῆ ἀποχρήσει. This is surely an idea in keeping with Galatians where the law of Moses is the issue at hand.

Wright puts forth the suggestion that the στοιχεῖα in Colossians refers to local deities, that is, the national gods. Paul and Timothy suggest, therefore, that Judaism is one more tribal religion just like all other pagan religions.<sup>389</sup> This view is difficult to maintain. In Colossians the connection made between the στοιχεῖα and the practice of the law revealed in 2:8 (κατὰ παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων) and in 2:20-22, suggest only that these practices are comparable to the Colossians' way of life in devotion to the στοιχεῖα prior to their conversion. Thus Paul and Timothy can ask, Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε; (2:20). Moreover, as has been mentioned, 2:22 suggests that the "regulations" in the previous verse were temporary, something argued by Paul in Galatians (3:23-4:4). Wright's view rests mostly on conjecture.

Martin once again thinly connects the Colossian philosophy to Cynicism when he argues that the στοιχεῖα should be understood as the Cynic emphasis on

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<sup>389</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 101ff.

nature. Yet, he is only able to appeal to one Cynic source which employs the term στοιχεῖα, and then the phrase is ἡ τῶν στοιχείων σύγκρασις. Moreover, the Cynic term for nature is not στοιχεῖα but φύσις. Colossians once again does not employ the normative terminology in its argument to refute Cynicism. This is quite odd if Cynicism is indeed the target.<sup>390</sup>

Thus references to the στοιχεῖα in relationship to the law in Galatians and Colossians appear to be the same-- the Gentile Christians' practice of the law is a return to their pre-conversion days under the στοιχεῖα. As in Galatians, the connection between the στοιχεῖα and the regulations of the law is soteriological. If the Colossians submit to law they are living as if they still belong to the world (2:20). This provides another link between the two letters.

#### Colossians 2:18

We have argued for a connection between the στοιχεῖα and angels in Galatians. Is such a connection made in Colossians? Colossians 2:18 provides an initial parallel in that the verse refers to angels, though the terminology is not precisely the same. There is no reference in Colossians to the angels administering the law, rather in 2:18 the phrase θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is found.<sup>391</sup> As was pointed out in chapter one most scholars translate this as an objective

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<sup>390</sup>Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 87ff.

<sup>391</sup>Very difficult to accept is the argument of Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 160, who argues that θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων refers to the worship practices the Colossians received from Christian ministers and teachers. Not only is the terminology not close, but in order to accept this view, one would have to ignore what is clearly the Jewish apocalyptic language of the passage.

genitive:<sup>392</sup> "the worship of angels," indicating a kind of Jewish-Hellenistic syncretism. As O'Brien claims, angel-worship goes beyond the deliberation about angels in Judaism and there are warnings in the Old Testament against worshipping celestial beings (Dt. 4:19; 17:3; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5).<sup>393</sup> Yet others have argued that θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων should be understood in a subjective sense; "the angels' worship."<sup>394</sup> There are certainly descriptions of angelic worship in Judaism (Is. 6:2-3; Dan. 7:10; 4 Macc. 5:7; Asc. Is. 7:13-9:33; TLevi 3:4-8; 1 En. 14:18-23; 36:4, 39-40; 61:10-12; 2 En. 20-21; Apoc. Abr. 17-18; 1QSb 4:25, 26).

Moreover, in apocalyptic Judaism there was a great yearning to participate with the angels in the worship of God (Ps. 29:1-2; 148:1-2; TJob 48-50; Apoc. Abr. 17; Asc. Is. 7:13-9:33; Apoc. Zeph. 8:3-4).<sup>395</sup> Qumran is an important case in point (1QSa 2:8-9; 1QSb 4:25-26; 1QM 7:4-6; 1QH 11:21-23; 4QShirShab<sup>a-f</sup>).<sup>396</sup>

Arnold, however, has mounted a strong argument in favor of the objective rendering of θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων.<sup>397</sup> In critique of Fred Francis' argument for the subjective genitive, Arnold notes that nowhere in the appropriate ancient literature was θρησκεία employed with a usual object of worship (a divine being

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<sup>392</sup>E.g. Wolter, Kolosser, pp. 146-147.

<sup>393</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, pp. 142-143. Also L. Hurtado, One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 24-35.

<sup>394</sup>Francis, "Humility," pp. 176-181.

<sup>395</sup>Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 90-94; C. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1-12): The Jewish-Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate." HTR 86 (1993), p. 182.

<sup>396</sup>More fully see Dunn, Colossians, p. 181.

<sup>397</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp.90-100.

or an idol) as a subjective genitive.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, Arnold argues that ἐν ἐθελοθρησκίᾳ, ταπεινοφροσύνη, and ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος in 2:23 are practices of the philosophy performed by people. Since ἐν ἐθελοθρησκίᾳ refers to the practice of human beings, it is doubtful that the mention of worship in 2:18 refers to the activity of angels. Such a shift in meaning is unlikely.<sup>399</sup>

From these observations Arnold makes several points in opposition to the subjective genitive reading. First, the subjective genitive interpretation does not adequately account for the significance of evil angelic powers in Colossians (especially 2:15). Second, the subjective genitive does not take seriously enough the connection between θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων and ἐμβατεύω. Third, the subjective genitive does not assist in comprehending how the Colossian philosophy "had an appearance of wisdom" (2:23). Fourth, the emphasis on moral and ritual purity at Qumran seems inconsistent with the Colossian vices emphasis on sexual sin (3:5-11). Fifth, the subjective genitive does not illuminate how the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου relates to the philosophy. Sixth, certain features of the "polemical core" appear inconsistent with Jewish mystical understanding. How can participation in angelic praise be referred to as "vain deceit" (2:8)? Seventh, how certain is it that the kind of mystical worship at Qumran found its way to Asia Minor? Eighth, the subjective genitive neglects the Gentile influence within the churches of Asia

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<sup>398</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 1:222; 4:61, 306; 7:341; 8:225, 251, 395; 9:96, 133, 157, 273; 10:53; 12:271; 17:214; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:315. See also (as noted by Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, p. 92, note 13) *SIG* 801d, line 4.

<sup>399</sup> Arnold, *Ibid.*, p. 93. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, p. 77, concurs.

Minor.<sup>400</sup>

Some of these criticism are more formidable than others. I will take each criticism in the order it is made, but first some response is required in reference to the objective/subjective genitive debate.

I think it is no longer possible for scholarship to maintain the notion that *θησκεια των αγγελων* in Colossians 2:18 is simply a subjective genitive.<sup>401</sup> It is here I believe Arnold's argument to be of most value. He clearly demonstrates that the lexical evidence and the usage of *θησκεια* in connection with genitives of objects of worship strongly suggest that it is extremely difficult to understand 2:18 in a purely subjective genitive sense.

At the same time, however, we are right to raise the question of whether or not it is appropriate in the context of Colossians 2:18, to draw a sharp distinction between the objective and subjective genitive usage. Stuckenbruck argues that it is not imperative to determine whether the writers intended the genitive construction in 2:18 to designate the activity of human beings or of angels.<sup>402</sup> Both themes are found together in a number of early Jewish texts (4QShirShab<sup>a</sup> 2:1-2; 4QShirShab<sup>d</sup> 1:32-33).

In addition, scholarship in general has not raised the question in any detail as to whether the phrase *θησκεια των αγγελων* in 2:18, is an accurate

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., p. 97-98.

<sup>401</sup> As do Dunn, Colossians, pp. 181-183; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 158-162.

<sup>402</sup> Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, pp. 118-119.

characterization describing the practice of the philosophers.<sup>403</sup> Would the philosophers themselves have referred to this practice as "the worship of angels?" If not then the objective/subjective genitive debate is less helpful, since it is not possible to discover with any certainty from the phrase itself the nature of the particular practice in question. It could very well be that the accusation of angel worship is precisely that-- an accusation. This is noticed by Arnold who suggests that the "veneration of angels" is a more descriptive phrase highlighting more accurately the nature of the practice mentioned in 2:18. He rightly dismisses the purely subjective genitive reading of *θησκαῖα τῶν ἀγγέλων*, but does not consider that the practices of the Colossian philosophers may in some respect, nevertheless, represent practices highlighted by those who argue in favor of a subjective genitive reading. In other words, it may be that the actual practice mentioned in 2:18 was a kind of mystical Judaism, where the philosophers desired to participate with the angels in the worship of God. Paul and Timothy simply reject this practice denouncing the philosophers as angel worshippers.

Moreover, Arnold's own interpretation is problematic. First, in 2:18, Arnold suggests that *ταπεινοφροσύνη* is a reference to the careful observance of taboos as a prerequisite for an effective magical recipe.<sup>404</sup> While this cannot be ruled out,

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<sup>403</sup>E.g. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, pp. 61-65; Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 179-182; O'Brien, *Colossians*, pp. 142-143; Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption*, pp. 158-162; Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 8, makes only passing reference to the possibility. Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 121-122, sees this as a serious option, but does not develop the idea.

<sup>404</sup>Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, p. 213.

Arnold is too quick to dismiss a Jewish connection here by referring to DeMaris' casual observation that the totality of the terminology employed in the polemical core seems to suggest more than practices typical of Judaism.<sup>405</sup> As argued in the previous section, Colossians 2:21 fits well within Jewish practices. In addition, rigorous asceticism (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) as a requirement for visions can be found in apocalyptic literature (4 Ez. 5:13; 6:31; Asc. Is. 2:7ff). Indeed, the humility of such spiritual disciplines (which included fasting) was required if one hoped to participate with the angels in heavenly worship (Dan. 10:2-3; Apoc. Abr. 9:7-10; 12:1-2; TIsaac 4:1-6; 5:4; 4 Ez. 5:13; 6:35; 2 Bar. 5:7; Philo, *De Somn.* 1:35-37; *Mos.* 2:67-69). Again, it is not that Arnold's reading can be discounted, but neither can the suggestion that *ταπεινοφροσύνη* represents something more in character with first-century Judaism.

Second, and more significantly problematic, is that Arnold's position is dependent upon his interpretation of *ἐμβατεύων* in 2:18. Arnold returns to Dibelius' thesis that *ἐμβατεύων* is a technical term for initiation into a mystery cult. Arnold makes an admirable attempt to explain the grammatical difficulty of the phrase *ἃ ἐώρακεν ἐμβατεύων* in the context of Colossians 2:18.<sup>406</sup> Like Dibelius, Arnold suggests that *ἃ ἐώρακεν* should be understood as the object of *ἐμβατεύων*. This would make the participle *ἐμβατεύων* parallel with *θέλων*, the latter understood as

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid., p. 210. Cf. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, p. 58. Also unacceptable is the position of Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit*, p. 77, who attempts to connect the reference to humility in 2:18 with Cynic critique of the Colossian Christians. He is only to produce one Cynic source that uses the term *ταπεινή*, Dio Chrysostom, which makes reference to humble attire. Here again, the Cynic connection is tenuous at best.

<sup>406</sup> Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, pp. 121-124.

modal, and translated "by insisting on."<sup>407</sup>

While it is grammatically possible to interpret αἰ ἐώρακεν as the object of ἐμβατεύων, Francis, on the other hand, presented a very persuasive argument that ἐμβατεύων is a temporal modifier. Thus the relative particle αἰ, which is the object of ἐώρακεν, has ταπεινοφροσύνη and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων as its antecedents.<sup>408</sup> Thus Francis renders verse 2:18, "Let no one disqualify you, being bent on humility and the worship of angels-- which he has seen upon entering-- being vainly puffed up in the mind of his flesh." Both readings are possible grammatically.<sup>409</sup>

Arnold's problem here is two-fold. First, Arnold's translation of θέλων ἐν as "insisting on," suggests that the Colossian philosophers were attempting to force their practices on the Colossian Christians. Arnold fails to consider that θέλων ἐν is a Hebraism more appropriately translated "delighting in" (LXX 1 Sam. 18:22; 2 Sam. 15:26; 1 Kgs. 10:9; 2 Chr. 9:8; Pss. 111:1; 146:10).<sup>410</sup> Thus the philosophers are not trying to push their practices on the Colossians. Rather the philosophers are delighting in what they perceive is their own superior way. This allows them to dismiss the Colossians as inferior because they are not following the same way.

The verb βραβεύω is the terminology of the athletic competition referring to the "awarding of a prize" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:14). Thus καταβραβεύω means

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>408</sup> Francis, "Humility," p. 113. See also Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, pp. 117.

<sup>409</sup> Note that Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 121-123, and Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 155-158, appeal to the structure of 2:16-18, in support of their differing conclusions.

<sup>410</sup> Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 193; Dunn, Colossians, p. 178.

deprive of the prize" or "disqualify" (BAGD). The important point here is that the athletic nomenclature suggests that each participant in the game is playing for the same prize-- meaning each participant is, therefore, playing the same game. The proponents of the Colossian philosophy then are arguing that the Colossian Christians are disqualified from the prize because they are either not playing the game well enough, or *they are not playing by the right rules*. Considering what we have already seen concerning the Jewish character of the philosophy, and the claim that the Colossian Christians share in Israel's heritage (cf. 1:12; 3:12; we will highlight this point in the next chapter), that is, the prize, the most obvious conclusion to draw from this is that the advocates of the Colossian philosophy come from within the Jewish community at Colossae. It does not seem to be the case that θέλων and καταβραβεύετω refer to an activity whereby the Colossian philosophers are putting pressure on the Colossian Christians to conform to their practices. On the contrary, the philosophers are simply dismissing them as inferior. Arnold fails to consider this.

Second, in spite of the grammatical difficulties, which seem without adequate solution, the evidence employed to argue for ἐμβατεύων as a technical term for entry into a mystery cult is quite sparse.<sup>411</sup> The Claros inscriptions are the only sources that can be used to corroborate Arnold's position. They date from a time later than Colossians (second century A.D.), and the specific terminology found

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<sup>411</sup>See his discussion of the appropriate sources in The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 109-120.

in the Claros inscriptions is absent from Colossians.<sup>412</sup> On the other hand, there are plenty of texts in early Jewish literature that connect "humility" or ascetic practices, including fasting, to participation in angelic worship (see above p. 154). Arnold, needs his particular reading of ἐμβατεύων for his thesis to stand. It is severely debilitated without it.

There is more evidence to suggest that ἐμβατεύω is simply a term meaning "enter." In Joshua 19:49, 51 (the only two occurrence in the LXX) ἐμβατεύω is used to refer to entering and taking possession of the promised land. The same idea of taking possession of an inheritance is also found in the legal papyri.<sup>413</sup> Moreover, in the *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice* reference is made to heaven as a temple in which the angels worship, and where importance is given to the entry and departure of the angels (4QShirShab<sup>f</sup> 14-15:3-4; 23i:8-10; cf. texts which refer to visionary ascent into heaven, 1 En. 14:8-13; 2 En. 3; 3 Bar. 2:2; 3:1-2; TLevi 2:4-7; Rev. 4:1-2).<sup>414</sup>

Third, while Arnold has succeeded in drawing the connection between angel veneration and magic in the Hellenistic and Jewish world he has not succeeded in demonstrating that this is what is being addressed in Colossians 2:18. While Arnold is able to refer to texts where angel veneration and references to magic occur together<sup>415</sup> this same connection is not explicitly present in Colossians.

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<sup>412</sup>Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, p. 113. See Arnold's translations of these texts in The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 110, 111, 112, 113.

<sup>413</sup>Francis, "Background," pp. 198-199.

<sup>414</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 181.

<sup>415</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 94.

Arnold's rendering of *θησκεια των αγγελων* must infer it; and he must appeal only to sources later than Colossians itself.

Fourth, to return to a point made earlier, Arnold fails to take account of the fact that the objective/subjective genitive distinction may not be too much help since both motifs are found together in early Jewish literature. Again, it is not my purpose to take issue with Arnold's impressive critique of the subjective genitive reading. What I want to contend, however, is that since the objective/subjective genitive distinction may be misleading in interpreting Colossians 2:18, and since the phrase *θησκεια των αγγελων* is likely a polemical phrase the authors of Colossians directed at the philosophers, the fact that *θησκεια των αγγελων* is an objective genitive is, in and of itself, not particularly revealing.

Arnold gives eight reasons why *θησκεια των αγγελων* cannot be interpreted subjectively in light of the context. True as this may be Arnold fails to demonstrate that the practice mentioned in 2:18 contains no subjective genitive elements.

First, Arnold suggests that the subjective genitive does not take sufficient account of the significance of the evil angelic forces in Colossians, particularly 2:15.<sup>416</sup> Our response to this is that it is not at all clear that the angels mentioned in 2:18 are to be considered as evil. The emphasis is not on the angels themselves, but on the practice of the philosophers involving the angels.

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<sup>416</sup>For the enumeration of Arnold's reasons see, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 97-98.

Moreover, the emphasis in the letter is the way that practice permits the philosophers simply to dismiss the Colossian Christians by disqualifying them of the prize or the goal because their way is inadequate.<sup>417</sup>

Second, Arnold states that the subjective genitive view does not explain its connection to ἐμβάσιον (2:18). I have already suggested why Arnold's particular reading of this term is questionable.<sup>418</sup> It is simply a reference to entering the heavenly realm, suggesting a kind of Jewish mysticism.<sup>419</sup>

Third, Arnold states that subjective genitive practices fail in connecting the philosophy to its "reputation for wisdom" (2:23). Based on the characteristics of the philosophy revealed in the letter, Arnold concludes that it is "highly unlikely" that Jewish wisdom in the traditional sense is in mind in 2:23.<sup>420</sup> Yet, this conclusion is not necessary. Arnold himself suggests that a Jewish contribution to the philosophy may be present at this point, not in reference to sapiential wisdom, but wisdom understood in a magical sense (cf. Wisd. 7:17-20; TSol. 3:5; 22:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 8:42-49; *War*, 2:136).

The problem for Arnold at this point is two-fold. First, it is questionable whether a distinction between traditional sapiential wisdom and magical wisdom is justified.<sup>421</sup> Indeed, with the recent and very competent scholarly discussions

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<sup>417</sup>Aletti, Colossiens, p. 195.

<sup>418</sup>Again, Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, pp. 113-114.

<sup>419</sup>Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 153-158.

<sup>420</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 201.

<sup>421</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 201-204.

on Jesus as the sage, the teacher of wisdom, the connection between Jesus' wisdom and his power over demons as reported in the Gospels has not been sufficiently appreciated (cf. Mt. 11:19; 13:54; Mk. 6:2).<sup>422</sup> It is not necessary for Arnold to conclude that the wisdom of the philosophers somehow proceeds beyond the boundaries of Judaism. In Josephus, *War*, 2:136, a passage Arnold refers to in support of his connection between wisdom and magical invocations, Josephus comments further that the Essenes will preserve the "means" or "names" "of the angels" (2:143). Thus, if the philosophers were venerating angels in some respect, it is not necessary to posit a syncretism that goes beyond Judaism (see again 4QShirShab<sup>a</sup> 2:1-2; 4QShirShab<sup>d</sup> 1:32-33), nor does the emphasis on wisdom in Colossians suggest it. Arnold argues that the motif of sapiential wisdom in the Colossians is a perfect counter to the magical wisdom of the philosophers. Such a distinction, as I have suggested, is untenable. It is likely more appropriate to suggest that the sapiential wisdom of Colossians with its embodiment in Jesus Christ is the fitting counter to a Jewish argument placing emphasis on wisdom in the doing of the Torah.

Thus, Arnold does not take sufficient note of how the Jewishness of the wisdom language of Colossians may function in the argument of the letter. The identification between wisdom and creation, and wisdom and Torah in the Christ-

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<sup>422</sup>E.g. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet (New York: Continuum, 1995); N. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 195-196, 210-214, 228, 311-316; Witherington, Jesus the Sage, though he notes it in The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 185.

Hymn (1:15-20) are Jewish motifs, which Arnold does recognize.<sup>423</sup> I discuss the motif of wisdom in Colossians in the next chapter.

Arnold's fourth contention against the subjective genitive practice of worshiping with the angels is that the stress on moral and ritual purity at Qumran appears inconsistent with the list of vices in Colossians 3:5-11, particularly the Colossian emphasis on sexual sin.<sup>424</sup> I am not quite sure what Arnold's point is here, but something can still be said in response. As with the sapiential wisdom/magical wisdom distinction, Arnold is sneaking into the discussion a differentiation between moral and sexual that neither Paul nor the Qumran covenanters would have made. Moreover, the Qumran covenanters appear to have been concerned over sexual purity (cf. Josephus, *War*, 2:121). Surely the prohibitions listed in Colossians 3:5-11 would have been prohibitions at Qumran as well. The emphasis on idolatry in the Colossian vice list has to do with the Gentile audience being addressed (more on this in chapter five). There appears to be nothing inconsistent here with subjective genitive practices of worshiping with angels.

Fifth, Arnold, states that subjective genitive practices do not explain the place of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in the teaching of the philosophy. As with Galatians we are faced with several options for interpretation.<sup>425</sup> We have

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<sup>423</sup> Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 247-250.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>425</sup> The alternatives are elementary teachings (Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 169, Moule, Colossians, pp. 91-92), or more philosophically, first principles (DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 73, 79-83); the basic substances composing the cosmos (Schweizer, "Elemente der Welt," pp. 149-163);

suggested that the connection in Galatians between the angels and the στοιχεῖα is soteriological. What about Colossians?

The first question to raise is whether or not στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Colossians means the same thing in Galatians. In keeping with Arnold I have already suggested this is the case.<sup>426</sup> The point of disagreement I have with Arnold concerns his view that the target of Colossians is quite different from Galatians, and this has bearing on the relationship between the στοιχεῖα and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων. He rightly makes the Jewish connection between the στοιχεῖα and the surrounding terminology. He notes that συλαγωγέω is a term that refers to captivity suggesting the same kind of situation as in Galatians. Thus the practices of the philosophers are viewed as an enslavement to the στοιχεῖα.<sup>427</sup> Moreover, if Wright is correct that συλαγωγῶν is a pejorative pun on the term συναγωγή,<sup>428</sup> then the thesis that the Colossian philosophy is Jewish would finally be hard to resist.

Moreover, the Jewishness of the phrase τὴν παραδοσὶν τῶν ἀνθρώπων is noted by Arnold,<sup>429</sup> and Arnold observes that the phrase κενὴ ἀπάτη in 2:8 is used in

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spiritual beings influencing the lives of men and women (Dunn, Colossians, pp. 149-151; O'Brien, Colossians, pp. 110, 129-132).

<sup>426</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 158-190. Arnold's argument is most impressive.

<sup>427</sup>Ibid., p. 186. See also Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 178.

<sup>428</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 100.

<sup>429</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 189, note 91.

Jewish condemnation of pagan religion (Sib. Or. 3:226; 3:584-590; TNaph. 3:1).<sup>430</sup> While this latter phrase could be an argument against a Jewish philosophy, its connection with στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου could also suggest another way of referring to the philosophy as a return to enslavement under the στοιχεῖα. Colossians 2:20 also suggests that the στοιχεῖα refer to a state of immaturity.

Finally, as in Galatians, the connection between the στοιχεῖα and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων appears to be soteriological. In the Christ-Hymn, Christ as the head of all authorities is presented as all-sufficient for the Colossians' salvation (1:16). In his pre-eminence (ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων-- 1:18) Christ has reconciled all things, including the Colossian Gentiles (1:20-22). Clearly elements of the polemical core present the practices of the philosophers as insufficient for salvation (2:20-23). Thus as in Galatians Paul can present the practices of the philosophers as soteriologically insufficient by referring to them both as "human traditions," suggesting the Jewish character of the philosophy, and at the same time as a return to the Gentiles' previous enslavement under the στοιχεῖα; powers which have been defeated (Col. 2:15). The philosophers' practices are simply a shadow of reality whose fullness is embodied in Jesus Christ (2:17), again suggesting a state of immaturity waiting to be completed in Christ.<sup>431</sup> It is difficult to

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<sup>430</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>431</sup>G. Bornkamm, "Die Häresies des Kolosserbriefes." *TLZ* 73 (1948): 15, who is noted by Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 115, note 173, suggests that Colossians presupposes a continuity in salvation history with the antithesis between σκία τῶν μελλόντων and σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Col. 2:17). He also notes the usage of ἀγγέλοι instead of στοιχεῖα in 2:18, and the characterization of circumcision as baptism (2:16ff.)

comprehend how Paul and Timothy would refer to practices that were something other than Jewish with this kind of terminology (cf. 2:22).

So what is precisely the connection between the angels and the στοιχεῖα in Colossians? Unlike Galatians where the angels are presented as the mediators of the law, which means that the law is inadequate, in Colossians θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων refers not to how the law was given, but to a practice of the Colossian philosophers condemned by Paul and Timothy as worship. Thus this practice of the philosophers is grouped together with the other practices mentioned in the polemical core and presented as soteriologically ineffective. In the polemical core θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is surrounded by other notions that have ample usage in Jewish literature, as we have suggested. Put in the context of these and other Jewish regulations and terminology which may suggest a Jewish target (συλαγωγέω, τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καταβραβεύω) θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων fits comfortably within a Jewish target for the Colossian philosophy. Considering the point previously mentioned that the objective/subjective genitive distinction may be problematic, this may also include the possibility of some type of angel veneration.

There is nothing in Colossians to suggest that Paul and Timothy are identifying the angels in 2:18 with the στοιχεῖα in any other way than that veneration of and worship with the angels is as salvifically ineffectual as the Colossians' pre-conversion way of life under the στοιχεῖα.

Arnold's sixth contention against subjective genitive practices is that certain attributes of the polemic in Colossians are inconsistent with Jewish mystical

interpretation.<sup>432</sup> Arnold only mentions "vain deceit" in 2:8. Our response is that this terminology is not helpful in determining the nature of the Colossian philosophy.<sup>433</sup> Other language present in the letter is more helpful as we have seen.

Arnold's seventh contention raises the question of whether the kind of mystical worship found at Qumran made its way to the west coast of Asia Minor.<sup>434</sup> Later Christian polemics outside Judea did sometimes accuse Jews of worshipping angels (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1:27, 5:6, 6:30; *Comm. John* 13:17; Clement, *Stromata* 6:5.41; Jerome, *Epist.* 121:10; Council of Laodicea (fourth century A.D.) canons, 29, 35, 37, 38<sup>435</sup>). Even though these are polemical texts and cannot be considered too helpful in delineating the true nature of what was taking place, it nevertheless suggests the existence of some type of practice, far away from Qumran, which did involve angels in the worship of Judaism. The fact that these sources are later than Colossians is no less problematic than the later sources Arnold has to appeal to in order to make his case for invocation of angels and magic. At the very least, the position I am contending for is bolstered by references to Jewish texts contemporary with and prior to Colossians, which highlight the prominence of a mystical Judaism which desired worship with the

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<sup>432</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p.98.

<sup>433</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 148.

<sup>434</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 98.

<sup>435</sup>It is the case that canon 35 does not mention the "naming of angels" with other Jewish practices, but since there is a definite polemic against Judaism in the other three canons (29, 37, and 38), it is certainly possible that the target of canon 35 is Jewish practice. It is also a reasonable conclusion since it was an accusation against Judaism elsewhere in Christian writing.

angels (1 En. 36:4; 39-40; 61:10-12; 2 En. 20-21 Apoc. Abr. 17-18; TLevi 3:3-8; cf. Lk. 2:14; Phil 2:10-11; Rev. 4-5; As. Is. 7-9; 1QSAa 2:8-9; 1QM 7:4-6 1QH 3:21-22; 1QSB 4:25-26; 4QShirShab<sup>a</sup> 2:1-2; 4QShirShab<sup>d</sup> 1:32-33), as well as warnings against getting carried away into what those texts considered to be angel worship (Apoc. Abr. 17:2; Apoc. Zeph. 6:15; The Life of Adam and Eve. 13-15; Rev. 19:10; 22:9; Philo, *Fug.* 212; *Somn.* 1: 232, 238; cf. As. Is. 7:21).

Arnold's eighth and final point in which he contends against subjective genitive practices is that such a perspective neglects the significance of the Gentile presence and influence within the churches of Asia Minor.<sup>436</sup> On the contrary, our perspective recognizes that influence very clearly. The clear references to the Colossians as Gentiles (1:21-22), the connection between the mystery hidden and the Gentiles (1:26-27), the references to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (2:8, 20), and the moral instruction highlighting vices considered by Jews to be particularly related to Gentile depravity (3:5-11), all suggest the significance and influence of the Gentiles in the church, and outside of the church.

Our contention is simply the opposite of Arnold's. He and others who want to propose some sort of syncretistic thesis fail to take seriously the Jewishness of the practices of the philosophy. Arnold may recognize these practices more than other scholars who argue for a syncretistic target, but the argument that something more is needed in order to explain the nature of the Colossian philosophy underestimates the essential Jewish elements of the philosophy. Thus

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<sup>436</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 98.

Arnold can dismiss circumcision as insignificant because it is not part of the author's polemic. He also acknowledges the Jewishness of the holy days mentioned (2:16) but then without presenting much of an argument simply suggests, like DeMaris, that these festivals seem to go beyond the limits of Judaism. The problem is most clearly seen in his suggestion that the philosophers adapted Sabbath observance.<sup>437</sup>

In other words, Arnold's position ultimately does not take seriously the Jewishness of the philosophy. Anything clearly Jewish is acknowledged as Jewish, but not sufficient to explain the terminology in question. This includes the way the polemical phrase *θηροσκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων* fits appropriately in an argument with the synagogue as its target.

### Conclusion

I have suggested along with the majority of scholars that the *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κοσμοῦ* in Galatians and Colossians are best understood as a reference to the cosmic elements of the universe which influence the daily affairs of women and men. Clearly in Galatians the *στοιχεῖα* are connected to the law. Even though the exact nature of the *στοιχεῖα* is a matter of debate, their relationship to the law in Galatians is beyond dispute. I have also suggested that the *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κοσμοῦ* in Colossians parallels the use of the phrase in Galatians. Colossians clearly connects the *στοιχεῖα* with basic and important elements of Torah-observance. The

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-218. "Since 'sabbaths' were not a part of the observances in local pagan religions or magical practices, it is likely that the teachers of 'the philosophy' adapted sabbath observance from Jewish tradition" (p. 215).

phrase, τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων further suggests the Jewishness of the philosophy.

Moreover, as in Galatians, the connection of the law to the στοιχεῖα is soteriological, arguing that both the law and the elements the Colossians were under prior to their conversion cannot save them. It should not be missed that in 2:15, after the authors clearly state that their objection to the following of these regulations is they are οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν (2:8), they then affirm the defeat of the στοιχεῖα, in the death of Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ).<sup>438</sup> The salvific connection seems clear.

Galatians is the closest extant parallel to Colossians for understanding the nature of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and its connection to the law. No such parallel has been found in Hellenistic philosophical literature. To posit any notion of syncretism that seriously compromises the unique aspects of Jewish identity present in the polemical core and elsewhere in the letter is difficult to accept. If such a syncretism did exist in Colossae, which included so many critical aspects of Torah-observance, it was unique to the first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds.

In reference to the phrase θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων in 2:18, I have contended that Arnold is correct to reject the phrase plainly as a subjective genitive. Yet, I have also suggested that it does not necessarily rule out subjective genitive practices since the objective/subjective distinction is misleading. Moreover, I

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<sup>438</sup> *Contra* Carr, Angels and Principalities, pp. 61-63; and R. Yates, "Colossians and Gnosis." JSNT 27 (1986), pp. 49-50 who argue that the principalities and authorities are not malevolent.

suggested that more emphasis should be placed on *θηρσκειά τῶν ἀγγέλων* as an accusatory phrase from the authors of the letter, and not a phrase the Colossian philosophers would have embraced to describe the nature of their particular practice.

In addition, I have attempted to respond to Arnold's contentions that the notion of mystical worship with the angels of heaven does not make sense in connection to other features of the letter. Thus the accusatory phrase *θηρσκειά τῶν ἀγγέλων* likely refers to a mystical Judaism in which the philosophers are seeking the experience of participating with the hosts of heaven in the worship of God. This does not exclude the possibility that there may indeed have been some angel veneration taking place as well, and that the objective genitive phrase, therefore, may be somewhat justified. It would also be hasty to rule out that magical practices of some kind accompanied this veneration. The problem with Arnold's argument is that while he has made a strong case for the importance of magic in the ancient world, he has failed to demonstrate a clear connection to Colossians, nor that if indeed such practices were targeted in Colossians 2:18, how this represents syncretism, since magic was important within ancient Judaism as well.

Finally I contended that the connection between the *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* and the angels in both letters is a soteriological one. To follow the regulations of the law mediated through angels (Galatians), and to involve oneself in the practices necessary to worship with the angels (Colossians) is as soteriologically inadequate as the Galatians' and the Colossians' previous way of life under the *στοιχεῖα*.

## THE UNITY FORMULA

### GALATIANS 3:28 AND COLOSSIANS 3:11

Finally we come to an affirmation found in both letters that also suggests a similar context for Galatians and Colossians. These two verses are not exact, but close literary parallels.

#### Galatians 3:28

Paul concludes his discussion of the purpose of the law with the affirmation, οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλλην, οὐκ ἐν δούλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ, οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. The first part of the verse contains three parallel statements which define the religious, cultural and social consequences of faith in Christ, reflected in the baptismal initiation.<sup>439</sup> The first is particularly appropriate for Galatians as the Jew/Greek distinction is the primary issue in the letter. "The cleavage between Jew and Gentile was for Judaism the most radical within the human race."<sup>440</sup> The use of the term "Greek" as opposed to "Gentile" suggests the saturation of Hellenistic thought and culture into the Roman world and served as a word Jews used to distinguish themselves from that influence (2 Macc. 4:36; 11:2; cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor. 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13).<sup>441</sup> From what has been discussed concerning Galatians in this paper it seems clear that what Paul has in mind is the abolition of those distinctions

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<sup>439</sup> Betz, Galatians, p. 189.

<sup>440</sup> Bruce, Galatians, p. 188.

<sup>441</sup> Dunn, Galatians, p. 205. Paul also refers to "Jews and Gentiles" (Rom. 3:29; Gal. 2:14-15; 1 Th. 2:14-16), but the phrase is used synonymously.

which in the past have separated Jew from non-Jew. This is confirmed in Romans 3:20 and its context where virtually the same formula is found in the midst of a similar argument: οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνου. The removal of this wall of separation was fundamental to Paul's gospel.<sup>442</sup>

Thus a Gentile can participate in the promise as a Gentile. One need not and must not Judaize, otherwise Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν (2:21). To impose the "works of the law" on the Gentiles was to impose the Jewish cultural and social standards on Gentile believers.<sup>443</sup> This was contrary to Paul's vision of a new humanity where there would be no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same claim is made near the end of the letter: "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything (6:15)."<sup>444</sup> The social significance of the affirmation οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλλήνῳ must not be missed. The Antioch incident reveals this significance.<sup>445</sup> The unity of humanity-- Jew as Jew, Greek as Greek-- has been fulfilled in Christ.<sup>446</sup>

The other two parallel affirmations οὐκ ἐνὶ δοῦλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ, οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσεν καὶ θήλῃ, do not play a central role in our discussion, but it is important to

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>443</sup> Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 168.

<sup>444</sup> See Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, p. 250. This may reflect another version of the 3:28 formula.

<sup>445</sup> Burton, Galatians, p. 207.

<sup>446</sup> I see no reason to accept Betz's claims that the formula οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλλήνῳ had its origin in Hellenistic Judaism and that such a claim represents a Hellenizing of Judaism, in that it universalizes the covenant (Galatians p. 191). Paul's argument in Galatians is that the universalization of the promise was God's intention all along. To understand it otherwise is to misunderstand it.

emphasize that these claims too emphasize social distinctions which have been removed in Christ. Along with the Jew/Greek distinction, the slave/free and male/female distinction are the most significant and obvious distinctions in the ancient world. Like the Jew/Greek distinction these also have come to an end in Christ. Slaves did, of course, remain slaves in the first century Roman world, even in the church.<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that both slave and free in the church were in Christ, provided some new opportunities for their daily relations with each other, as we will highlight in our chapter on the *Haustafel*. It is sufficient to say at this point, that ethnic, social, and cultural distinctions cannot hinder the reality that in Christ all persons stand on equal footing soteriologically.

The last phrase in 3:28, therefore, is in perfect keeping with the phrase before it: πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.<sup>448</sup>

#### Colossians 3:11

Here we find a similar formula: ὅπου οὐκ ἐνι Ἑλλήν καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δούλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ πᾶσιν Χριστός. As in Galatians Ἑλλήν καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία is the primary distinction about

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<sup>447</sup>J. Harrill, The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity HUT 32 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995) argues, contrary to many New Testament scholars, that there was no "early Christian opposition to the liberation of baptized slaves" (p. 194).

<sup>448</sup>Longenecker, Galatians, p. 157.

which Paul is concerned.<sup>449</sup> Given the Jewish nature of the Colossian philosophy, this is understandable. As Bruce notes, it was necessary for the Colossians to understand that this distinction had been abolished in view of the Jewish nature of the philosophy.<sup>450</sup> What is meant by the Jew/Greek distinction is repeated and explicated further by the next distinction, *περιτομή και άκροβυστία*.<sup>451</sup> To place these two specific distinctions at the beginning of this formula as well as to repeat the Jew/Greek contrast with the phrase *περιτομή και άκροβυστία* suggests very strongly that the main issue at hand in Colossians has to do with the Jew/Greek issue and that the importance of circumcision or the lack thereof is also a rather significant consideration.<sup>452</sup> In Christ the boundaries between Jew and Gentile given in the law, of which circumcision was the most important, are no longer valid (Cf. Gal. 6:15).<sup>453</sup> Given the suggestion that circumcision, food laws, Sabbath and feast days, are all Jewish in nature and to be understood that way in Colossians 3:11 carries the same connotation as Galatians 3:28.

Moreover, as in Galatians, Colossians 3:11 follows hard on the heels of

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<sup>449</sup>Certainly Colossians 3:11 is mainly concerned with ethnic and cultural distinctions. See M. MacDonald, The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings SNTSMS 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 103-104.

<sup>450</sup>Bruce, Colossians, p. 275.

<sup>451</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 199.

<sup>452</sup>Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 214. Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism completely ignores any discussion of 3:11, yet he thinks circumcision is not part of the teaching of the Colossian philosophy (p. 196).

<sup>453</sup>For an elucidation of each of these four terms see, H. Windisch, "Ελλην." TDNT, 2:512-516; W. Gutbrod, "Ιουδαϊος." TDNT, 3: 380-382; R. Meyer, "περιτομή." TDNT 6:82f.; K. Schmidt, "άκροβυστία." TDNT, 1:225f.

baptism.<sup>454</sup> In Galatians 3:27 we read, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." A similar statement is made in Colossians 3:10: "...and have clothed yourselves with the new humanity (cf. again Gal. 6:15), which is being renewed in the knowledge according to the image of its creator." The baptized are now in the domain of Christ's rule and they are to live in that domain.<sup>455</sup>

The formula in 3:11, like Galatians 3:28, is an affirmation of social significance. In addition to Jew/Greek, circumcision/uncircumcision the terms βάρβαρος and Σκύθης were social terms. The Greeks themselves often distinguished between two kinds of people: Greeks and barbarians,<sup>456</sup> and Scythians were even lower on the social scale,<sup>457</sup> although Martin argues that the βάρβαρος/Σκύθης distinction is rightly interpreted from a Scythian perspective where all who do not speak Scythian are barbarians (Ps. Anacharsis, *Ep.* 1;<sup>458</sup> Ps. Diogenes, *Epistles.* 28.8).<sup>459</sup> Thus the pair barbarian/Scythian is to be interpreted in

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<sup>454</sup> Baptism is not explicitly mentioned at this point in Colossians but the metaphor of being clothed with the new humanity may betray a baptismal ritual.

<sup>455</sup> Lohse, Colossians, pp. 141-142.

<sup>456</sup> O'Brien, Colossians, p. 193. Hengel, Jews, pp. 215-216, and Lightfoot, Colossians suggest that by Paul's time βάρβαροι denoted all non-Greeks.

<sup>457</sup> Josephus, *Ap.* 2, 269: βραχὺ τῶν θηρίων διαφέροντες.

<sup>458</sup> N.B. Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 197.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

mutually exclusive categories.<sup>460</sup> While Martin's argument is interesting and bears some consideration, the whole of the letter hardly suggests Cynic critique of the church at Colossae. Moreover, Cynicism is not the main consideration in the formula as the repeated Jew/Greek, circumcision/uncircumcision distinctions suggest.

This new humanity is indeed a unity. There is no reference here to some kind of natural equality, whatever that might mean, but rather Paul has in mind people from diverse backgrounds and cultural stations gathered together by one common Lord. Their allegiance to that Lord means something for the way these Christians live in relationship to each other, even though they continue to live in the roles determined by the world.<sup>461</sup> The final phrase of 3:11, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός, is close to the last phrase of Galatians 3:28: πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. In Christ the social boundaries that divided Jew from Gentile are no more. The social, ethnic, and religious boundaries of circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath and special feast days, are rejected not because they are legalistic, but because they are nationalistic.<sup>462</sup> Salvation defined in nationalistic terms cannot do anything but divide humanity. Christ unites humanity in rendering these nationalistic distinctions unimportant.

The fact that Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 are close parallels and

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid. Martin states, "Admittedly, this perspective is unusual, but it is attested in Cynic materials that illustrate a pairing of barbarian and Scythian similar to the pairing in Col. 3:11."

<sup>461</sup> Lohse, Colossians, pp. 144-145.

<sup>462</sup> Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 240.

similar to other statements in the New Testament (Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13) suggests a pre-Pauline tradition with which the Galatians and the Colossians were already familiar. This would also intimate that the notion of new humanity where social distinctions have been abolished was also familiar to them.<sup>463</sup> Why would Paul and Timothy use a familiar declaration affirming the irrelevance of social and ethnic roles (where Jew/Greek is always mentioned) in a different way without explicit explanation? This would be most confusing to the readers of the letter.

#### CONCLUSION

The evidence examined thus far makes reasonable the idea that the nature of the Colossians philosophy was essentially Jewish. Circumcision, food laws, Sabbath and special feast days, the *στοιχεῖα* and angels, and the formula of Colossians 3:11 that removes the social and ethnic distinction of Jew/Greek imply this. The parallels with Galatians are too striking to ignore. This, of course does not mean that there are no differences in the nature of the problem between Galatians and Colossians, and neither does it mean that there are no differences in the arguments of the respective letters.

In addition, there are other Jewish elements in the letter that give even more validity to this proposal. Such notions as *θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ* (4:12), *περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως* (1:10; also 2:6), *εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου* (1:12), and *εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου* (1:15) are very Jewish in tone. But from what has been examined thus far, it seems plain that Judaism is in the background of the epistle. Unfortunately

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<sup>463</sup>J. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 179.

DeMaris downplays the obviously Jewish aspects of the letter, and Martin completely ignores them. In rejecting what is clear in the letter they chase after more tenuous and, in the case of Martin, anachronistic hypotheses.

The authors state to their readers that Christ is all sufficient 1:15-20; 2:11-12; 13-15. They do not need circumcision or anything mentioned in chapter two that was part of the "written code" of the law. Paul puts Christ at the center of the faith who creates a new humanity, made up of Jew and Gentile. In so doing he redefines (or from his perspective simply draws the logical conclusion for what God had intended all along) the very notion of election (1:12).

Now it is true that Paul never uses the term "law" ( $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ )<sup>464</sup> in Colossians, but the language used in chapter two is certainly language characteristic of Judaism, and in particular language pertinent to the law.<sup>465</sup> Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 3-5 Paul contrasts the old and new covenants without using the word  $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$  at all.<sup>466</sup>

All of this is to say that we have thus far made a reasonable defense for the Jewish character of the Colossian philosophy with the synagogue as its target. This defense should become even stronger with the next chapter, as we will examine other very obvious Jewish motifs present in the letter.

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<sup>464</sup>H. Weiss, "The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians." CBO 34 (1972), p. 294; DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, p. 132.

<sup>465</sup>See Hooker, "False Teachers," pp. 315-331.

<sup>466</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 26.

### III. THE ISRAEL MOTIF

In the first chapter the argument of this thesis was presented in outline-- the nature of the Colossian philosophy is Jewish and this sheds new light on the integration of the paraenesis. In the last chapter we made a case for the Jewish nature of the Colossian philosophy with the synagogue as the target of the letter by drawing five significant parallels between Colossians and Galatians-- clearly a letter with a Jewish character. In this chapter we continue to make a case for the Jewishness of Colossians by analyzing other themes which take on some prominence in the letter. These themes are clearly steeped in the theology of Israel and are employed in the argument of Colossians. More importantly, these themes are intimately related to Israel's own self-understanding as the people of Yahweh. It is this self-understanding, this Israel motif, that the authors of Colossians utilize in order to make their case that the Gentile Christians at Colossae should understand themselves as the people of God because of the work of Christ. We will look, therefore, at three major themes in the letter-- Jesus and wisdom, Christ as the embodiment of Torah, and the Exodus and the work of Christ.

#### JESUS AND WISDOM

Wisdom played a very important role in the theology of second Temple

Judaism.<sup>467</sup> So much so that it came to be identified with the Torah.<sup>468</sup> Wisdom is a significant theme in the writings of Qumran as well, particularly in relationship to the covenant community (1QS 4:22; CD 3:13-20f.; 1QH 17:14-18.; 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 3:1f.)

The Jewish usage of wisdom is one of the most significant themes in the christology of the early church. Wisdom language, particularly in reference to Christ, can be found throughout the Gospels and the Pauline corpus (e.g. Mt. 11:27-30; [cf. Sir. 51:23-27]; Jn. 1:1-18; [cf. Wisd. 9:9; Sir. 24:8; 1 En. 42:2]; 1 Cor. 8:5-6; [cf. Prov. 3:19; Wisd. 8:4-6]; Heb. 1:1-3a; [cf. Wisd. 7:26]).<sup>469</sup> The major text of concern here is the wisdom christology of Colossians 1:15-20, and the associated themes of the passage, and other passages in Colossians that illuminate the importance of wisdom in the argument of the letter. In what follows I do not offer any new insights on wisdom and the Christ-hymn; rather I am outlining the

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<sup>467</sup>The significance of wisdom for second Temple Judaism and the christology of the early church has been written on extensively and has been clearly demonstrated. [See for example J. Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature." The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 369-407; W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 2: 80-92; Hayward, "Sacrifice and World Order: Some Observations on Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple Service." Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays on Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 22-34; Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 1:153-175; R. Murphy, The Forms of Old Testament Literature. Vol. XIII Wisdom Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); G. von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon, reprint 1988)]. There is no need, therefore, to provide a detailed account of wisdom and christology. What is simply needed is a reminder of its significance in reference to Colossians. Several of the sources subsequently footnoted provide more detailed treatments.

<sup>468</sup>C. Hayward, "Sacrifice and World Order", pp. 22-34. See also G. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 59-62.

<sup>469</sup>For a detailed treatment see J. Dunn, Christology in the Making 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1989), pp. 163-212.

main consensus of scholarship.

#### A Brief Preliminary Discussion on the Christ-Hymn

Whether or not Colossians 1:15-20 is a pre-Pauline Christian hymn as most scholars believe,<sup>470</sup> is not critical to the discussion.<sup>471</sup> I am concerned with its final form and its place in the argument of the letter. The Gnostic redeemer myth thesis<sup>472</sup> is no longer defensible, and will, therefore, not be addressed. This has been done elsewhere.<sup>473</sup> In addition, I will not address Martin's argument for a Cynic background of the Christ-Hymn.<sup>474</sup> Since his entire thesis falls in the rest of the letter, it is unlikely that Cynicism explains the Christ-Hymn. Just as in the rest of his argument Martin has to base his discussion on what are vague and strained similarities between the Christ-Hymn and Cynicism. It is my contention, however, that whatever the original form, an analysis of the hymn as it is found in Colossians and an inquiry into its place in the context of the letter, will

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<sup>470</sup>See Lohse, Colossians, p. 41, for a bibliography on the hymnic nature of the passage.

<sup>471</sup>A few scholars argue that there is no pre-Pauline presence in the hymn. Caird, Paul's Letters, pp. 174-175; Feuillet, Le Christ, pp. 246-273; Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 342-343.

<sup>472</sup>Most notably E. Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 149-168.

<sup>473</sup>E.g. E. Yamauchi, "Some Alleged Evidences for Pre-Christian Gnosticism." New Dimensions in New Testament Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 68. Note A. Wedderburn ("The Theology of Colossians," pp. 31-32) who argues that such passages in the New Testament as Colossians 1:15-20 may have been the starting point for later Christian Gnostic speculation. It does not necessarily follow, however, that such passages already betray Gnostic ideas.

<sup>474</sup>Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, pp. 182-189.

elucidate the influences on the hymn as well.

It is Wright's contention that the hymn (or as he prefers poem<sup>475</sup>) "presents a pattern well known within the context of mainline Judaism."<sup>476</sup> Thus the hymn should not simply be read in light of one aspect of Jewish tradition (e.g. wisdom), but of the whole Jewish worldview of which wisdom was one important part.<sup>477</sup> I will draw on Wright's work in some respect, to make the case that the Jewishness of the hymn cannot be missed.

### The Christ-Hymn

#### Σοφία

The point has been made time and time again that Colossians 1:15-20 displays close affinities with the Jewish wisdom tradition.<sup>478</sup> Schweizer observes, "One could quote the parallels to the first stanza word by word in Wisdom literature."<sup>479</sup> As long as two decades ago Martin observed that there was an

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<sup>475</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>476</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>477</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>478</sup>E.g. J. Aletti, Colossiens 1:15-20. Genre et exégèse du texte. Fonction de la thématique sapientielle AnBib 91 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981), pp. 148-152; A. Feuillet, Le Christ sagesse de Dieu d'après les épîtres pauliniennes (Paris: Gabalda, 1966), pp. 189-191; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 172-174; and Wolter, Kolosser, p. 76.

<sup>479</sup>E. Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ." NTS 8 (1961): 7. B. Witherington, Paul's Narrative Thought World (Louisville: W/JKP, 1994), p. 106, demonstrates the clear dependence of the hymn on the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisd. 7:26 and Col. 1:15a; Wisd. 6:22 and Col. 1:15b; Wisd. 1:14 and Col. 1:16a; Wisd. 5:23d, 6:21, 7:8 and Col. 1:16d; Wisd. 7:24b and Col. 1:16-17, 19; Wisd. 1:7, 8:1 and Col. 1:17b; Wisd. 7:29c, cf. Sir. 1:4, 24:9 and Col. 1:17a, 18d.

"emerging consensus" that the background of the hymn was Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>480</sup>

Wisdom 7:26 reads: ἀπαύγασμα γὰρ ἐστὶν φωτὸς αἰδίου καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ. In Jewish literature wisdom was closely associated with creation (Prov. 8:22; Wisd. 9:9; Sir. 1:4; 24:9). Indeed wisdom was involved in creation.<sup>481</sup> Wisdom 3:1 reads: ὁ θεὸς τῆ σοφία ἐθεμελίωθεν τὴν γῆν. Colossians 1:16 is likely an allusion to Wisdom 3:1: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα...τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται.<sup>482</sup> Here is an excellent example of the Colossian Christ-hymn's use of wisdom language:<sup>483</sup> "language used of Christ which at that time was typically used of divine wisdom in Jewish circles" (Prov. 3:19; 8:22-30; Wisd. 8:4-6; Sir. 24:9; 2 En. 30:8).<sup>484</sup> Here is language that is "Jewish through and through."<sup>485</sup> The Old Testament portrait of wisdom bears a "striking resemblance" to the Christ described by Paul.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>480</sup>Martin, Colossians, p. 65.

<sup>481</sup>A. Feuillet, "La création de l'univers 'dans le Christ' d'après l'Épître aux Colossiens." NTS 12 (1965): 1-9.

<sup>482</sup>It has been noted by more than a few that there are really no literary parallels with εἰς αὐτὸν in 1:16. Lohse, Colossians, p. 52; Martin, Colossians, p. 58; W. Eltester, Εἰκὼν in the New Testament (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1958), pp. 142-143.

<sup>483</sup>But see S. Fowl's cautions in describing this language as technical with a special vocabulary, The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 118-121.

<sup>484</sup>Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, p. 196.

<sup>485</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>486</sup>W. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), p. 151.

Wisdom was not only considered to be active in the creation of the universe, but it expressed divine immanence as well. Wisdom had a redemptive quality. In Proverbs 8:35-36 Wisdom speaks,

"For he who finds me finds life, and obtains favor from Yahweh. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death."

This same idea is conveyed as well in 9:4-6,

"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, "Come, eat my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding."

Thus wisdom comes to express the divine way of morality and knowledge. In the Christ-hymn, the relationship between creation and redemption is clear.<sup>487</sup> Wisdom is present in creation and it provides knowledge for living in the ways of God. Christ is the wisdom of God in both.

The significance of creation and redemption is important in Colossians as the hymn's emphasis is Christ's role in creation and salvation,<sup>488</sup> creation and new creation. For Paul and Timothy all that can be said of wisdom can now be said of Christ. Here is the major point of the hymn. In creation and the renewal of creation Christ is the wisdom of God.

Related to this is the implicit affirmation in Colossians 1:15-20 that Christ embodies the Torah (a point to be analyzed in more detail in the next section).

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<sup>487</sup>Dibelius, Kolosser, p. 6.

<sup>488</sup>Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, p. 162. Davies analyzes and rejects Windisch's argument that in Judaism the Messiah was connected to the wisdom of God (pp. 158-162). See H. Windisch, Die Weisheit und die Paulinische Christologie, pp. 227f.

Surely Davies in his discussion of the subject overstates his case in portraying Jesus as the new Torah,<sup>489</sup> but the relationship implied between Jesus and Torah bears investigation.<sup>490</sup> Sirach unquestionably makes a connection between wisdom personified and Torah:<sup>491</sup>

Wisdom will praise herself, and will glory in the midst of her people. In the congregation of the Most High she will open her mouth, and triumph before his power. "He created me from the beginning before the world, and I will not cease....All these things are the book of the covenant of the Most High God, even the law which Moses commanded for a heritage to the congregations of Jacob (see 24:1-3, 8-9, 23-24)

Also Baruch

Hear, Israel, the commandments of life: give ear to understand wisdom....Learn where is wisdom, where is strength, where is understanding; that you may also know where is length of days, and life, where is the light of the eyes, and peace. Who has discovered her place? or who has come into her treasures?....This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endures forever.... (see 3:9-15, 4:1-4).

In these passages which deal primarily with the themes of wisdom and law Torah is understood as sufficient for the faith and practice of God's people, Israel. Such passages as above led Moore to state that in Torah is found "all that God has made known of his nature, character and purpose and of what he would have man be and do."<sup>492</sup>

What, therefore, is being said in Colossians 1:15-20 when the authors

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<sup>489</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-176.

<sup>490</sup>See Hooker, "False Teachers," p. 330.

<sup>491</sup>See Dunn, Colossians, p. 89.

<sup>492</sup>G. Moore, Judaism 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927-1930), 1:263.

present Christ as the wisdom of God and its implications with Torah? Quite simply they are conferring upon Christ everything previously applied to wisdom which was embodied in Torah. Here we see wisdom language in conscious dependence on Jewish themes. As the law was sufficient for the life of the people of Israel because it was God's wisdom embodied, so Jesus is sufficient for the faith and practice of the people of God, the church, because Christ is God's wisdom embodied. The identification of Torah with wisdom gave cosmic importance to the morality of the law.<sup>493</sup> The identification of Christ with wisdom in Colossians 1:15-20 continues to give cosmic importance to morality, but now such identification transcends national boundaries. Christ is not only the fulfillment of the promises made in Torah, he is greater than Torah.<sup>494</sup> In Romans 8:3 Paul states, τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου, ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν.<sup>495</sup> Surely the Jewishness of this cannot be missed. Yet there is more to consider.

### Πρωτότοκος

The wisdom theme also gives a better understanding of πρωτότοκος in the Colossian Christ-hymn.

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old. From everlasting I was established, from the beginning from the earliest times of the earth (Prov. 8:22-23)

Πρωτότοκος is found 130 times in the LXX. It is used mainly in historical narratives

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<sup>493</sup>Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, p. 171.

<sup>494</sup>T. Pollard, "Colossians 1:12-20: A Reconsideration." NTS 27 (1980-1981): 575.

<sup>495</sup>See Hooker, "False Teachers," p. 331.

and genealogies to indicate temporal priority and sovereignty of rank.<sup>496</sup> The title πρωτόκοκος is a mark of honor and emphasizes in the hymn the priority of the redeemer.<sup>497</sup>

Πρωτόκοκος πάσης κτίσεως in 1:15 also contains an allusion to Proverbs 8:22, וְהָיָה כִּי יִקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּרָאִתִּי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִקְרָא אֶת־יְהוָה (Κύριος ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.-- LXX). Indeed the term אֱלֹהִים was interpreted by the rabbis in light of אֱלֹהִים found in Genesis 1:1.<sup>498</sup> Through wisdom God created the heavens and the earth. It seems logical, therefore, to conclude that πρωτόκοκος πάσης κτίσεως is a reference to Christ as the agent of God's creation and that he is God's wisdom.<sup>499</sup> The hymn speaks "of Christ as embodying and expressing (and defining) that power of God which is the manifestation of God in and to his creation."<sup>500</sup> The book of Wisdom speaks of wisdom as the τεχνίτις and τὰ πάντα ἐργαζομένης (8:5-6).<sup>501</sup> Wisdom is also closely related with creation in Sirach 1:4; 24:9; and Wisdom 9:9. According to the

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<sup>496</sup>J. Gibbs, Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p. 103; O'Brien, Colossians, p. 44. For the argument in favor of temporal priority see Aletti, Colossians, p. 103; Ernst, Kolossier, p. 168; Moule, Colossians, pp. 66-67; Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 28. For sovereignty of rank see Caird, Paul's Letter, p. 179; Lohse, Colossians, p. 52. For the argument to allow the ambiguity between the two to stand see Harris, Colossians, pp. 46-47.

<sup>497</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 75.

<sup>498</sup>C. Burney, "Christ as the APXH of Creation." JTS 27 (1926): pp. 160-177. This will be discussed below under 'Αρχη

<sup>499</sup>Feuillet, "Le Création," pp. 4-5.

<sup>500</sup>Dunn, Christology, p. 194.

<sup>501</sup>Feuillet, "Le Création," pp. 6-7

Colossian Christ-hymn the wisdom of God is most fully represented in Jesus. "Jesus is the exhaustive embodiment of divine wisdom; all the divine fullness dwelt in him."<sup>502</sup> The purpose of the universe and the world is found in Christ.<sup>503</sup>

The phrase αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων again refers to πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως. Parallels have been drawn between τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, and Platonic and Stoic sources where the unity of the world is affirmed.<sup>504</sup> There are, however, close correlations to be found in Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>505</sup> In Sirach we read, δι' αὐτὸν ἐβόδια τέλος αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ σύγκειται πάντα (43:26). Wisdom 1:7 states, ὅτι πνεῦμα Κυρίου πεπλήρωκε τὴν οἰκουμένην, καὶ τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα γινῶσιν ἔχει φωνῆς. Again the theme of wisdom is present which is "regarded as the principle of coherence between God and his world..."<sup>506</sup> Yet more than coherence is expressed in Colossians. Verse 17 is another affirmation in the hymn of Christ's supremacy over creation. Christ is given the "unique position" as "Lord over the

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<sup>502</sup>Dunn, Christology, p. 195.

<sup>503</sup>Wolter, Kolosser, p. 82.

<sup>504</sup>H. Hegermann, Die Vorstellung vom Schöpfungsmittler im hellenistischen Judentum und Urchristentum (Berlin: Akademie, 1961), p.94. The most important parallels are drawn from Plato, *Rep.* 530a; Ps. Aristotle, *Cosmos* 6; and Philo, *Quis Her.* 281 and 311.

<sup>505</sup>This is not to say that the Platonic image of the universe as a body failed to work its way into Hellenistic Judaism. See Dunn, Colossians, p. 94. On the relationship between κεφαλή and the cosmos see Gnlika, Kolosserbrief, p. 68.

<sup>506</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 48.

cosmos.<sup>507</sup> Πρωτότοκος again connects Christ to divine wisdom (cf. Wisd. 9:9; Philo Conf. 146; Agr. 51; Somn. 1.215; Fug. 109).

### Εἶτε Θρόνοι Εἶτε Κυριότητες Εἶτε Ἐξουσίαι

Θρόνοι and κυριότητες are sometimes designed in Jewish literature among the multitude of angels. In the Testament of Levi we read,

In the heaven below them are the messengers who carry the responses to the angels of the Lord's angels. There with him are thrones (θρόνοι) and authorities (ἐξουσίαι); there praises to God are offered eternally (3:7-8; cf. 2 En. 20:1).

Ἄρχαι and ἐξουσίαι occur together in typical fashion all but four times in the New Testament. Ἄρχαι is used twice without ἐξουσίαι and ἐξουσίαι is used twice without ἀρχαι.<sup>508</sup> In the New Testament ἀρχαι designates earthly or spiritual forces (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Tit. 3:1). These forces may or may not be hostile to God (cf. Apoc. Zeph. 6:8-9, 16-17; As. Is. 9:16).<sup>509</sup> It is not clear in Colossians 1:17, whether the powers referred to are malevolent. The reference in 1:13 suggests they are threatening,<sup>510</sup> yet the context of the hymn is that Christ is head over all the principalities and powers ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (1:16). Thus both hostile and amicable forces are probably in mind in 1:17.

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<sup>507</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 52. Schweizer, Colossians, pp. 71-72, suggests that the emphatic αὐτός refers to the "extremely expressive 'I'" employed of יהוה in the Old Testament and Ἰησοῦς in the New Testament. While this suggestion cannot ultimately be eliminated, it is implicit at best.

<sup>508</sup>Carr, Angels and Principalities, pp. 49-50.

<sup>509</sup>G. Delling, "Ἀρχή" TDNT, 1:482-483.

<sup>510</sup>Wink, Naming the Powers, p. 66.

Likewise ἐξουσίαι refer to earthly or spiritual authorities. Ἄρχαι and ἐξουίαι are not used in reference to supernatural powers in Hellenistic or pagan Gnostic sources.<sup>511</sup> They are, however, found with such reference in Jewish sources. In the Testament of Levi (3:8) both words are used with θρόνοι (the only extant parallel with Colossians; cf. the similar language in the longer recension of the Slavonic 2 En. 20:1). The ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι along with θρόνοι suggest a reference to angelic beings who worship God as part of the heavenly court (As. Is. 7:15, 19, 21; 8:7; 9:6-10).<sup>512</sup> Ἄρχαι and ἐξουσίαι are clearly intelligible in a Jewish context.<sup>513</sup>

The mention of thrones, dominions, principalities, and authorities in 1:17, is an early affirmation in the letter of Christ's superiority over these powers, reinforced in 2:10 and 2:15. If indeed the phrase εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητος εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι is a phrase added by the authors of the letter<sup>514</sup> it suggests that the affirmation of Christ's superiority over the powers is particularly important to the argument. Thus right from the earliest stage of the letter Paul and Timothy prepare to make the point that Christ has defeated and is, therefore, superior to the hostile forces (2:15), and he is superior to the angelic powers the Colossian philosophers find so intriguing. The philosophers dismissive attitude toward the Gentile Christians, amounted to nothing more than arrogant conceit

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<sup>511</sup>W. Foerster, "Ἐξουσία." TDNT, 2:571.

<sup>512</sup>Carr, Angels and Principalities, p. 49.

<sup>513</sup>Foerster, "Ἀρχή" p. 572.

<sup>514</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 57.

(εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος; 1:18). They delighted in their participation in angelic praise, not simply because it was a wonderful experience (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2-4), but it also signified their own righteousness. But since the angels fall under Christ's Lordship, the philosophers' delight is nothing more than worldly mindedness (εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ; 2:18) κατὰ παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων (2:8). They may attempt to set their minds on heavenly things, things above, but they are a shadow (σκιά),<sup>515</sup> woefully insufficient because the substance (σῶμα) belongs to Christ (2:17; cf. Heb. 10:1).<sup>516</sup>

#### Ἀρχή

Christ is the ἀρχή (1:18). In Jewish thought both λόγος and σοφία were referred to as ἀρχή<sup>517</sup> (on λόγος see Jn. 1:1; on σοφία cf. Job 28:23ff. and Wisd. 7:22f., and Sir. 24; *Genesis Rabbah* 1:1; *Sifre Deuteronomy* 11:10).<sup>518</sup> The use of ἀρχή in the LXX confirms this (cf. Gen. 40:13, 20; 1 Chr. 26:10). Beasley-Murray

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<sup>515</sup>Philo draws a contrast between σκιά and σῶμα (*Decal.* 82; *Mig. Abr.* 12; *Conf.* 190).

<sup>516</sup>See E. Best, *One Body in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 121; Bruce, *Colossians*, p. 116-117.

<sup>517</sup>See Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 29.

<sup>518</sup>M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 1:170f.; F. Manns, "Col. 1,15-20: Midrash Chrétien de Gen. 1,1." *RevSR* 53 (1979): 100-110; Feuillet, "La Création," pp. 4-7; T. Glasson, "Colossians 1:18, 15 and Sirach 24." *JBL* 86 (1967): 214-216.

tracks ἀρχή back to its Hebrew counterpart אֶרְכָּה which is a cognate of אֶרְכָּה.<sup>519</sup> In several places in the LXX אֶרְכָּה is translated ἀρχή (Gen. 2:10; 40:13, 20; Ex. 6:25; 12:2; Num. 1:2; 4:22; 26:2; Jdg. 7:16, 19f.) Burney argues that in this hymn the author presents a rabbinic interpretation of אֶרְכָּה.<sup>520</sup> The general consensus of scholarship, however, rightly argues that the hymn is best explained against the wider Hellenistic-Jewish background of Proverbs 8 and Wisdom 7:25 (cf. Rev. 3:14).<sup>521</sup>

### Πλήρωμα

Finally, in our analysis of the Christ-hymn, it is necessary to investigate the background of πλήρωμα.<sup>522</sup> Some have understood πλήρωμα as a technical term in Gnosticism. Dibelius supports the idea that the πλήρωμα should be understood as part of the realm of the στοιχεῖα.<sup>523</sup> The major weakness with this is that in

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<sup>519</sup>P. Beasley-Murray, "Colossians 1:15-20: An Early Christian Hymn Celebrating the Lordship of Christ." Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 175-176.

<sup>520</sup>C. Burney, "Christ as the APXH," pp. 160-177.

<sup>521</sup>Aletti, Colossians, p. 115; Jervell, Imago Dei, pp. 200-201; N. Kehl, Der Christushymnus im Kolosserbrief. Eine motivgeschichtlich Untersuchung zu Kol. a:12-20 SBM (Stuttgart: Katholisches bibelwerk, 1967), pp. 78-81, 87, 104; Lohse, Colossians, p. 45; Martin, Colossians, p. 65; O'Brien, Colossians, pp. 37-38; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 172-173; Schweizer, Colossians, p. 65. Wright, Climax, pp. 110-113, argues, however, that Burney has been misunderstood by many, and that with the modification of putting his argument within the broader context of Jewish monotheism, Burney's theory in actually becomes quite helpful.

<sup>522</sup>Lightfoot, Colossians, pp. 257-271, provides a detailed historical analysis of the interpretations of πλήρωμα.

<sup>523</sup>Dibelius, Kolosser, p. 19.

Gnosticism God does not belong to the πλήρωμα.<sup>524</sup> Moreover, in the Christ-hymn the relationship between creator and redeemer is a positive one. This makes it extremely difficult to maintain a Gnostic interpretation.<sup>525</sup>

Wedderburn is correct to look for the use of this term in a "Judeo-Christian background."<sup>526</sup> Several passages in the Old Testament are reminiscent of Colossians 1:19. For example, Jeremiah 23:24 in the LXX reads, μή οὐχὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν ἐγὼ πληρῶ; λέγει Κύριος. Also Psalm 72 (71):19-- καὶ πληρωθήσεται τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ (cf. Ezek. 43:5; 44:4; also 1 En. 49:3-4; Philo, *Mos.* 2.23). According to these verses God is immanent and he is personally involved in the world, and the creation itself reflects the fullness of God's glory (Psalm 24:1; Sir.42:16).<sup>527</sup> Philo uses the noun πλήρης to refer to God's perfection and self-sufficiency (*Spec. Leg.* 1:44; 2:53; *Quis. Her.* 187-188; *Sacr.* 9). The noun πλήρωμα is used in the Old Testament to signify completeness (Jer. 8:16; Ezek. 19:7; 30:12).

In addition, εὐδόκησεν recalls the Old Testament notion of God's good pleasure in divine election (Ps. 44:3; 147:11; 149:4); in the Colossian context referring to God's unique revelation in Christ.<sup>528</sup> Κατοικῆσαι is reminiscent of God's continual presence with his people (Dt. 12:5, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2). In

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<sup>524</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, p. 77.

<sup>525</sup>Pokorný, *Colossians*, p. 55. See also L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of Saint Paul* (New York: Herder, 1959), p. 427.

<sup>526</sup>Again Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 31.

<sup>527</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 52.

<sup>528</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 45. In addition to Christ as God's revelation, I would add the idea of Christ as God's elected one.

the LXX εὐδοκέω and κατοικέω are utilized together, as in Psalm 67 (68):16-- τὸ ὄρος  
δ' εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς κατοικεῖν ἐν αὐτῷ (cf. Ps. 131:13-14; Is. 8:18; 49:20).

### Some Conclusions on the Christ-Hymn

In Colossians 1:15-20 Christ is designated as the wisdom of God, a common notion in the Old Testament and non-canonical Jewish literature. The other major elements of the hymn also reflect a Jewish worldview.<sup>529</sup> To understand the hymn in such a perspective is reinforced all the more by 1:12-14 which would have elicited in the readers thoughts of the Exodus (this point will be argued below). Thus Christ's work of reconciliation would have been claimed as the final return from slavery. Wisdom making her home in Israel (Sir. 1:1-10; 24:3-12) has now made her home in Christ. As wisdom reflects the image of God's goodness (Wisd. 7:26), so Christ reflects the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

In the hymn the Jewish notions of wisdom and Israel are linked together<sup>530</sup> in order to argue that Christ is all sufficient for the Colossians. The wisdom given in Torah was now to be accumulation in Christ.<sup>531</sup> It is apparent, therefore, that in the context of Colossians the hymn is a refutation of the idea that the Gentiles need to take on these Jewish badges of identity in order to be part of the people of God. The philosophers appeal to their experience of angelic worship, but the Colossians continue to abide with the one seated in the heavenlies above those angels-- Jesus Christ. Thus the point argued in this thesis continues to be reinforced in the Christ-hymn: the nature of the

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<sup>529</sup>Again see Wright, Climax, p. 108.

<sup>530</sup>Pollard, "Colossians 1:12-20," p. 575.

<sup>531</sup>Wright, Climax, p. 118.

philosophy addressed in Colossians is essentially Jewish in character. Indeed, one cannot understand the hymn and its place in the letter without understanding the Jewish themes in the letter.<sup>532</sup>

The Christ-hymn is not the only place in Colossians where wisdom is the theme. The theme of Christ as God's wisdom is integrated into the argument of the letter. Moreover, as has already been suggested in our analysis of the Christ-hymn, the claim that Christ embodies God's wisdom has crucial implications for the place of the Torah, since in first-century Judaism wisdom was identified with the Torah. In asserting for Christ what has been said of God's wisdom, I have stated that the authors of Colossians are conferring upon Christ everything previously applied to the law. We look now more closely at that claim.

#### CHRIST AS THE EMBODIMENT OF TORAH

Colossians 1:26, 27; 2:2

As we begin our analysis of the law in Colossians, it is clear that the theme of wisdom continues to be part and parcel of the discussion. Our concern in 1:26, 27, and 2:2 is with *μυστήριον* and its background. In the LXX *μυστήριον* occurs in the writings of the Hellenistic period. In the Wisdom of Solomon *μυστήριον* is related to wisdom:

Τι δέ ἐστι σοφία καὶ πῶς ἐγένετο, ἀπαγγελῶ, καὶ οὐκ ἀποκρύψω ὑμῖν μυστήρια, ἀλλ' ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενέσεως ἐξινιάσω, καὶ θήσω εἰς τὸ ἐμφανές τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῆς, καὶ οὐ μὴ παροδεύσω τὴν ἀλήθειαν (6:22).

*Μυστήριον* also refers to pagan cults (Wisd. 12:5; 14:23; 3 Macc. 2:30). In addition it is employed in a secular denotation referring to the secret schemes of leaders

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<sup>532</sup>Which DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 136-138, fails to understand.

(Tob. 12:7, 11), as well as secrets between people in general (Sir. 27:16).

It is in Daniel that *μυστήριον* takes on the notion of eschatological mystery, to be disclosed at the end of history by God himself (2:28-29, 47).<sup>533</sup> This reveals some definite differences between *μυστήριον* in apocalyptic thought, and *μυστήριον* in Gnosticism. Bornkamm writes,

Apocalyptic usage discloses clear connections with that of the mystery cults and Gnosticism. We find the same demand for silence. The angel plays in apocalyptic the role of the mystagogue. The journey to heaven and hell, liturgically depicted in the cults takes visionary form in Gnosticism and apocalyptic. Yet for all the common features there are decisive distinctions: 1. The apocalyptic mysteries do not relate to a destiny which the deity or the heavenly redeemer suffers, but to one which the deity decides or ordains; 2. reception of the mysteries is not deification in apocalyptic; 3. the mysteries are in apocalyptic orientated to an eschatological cosmic revelation.<sup>534</sup>

The background of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament is correctly identified with the Old Testament and other Jewish literature.<sup>535</sup> Of special importance is its place in wisdom and apocalyptic literature<sup>536</sup> (1 En. 103:2; 106:19; 2 En. 24:3; 4 Ez. 10:38; 14:5; 1QS 3:23; 4:18; 1QpHab 7:5; 1QMyst.; cf. Rev. 10:7).<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>533</sup>G. Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον, μύεω.*" *TDNT*, 4:814-815.

<sup>534</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 816.

<sup>535</sup>Cf. for example, 1QH 5:6-9, "Every [one who has been chosen by] the knowledge of all intelligence will understand [...] you have established. [For] to you belongs holiness before the centuries and forever and ever. You are [...] holy ones [...] And in your wonderful mysteries you have instructed me for your glory, and the depth of [...] of your knowledge (does) not [...] But you have revealed the paths of truth and the deeds of evil, wisdom and folly.

<sup>536</sup>As DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, pp. 143-144, admits.

<sup>537</sup>R. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 1-30.

In the Pauline corpus *μυστήριον* occurs over twenty times and has to do with a mystery which has already been revealed: *Χριστὸν ἐν ὑμῖν*-- *ὑμῖν* referring to the Gentiles (Col. 1:27). In Christ God's salvation is now available to the Gentiles as Gentiles. The final act of God's plan has begun and it encompasses the entire world.<sup>538</sup> It is no longer restricted to one culture. The use of *μυστήριον* in Colossians is entirely in keeping with Isaiah.

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on he shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles (9:1).

The definition of the mystery is Christ. The Gentiles are the recipients of that mystery.<sup>539</sup> Christ is the essence of the message. Such teaching is instruction *ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ*.<sup>540</sup> The goal of such instruction is maturity or completeness in Christ. This is not achieved instantaneously. Christ "is indeed the embodiment of divine wisdom, but the exploration of the wisdom that resides in him is the task of a lifetime...."<sup>541</sup>

The authors want the Colossians to have the knowledge *τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ, ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρφοι*. In 2 Baruch the notion of "treasures of wisdom" is connected to the law.

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<sup>538</sup>Gnilka, *Kolossierbrief*, p. 99.

<sup>539</sup>Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption*, p. 185.

<sup>540</sup>Here "wisdom" is not the content of the instruction-- Christ is the content. If wisdom were the content that would make *σοφία* the object of *διδάσκοντες* and therefore accusative. The dative here expresses instrumental usage or manner.

<sup>541</sup>Bruce, *Colossians*, p. 86.

These are they who prepared themselves treasures of wisdom. And stores of insight are found with them, And they have not withdrawn from mercy and they have preserved the truth of the law (44:14).

Also,

For with your counsel, you reign over all creation which your right hand has created, and you have established the whole fountain of light with yourself, and you have prepared under your throne the treasures of wisdom. And those who do not love your law are justly perishing (54:13-14a).

For Paul and Timothy, Christ, not the law is where πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀποκρυφτοί.

#### Colossians 2:4

There is a difference of scholarly opinion over how to understand τοῦτο λέγω ἵνα. Some understand it in an imperatival sense referring to what is to come, thus making verse 4 the beginning of a new paragraph.<sup>542</sup> Others interpret it in a telic manner pointing to what was just said.<sup>543</sup> The argument in favor of accepting this phrase retrospectively is made clear by Sappington. The imperatival uses of τοῦτο λέγω in Galatians 3:17<sup>544</sup> and 1 Corinthians 1:12<sup>545</sup> are

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<sup>542</sup>Bruce, Colossians, p. 92; Moule, Colossians, p. 88.

<sup>543</sup>Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 177; Lohse, Colossians, p. 83; O'Brien, Colossians, p. 97; Dibelius, Kolosser, p. 26; Caird, Paul's Letters, p. 187; Bandstra, Colossian Errorists, pp. 339-340.

<sup>544</sup>τοῦτο δὲ λέγω διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος οὐκ ἀκυροῖ, εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν.

<sup>545</sup>λέγω δὲ τοῦτο, ὅτι ἕκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἶμι Παύλου, Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ.

not exact parallels as ἵνα is absent. In John 5:34<sup>546</sup> ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα is unquestionably telic. If indeed Colossians 2:4 is telic, then there is no example of the imperatival use of τοῦτο λέγω with ἵνα in the New Testament.<sup>547</sup> Thus it seems best to translate this phrase, "I am saying this in order that...."

What is important about this is that 2:4, which is a mild warning to the Colossians not to be deceived by persuasive arguments, is connected to the affirmation in the two preceding verses that Christ is the wisdom of God. The philosophy which prompted the writing of this letter is connected in some way to this affirmation. The argument that Christ is the wisdom of God is a refutation of the philosophy being faced by the Colossian church. "Those who know Christ have no further need of revelation in this present age. They have already attained 'the full riches of complete understanding' simply on the basis of their faith in Christ" (2:5).<sup>548</sup>

Thus Christ is the wisdom of God, something previously ascribed to Torah. Christ, as Hooker argues,<sup>549</sup> has now superceded Torah, at least for the Gentiles. It is likely, therefore, that the warning in 2:4 is issued to those who are tempted to see in the law something that for the authors is now to be understood in Christ. The warning in 2:4 gives us another glimpse of the Jewish nature of the philosophy at Colossae.

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<sup>546</sup> ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου τὴν μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε.

<sup>547</sup> Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 177.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>549</sup> Hooker, "False Teachers," pp. 330-331.

Colossians 2:6-7

Here in these two verses we are given a summary of what has been argued up to this point in the letter and it is also thematic for the argument in the main body of the letter beginning in 2:8.<sup>550</sup> The Colossians are to persist in their faith in *the* Christ they have received.<sup>551</sup> The verb παραλαμβάνω<sup>552</sup> was technical terminology in early Christianity for receiving the traditions of the faith<sup>553</sup> (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal. 1:9, 12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Th. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Th. 3:6; παραδίδωμι-- 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:3).<sup>554</sup> The passing on of the traditions from generation to generation was of critical importance, particularly for the new communities of faith. So that there be no distortion of the Gospel the Colossians are urged to continue to place their faith in the Christ that was preached to them from the first--<sup>555</sup> the all-sufficient Christ. While the Colossians are not being pressured from false teachers, nevertheless there are dangers tempting the church, and a call to endurance in the faith they have received is appropriate. Their faith in the Christ they have received is more than adequate for their way of life as

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<sup>550</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 138; O'Brien, Colossians, p. 102.

<sup>551</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 98, suggests that Paul is admonishing the Colossians to continue to live in *this Christ* (God's image, God's wisdom, God's mystery) that they have received. A particular view of Christ is in mind.

<sup>552</sup>The Hebrew equivalents are קבל and קיבל (cf. 'Abot 1:1). See Lohse, Colossians, p. 93.

<sup>553</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 141, notes that the traditions of the faith would likely have included ethical instruction, the significance of teachers in the early churches, and allusions to the teaching and example of Jesus.

<sup>554</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>555</sup>Gnilka, Kolossenerbrief, p. 116.

Christians. They are already qualified "to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." They need not seek anything else, including the regulations of the Torah. The Colossians must continue to walk in what they have received. They must "walk" (a Semitic way of talking about faithfulness) not only in the traditions they have received, but also within a living relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord.<sup>556</sup>

This sufficiency of Christ is reinforced at the beginning of the main body of the letter in 2:8-10, where the themes of the Christ-hymn are once again mentioned, along with their relationship to the believers. In Jesus the fullness of deity dwells bodily and the Colossians have come to fullness ἐν αὐτῷ. Here the high and lofty affirmation of Christ's fullness found in 1:19 of the Christ-hymn takes on a practical role in the life of the Gentile church in Colossae. Christ is once again attested as ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας (cf. 2:19 where the ecclesiological connection with "head and body" is made). Anything is rejected that is οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν. Anything οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν is a substitute tradition.<sup>557</sup> The Colossians must not exchange the one they have received for another.

After this reinforcement of what has already been stated with clarity, Paul and Timothy then launch into the main argument of the letter, where we find the five parallels already discussed. The first four of these parallels (circumcision, Sabbath and special days, food laws, τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and angels) are rejected because they are "not according to Christ." The last of the five (the

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<sup>556</sup>Lähnemann, Kolossierbrief, p. 113.

<sup>557</sup>Martin, By Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 33.

unity formula) is affirmed as "according to Christ" precisely because the first four parallels have been rejected. Christ has made possible the notion that there is no longer Jew or Greek, circumcision or uncircumcision (cf. 3:11).

#### Colossians 2:14

One final term needs to be identified in this section-- χειρόγραφον (2:14). Several different interpretations have been given by scholars: a certificate of debt,<sup>558</sup> a heavenly book of deeds,<sup>559</sup> and the Mosaic law.<sup>560</sup> While the first two views have some evidence in their favor, it is my contention that the χειρόγραφον refers to the Mosaic law, although there is a sense, as Wright argues, in which the last interpretation does not exclusively rule out the first two views, as each plays some role in Pauline thought on the law (cf. Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:19-22).<sup>561</sup> External arguments for this position have been made by others.<sup>562</sup> I simply want to make a couple of internal arguments from the text of Colossians itself to support this view.

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<sup>558</sup>H. Conzelmann, Die kleineren Briefe des Apostels Paulus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 144; Lohse, Colossians, p. 108; S. Lyonnet, Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 147-148; Moule, Colossians, p. 97.

<sup>559</sup>Bandstra, The Law and the Elements; Dunn, Colossians, pp. 164-165; A. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 113-114; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, pp. 215-220; Weiss, "The Law," p. 302.

<sup>560</sup>J. Houlden, Paul's Letters from Prison (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 191-192; Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 187; H. Moule, Colossians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), p. 106; Wright, Colossians, pp. 111-112.

<sup>561</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 112.

<sup>562</sup>E.g. Abbott, Colossians, p. 255; Wright, Colossian, p. 112.

To my knowledge it has not been noticed by commentators that there may be a play on words taking place in chapter two between ἀχειροποιήτω (2:11) and χειρόγραφον (2:14). The believer in Christ has been circumcised with περιτομή ἀχειροποιήτω which means implicitly, among other things, that a circumcision "done with hands" is no longer essential because the "hand written document" which requires such circumcision has been erased in the cross of Christ. This would, of course, make the χειρόγραφον a reference to the law of Moses.

Moreover, the regulations in 2:16-18, which are clearly Jewish in nature, further define the phrase τοῖς δόγμασιν. The μή οὖν in 2:16 suggests this is the case.<sup>563</sup> The law was known as "decrees" and "regulations" in the Judaism of the first century (3 Macc. 1:3; Philo, *Leg. All.* 1:55; *Gig.* 52; Josephus, *Ap.* 1:42).<sup>564</sup>

The problem with this interpretation is that it suggests a flaw in the reasoning of the argument Paul and Timothy present. The authors wishing to draw on Jewish tradition to establish the fact that the Gentiles are now God's elect people in Jesus Christ, effectively cancel out that tradition by referring to the law as having been erased in the cross of Christ.

The logic, however, seems no more problematic than the claims in Colossians 1:15-20 that Christ embodies Torah, which is an argument meant only to critique certain ethnic practices prescribed in the law, which the Colossian Gentiles need

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<sup>563</sup>Lincoln, *Paradise*, p. 121, argues that the Colossians were attempting "to strip off their fleshly nature through observance of detailed ascetic regulations." On the contrary, it seems that the Colossians may have put too much confidence in the "flesh": in circumcision done with hands" and a "hand written document" where physical circumcision and other regulations are found. These are "fleshly" in that they are "human traditions" (2:22; cf. 2:8).

<sup>564</sup>Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 165.

not heed.<sup>565</sup> It is no more problematic than the references to the ethnic practices mandated by the Torah as "according to human tradition" (2:8). It is no more problematic than Paul's claim in Galatians that with the coming of Christ the law has served its purpose (Gal. 3:24), while at the same time employing the tradition in order to argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles by faith (Gal. 3:6-9). It is no more problematic than Paul's appeal to the law's mediation by angels, as a sign of the law's indirectness (Gal. 3:19-20). Clearly Paul's utter rejection of the badges of identity for the Gentiles seemed inconsistent and no less problematic to his Jewish contemporaries.<sup>566</sup>

It may be true that the language of 2:14 is somewhat extreme, but the point continues to be that Christ is supreme above all powers, and embodies the wisdom revealed in the Torah. Thus the law is set aside in the sense that the Gentiles are not bound to the specific regulations mandated in the law, which mark the people of God ethnically as Jewish. It has been set aside because it was a shadow of the reality to come in Christ (Col. 2:17).

Paul and Timothy do not equate the regulations of the law to the principalities and powers mentioned in the next verse (2:15). The connection drawn is simply that Christ is supreme over the Torah, and therefore, the practices of the philosophers, and he is supreme over the hostile powers, the Colossian Gentiles oriented their lives around before their conversion. Here, once again Paul and Timothy draw a soteriological connection suggesting that both the

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<sup>565</sup>Hooker, "False Teachers," p. 330-331.

<sup>566</sup>See Barclay, Jews, pp. 384-385.

Torah<sup>567</sup> and the στοιχεῖα are salvifically insufficient.

On the cross the "rulers and authorities" who crucified Jesus were themselves disarmed in a stifling bit of irony. Thus 2:15 could well be translated "having stripped the powers and authorities he made a public example of them, exposing them to ridicule on the cross."<sup>568</sup> The parody in 2:15 is that when Christ hung naked on the cross bared to humiliation in public, it was in reality the forces of evil that God was lifting up to public dishonor and shame. In the cross of Christ the Colossians are free from the practices found in Torah which the authors are about to enumerate in 2:16-19.

Before salvation the Colossians were dead in their trespasses and the uncircumcision of their flesh; that is, the Colossians have already been circumcised with περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ, which means that even though they are still Gentiles, in that they have not been physically circumcised, they are nevertheless no longer alienated from God.<sup>569</sup> They were made alive when they were raised with Christ διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν (2:12). This was accomplished because the law (χειρόγραφον) with its regulations (δόγμασιν) was set aside when it was nailed to the cross of Christ.

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<sup>567</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 114.

<sup>568</sup>L. Williamson, "Led in Triumph: Paul's Use of *Thriambeuō*." Int 22 (1968): 326-327.

<sup>569</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 122.

## Conclusion

Our investigation into the theme of Torah demonstrates its importance for Colossians. The Jewish context here is unmistakable. Again wisdom is an important theme that continues in the letter and is particularly mentioned as critical if the Colossians are to live their lives as Christ desires. The moral connotations here so necessary for the paraenesis (which we will soon examine in detail) must not be missed.

Paul's use of the term **μυστήριον** is in keeping with its employment in Hellenistic Judaism. Moreover, **μυστήριον** takes on an eschatological context in the book of Daniel. Thus the authors' use of the term is a rebuttal of the idea that the "treasures of wisdom" are to be found in the law and in worshiping with the angels. Christ is the wisdom of God and is, therefore, sufficient for their knowledge of God and their Christian living.

Indeed, Paul insists that the **μυστήριον** finally revealed in Christ is the salvation now available to the Gentiles as Gentiles. God's plan includes the entire world. It is no longer to be understood in terms of national righteousness. The Colossians need to continue in this faith they received at the beginning. They have attained the full riches of understanding because they placed their faith in Christ. In the cross these regulations and the hand-written document on which they are inscribed have been erased (**ἐξαλείψας**). They are, therefore, of no account. The fact that Paul and Timothy connect the mystery hidden to the Colossian Gentiles' identity suggests their identity as God's people as Gentiles was being questioned.

## THE EXODUS AND THE WORK OF CHRIST

God's wisdom is active in the world. It is expressed in the Torah, and it has made its home in Israel.<sup>570</sup> Israel's use of wisdom as embodied in Torah continued to affirm its uniqueness from the other nations of the world. To claim that the wisdom of the one true God was embodied in Torah was also to claim a special place for the people of that one true God. In asserting that Jesus embodies God's wisdom, Paul and Timothy were making a unique claim as well in reference to the people who believed in Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile.

Similarly, the continued telling and retelling of the story of the Exodus from Egypt was meant for deeper purposes than entertainment and simple reminder. The stories of Israel's deliverance also signified the special place of Israel as the people of God. In addition, it would be a reminder of the deliverance yet to come. Thus Paul and Timothy use these Exodus "echoes" as a way of explicating the work of Christ as final liberation from slavery.

### Echoes of the Exodus

Certainly the clearest reminder of the Exodus and the uniqueness of the people of God is to be found early in the letter in 1:12-14. In 1:12 Paul and Timothy give thanks to God the Father τῷ ἰκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς<sup>571</sup> εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ

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<sup>570</sup>Wright, Climax, p. 110.

<sup>571</sup>While both ὑμᾶς and ἡμᾶς are well attested, ὑμᾶς is to be preferred as it is possible that ἡμᾶς is an assimilation to verse 13. See B. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 620.

κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί. The authors addressing the Gentile Christians in this very Jewish way, reaffirm what the Colossians must have been told when the gospel was first preached to them: They have a share in the inheritance of God's people. Μερίς and κλήρος are often found together in the LXX (Dt. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29; 18:1; Josh. 19:9; Jer. 13:25).<sup>572</sup> Because of their faith in Christ they "share in the inheritance of God's gracious gift of the land of Canaan to Israel."<sup>573</sup>

The authors appropriate this image and use it in reference to the church, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles now share in the inheritance given to Israel *by God's grace*. They are to be numbered among those who are called "saints." Some commentators have argued that τῶν ἁγίων ἐν φωτι refers to angels, as the authors are arguing in opposition to a cult of angels in the Colossian church.<sup>574</sup> As has been argued in chapter 2, however, it is not necessary to conclude that the Colossians were involved in angel worship. Moreover, the term ἅγιοι in Pauline literature normally refers to the followers of Jesus Christ as Benoit has shown.<sup>575</sup> Surely this is the meaning of the word in

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<sup>572</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 26. Lohse discusses the Hebrew equivalents of μερίς and κλήρος in the Dead Sea Scrolls in "Christologie", pp. 157-168.

<sup>573</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, p. 50.

<sup>574</sup>Martin, *Colossians*, p. 54; Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 35-36, also makes this argument based on the Qumran literature. In addition see M. Noth, "The Holy Ones of the Most High." *The Laws of the Pentateuch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 215-228.

<sup>575</sup>P. Benoit, "'Ἄγιοι en Colossiens 1.12: Hommes ou Anges?" *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honor of C. K. Barrett* (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 83-9. Benoit suggests that the word in Colossians 1:12 may include both meanings, but I think this unlikely. See Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 76-77.

1:1, τοῖς ἐν Κολοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς Χριστῷ. Unless there is explicit evidence that the author is shifting meanings, it seems best to understand "saints" in 1:12 as a reference to Christians (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; 1 Th. 3:13; 2 Th. 1:10; 1 Pt. 2:9; cf. Dan. 12:3; 1 En. 1:8; 5:7; 104:2; 2 Bar. 51:5, 10; Polycarp, *Philippians* 12:2), who in worship share a foretaste of heaven.<sup>576</sup>

The affirmation of 1:12 (cf. Eph. 2:11-13) implies that the inheritance of the people of God given by grace is no longer the privilege of one race, but has now expanded to include those not of Jewish background. "The promise of the land is widened into the promise of a whole new creation."<sup>577</sup>

This exodus theme<sup>578</sup> is intensified in verse 13 with the phrase τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, reminiscent of Israel as God's son called out of slavery in Egypt (Hos. 11:1). Such imagery in this prayer is entirely appropriate as the author "shades off into the majestic hymn about the Lordship of Christ."<sup>579</sup> It is in Christ that God's people are liberated and freed from the powers that enslaved them. They now share in the bounty brought by the new covenant.<sup>580</sup>

This language in 1:12-14 sets the stage for the Christ-hymn as it casts Jesus in these roles. Πρωτότοκος, for example, is used in the LXX to denote a special relationship between a father and his son. In Exodus 4:22 Israel is

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<sup>576</sup>Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 77.

<sup>577</sup>Wright, *Colossians*, p. 61.

<sup>578</sup>See Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials*, p. 17.

<sup>579</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 29.

<sup>580</sup>Wright, *Colossians*, p. 63.

referred to as υἱός πρωτότοκος μου, signifying God's special relationship with the Hebrews (reminiscent of Jesus' baptism, cf. Mt. 2:15<sup>581</sup>). In addition, the patriarchs, the Torah, and the messianic king are referred to in this way, denoting a special relationship to God. Psalm 88:28 states about this messianic king: κἀγὼ πρωτότοκος θήσομαι αὐτόν, ὕψηλόν παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν τῆς βασιλευσίν τῆς γῆς. Πρωτότοκος emphasizes uniqueness. The first-born is to be distinguished from the rest of creation. As the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως Christ is unique and to be demarcated from creation. As the agent of creation he is superior.<sup>582</sup> By virtue of his agency in creation (another theme found in Jewish wisdom literature-- cf. Ps. 104:24), Christ has dominion over all things.<sup>583</sup>

Significantly related to this is the phrase in 1:18-- πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν. In the LXX Genesis 49:3 uses the words ἀρχή and κεφαλή to describe the first-born as superior and as the founder of a specific people: Ρουβὴν πρωτότοκος μου, σὺ ἰσχύς μου, καὶ ἀρχὴ τέκνων μου, σκληρὸς φέρεσθαι, καὶ σκληρὸς ἀθάδης (cf. also Dt. 21:17). Thus ἀρχή and κεφαλή (1:18) in the Christ-hymn refer to Christ not only in a cosmological sense, but in an ecclesiological sense as well. To speak of Christ as wisdom is to speak of his role in creation and redemption. Christ not only

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<sup>581</sup>Though it is unlikely that πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν actually refers to the baptism of Jesus. For this argument see, W. Schenk, "Christus, das Geheimnis der Welt, als dogmatisches und ethisches Grundprinzip des Kolosserbriefes." *EvTh* 43 (1983): 147-151.

<sup>582</sup>Pokorný, *Colossians*, p. 75.

<sup>583</sup>See N. Kehl, *Der Christushymnus im Kolosserbrief: Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Kol. 1:12-20* SBM 1 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), pp. 116-125.

helps bring creation into being but he sustains it as well.<sup>584</sup> The head provides the body with direction that creates unity.<sup>585</sup> The body (ἐκκλησία) is dependent on the head for its very life.<sup>586</sup> Christian cosmology finds its coherence, indeed its unity in Christian ecclesiology. The Lord of the entire universe has chosen the church as the unique domain of his redemptive grace.<sup>587</sup> The church is to be the microcosm of the macrocosm of creation.<sup>588</sup> Creation and redemption go together.<sup>589</sup>

Christ is the *πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν*. He is the founder of his people on account of his resurrection.<sup>590</sup> "[I]n Colossians 1:15-20 the celebration of creation reaches its peak in the creation of a new people by means of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."<sup>591</sup> Thus the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cosmology) becomes the foundation for the paraenesis of Colossians, addressed to that new people (ecclesiology). Indeed, it is in the paraenesis that the Israel motif is employed

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<sup>584</sup>Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 28.

<sup>585</sup>Fowl, The Story of Christ, p. 112.

<sup>586</sup>S. Bedale, "The Meaning of *κεφαλή* in the Pauline Epistles." JTS 5 (1954): 211-215.

<sup>587</sup>Cannon, The Use Traditional Materials, p. 27.

<sup>588</sup>See A. Lincoln, Ephesians WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), pp. 66-82.

<sup>589</sup>Aletti, Colossians, pp. 102-103; Wolter, Kolosser, pp. 79-80. Gibbs, Creation and Redemption, pp. 105-106 writes, "The hymn, no less than its context in Colossians, declares that Christ's lordship has cosmic implications and Church-existence is inseparable from the rest of the universe."

<sup>590</sup>Fowl, The Story of Christ, p. 114.

<sup>591</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

once again (3:12) in order to connect their identity (who they are) to their daily walk-- as we will see in chapter 5.

#### CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that Colossians 1:12-14 would have elicited in its readers thoughts of the Exodus.<sup>592</sup> Thus Christ's work of reconciliation in the hymn is claimed as the final return from slavery. Wisdom making her home in Israel and reflected in Torah (Sir. 1:1-10; 24:3-12) has now made her home in Christ. As wisdom reflects the image of God's goodness (Wisd. 7:26), so Christ reflects the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

In the hymn the Jewish notions of wisdom, Torah, and Israel are linked together<sup>593</sup> in order to argue that Christ is all-sufficient for the Colossians. The major argument put forth in Colossians is that Christ is sufficient for Christian faith and practice. The Colossians need not look elsewhere. I have drawn five parallels between Colossians and Galatians in the previous chapter to demonstrate the reasonableness that the authors of Colossians are primarily addressing a philosophy which is Jewish in character. In this chapter I have explicated other concepts and terminology which bolster this contention.

The Christ-hymn of 1:15-20 is best understood in light of a Jewish background where Christ is presented in images that clearly would have made sense to Jews in the first century and would be in harmony with Jewish

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<sup>592</sup>Wright, Climax, p. 109.

<sup>593</sup>See Pollard, "Colossians 1:12-20: A Reconsideration," p. 575.

literature. These themes reappear in the main body of the letter. Indeed it is the significance that would have been made of such themes as wisdom that is important. The use Paul and Timothy made of such Jewish notions already signals the Jewish nature of the dilemma. Several references in Colossians point out the Gentiles' place in the inheritance of the people of God through Christ and this is the mystery hidden that Paul and Timothy now proclaim.

Given the argument that Christ is sufficient, given the Jewish nature of what is contested by the authors, and given the argument that there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, circumcision and uncircumcision, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Colossians were tempted to observe, at the very least, some of the more important regulations of the Torah. Paul and Timothy resort to crucial Jewish ideas, and more importantly, ideas crucial to Jewish identity, in order to refute the arguments being levelled against the Gentile Christians in Colossae from the synagogue. Wisdom, Torah, and Exodus are themes intrinsic to Israel's self-understanding, and they are used to remind the Colossians that as they started their journey as God's people in Christ, they can and must continue their journey as God's people in Christ. As people in Christ they can "bear fruit (a Jewish notion) in every good work" (Col. 1:10; cf. Jer. 1:9-10; 18:7-9; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10).<sup>594</sup> Nothing else need be accomplished.

The major argument has been made-- the Colossian philosophy is Jewish in nature. The target of the letter is the synagogue. It is now the task in the remainder of the thesis to discover whether or not this casts a different light

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<sup>594</sup>See Aletti, Colossians, p. 161.

on the Colossian paraenesis.

#### IV. THE BACKGROUND OF COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 AND ITS INTEGRATION

I have put forth in this thesis thus far the argument that there are parallels to be drawn between Galatians and Colossians which suggest that Colossians is a response to matters which are Jewish in nature. I have drawn five such parallels suggesting a Jewish target of the letter but, at the same time, I have been cautious not to sketch the parallels too sharply. While there are Jewish parallels to be explicated they are not exact parallels. Moreover I have also highlighted the Israel motif, suggesting that the Colossians faced a challenge similar to that in Galatians-- a challenge from the synagogue to the Gentile Christians who were assuming they shared in the inheritance of the people of God, Israel. This motif consisted of the themes of Jesus and wisdom, Christ as the embodiment of Torah, and the Exodus and the work of Christ. I explicated these themes in order to continue to demonstrate the Jewish rootedness of the argument in Colossians.

My task in this chapter is to argue that the best way to read Colossians 3:1-4 is against the background of Jewish apocalyptic thought, strengthening further the comparison that the argument of the entire letter is integrated because of its Jewish flavor. By setting 3:1-4 in the framework of Jewish apocalyptic, it allows for the eschatological interpretation of the *ἐν Χριστῷ* theme, thus connecting it to the themes of Christ's death and resurrection and the believers' participation in Christ.<sup>595</sup> It is important to highlight the christological participationist theme in Colossians, which will center around the

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<sup>595</sup>Note Martin, *Philosophy and Empty Deceit*, pp. 192-193, who completely omits even so much as a reference to the apocalyptic background of Colossians 3:1-4, in his discussion of Christ's death and resurrection.

initial verses of the paraenesis-- 3:1-4. Not only will the theme continue to emphasize the eschatological nature of the first verses of chapter 3, but in addition I hope to demonstrate that the participationist theme present in the letter up to chapter 3 continues into the paraenesis. This will further suggest that the argument proper and the paraenesis of the letter are integrated.

While it is necessary to investigate the background of Colossians 3:1-4 so that some of these other important questions can be answered, first it is important to try to place the paraenesis into the structure of the argument which precedes it. It is not entirely clear that the paraenesis suddenly begins at 3:1; rather, the transition from argument proper to paraenesis is more subtle.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARAENESIS

Despite the immediately preceding argument it is generally agreed that Colossians 3:1 marks the beginning of the paraenesis. The οὖν in 3:1 is to be understood transitionally as in 2:6: Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε.<sup>596</sup> However, while the hortatory section proper likely begins at this point,<sup>597</sup> it must be noted that the argument which begins in 3:1 with Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, is the continuation of an argument begun in 2:20 with Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ.<sup>598</sup> One cannot talk about being raised with Christ, until one talks about dying with Christ. What this suggests is that the hortatory

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<sup>596</sup>R. DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, pp. 42-43.

<sup>597</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p.132.

<sup>598</sup>Wolter, Kolosser, pp. 164-165, understands 3:1-4 as the *peroratio* concluding the *argumentatio* (2:9-23) and leading into the *exhortatio* (3:5-4:6).

section does not begin cleanly in 3:1, but the paraenetic material in some form, begins at 2:20--<sup>599</sup> hinting that there is integration between the argument of the paraenesis and the rest of the letter. Thus 2:20-23 marks an extended transition from argument proper to paraenesis, from theological affirmation to exhortation.<sup>600</sup> The injunction, *Νεκρώσατε οὖν*, is intelligible only in conjunction with the phrase. *Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε*. Indeed this theme of death and resurrection continues in 3:5 and 3:12. Colossians 2:20 logically leads to 3:5 and 3:1 logically leads to 3:12:

<i>Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε</i> (2:20)	then	<i>Νεκρώσατε οὖν</i> (3:5)
<i>Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε</i> (3:1)	then	<i>Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν</i> (3:12)

While the lines between indicative and imperative should not be drawn too closely, nor defined so narrowly that indicative cannot be moral reflection and

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<sup>599</sup>P. Lamarche, "Structure de l'épître aux Colossiens." *Bib.* 56 (1975), p. 460f., argues that the exhortation begins at 2:16. While there is certainly exhortation in 2:16-19, it seems to me that to understand 2:20-23 as a transition from *probatio* to *exhortatio* makes better sense of the contrast between dying with Christ in 2:20 to being raised with Christ in 3:1, putting off in 3:5 to putting on in 3:12.

<sup>600</sup>In his epistolary analysis of Colossians, G. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), pp. 149-163, puts forth the idea that 1:24-4:9 ought to be considered as the body of the argument. He divides the body of the argument into three parts: the body-opening (1:24-2:5), the body-middle (2:6-4:1), and the body-closing (4:2-9). Given this structure, the paraenesis is included in the body-middle whose function is to progress the issues introduced in the body-opening. This structure allows for the overlap of argument proper and paraenesis in 2:20-23. So while a distinction can still be made between the two, the paraenesis is considered to be part and parcel of the main argument, and therefore, not somehow beside the point. The integration of the entire letter is assumed in the epistolary structure of the letter.

imperative cannot be theological affirmation,<sup>601</sup> nevertheless there is a logical structure presented within the argument, which suggests that there is a gradual transition from argument proper to paraenesis. The question of submission to the regulations of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in 2:20, is a moral matter. Thus 3:1 continues a discussion which links the death of Christ to his resurrection, argument proper to paraenesis.

#### THE BACKGROUND OF 3:1-4

Several scholars have taken note of the relationship between Colossians 3:1-4 and the Second Apocalypse of Baruch.<sup>602</sup> There is no reason to suggest a direct literary connection between the two, but they likely reflect a "shared apocalyptic perspective."<sup>603</sup> Grässer has argued that 3:1-4, particularly 3:2 suggests a Gnostic outlook,<sup>604</sup> but as we have argued thus far, Gnosticism does not make sense in the context of the letter. Moreover, Grässer emphasizes 3:1-2 to the detriment of verses 3 and 4, not taking enough account of the "not yet" aspect of 3:3-4.<sup>605</sup> As we will see 3:1-4 is much "more consistently expressive"<sup>606</sup> of the perspective of Jewish apocalyptic than Gnostic thought.

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<sup>601</sup>See Schrage's discussion of indicative and imperative in The Ethics of the New Testament, pp. 167-172.

<sup>602</sup>J. Gnllka, Der Kolosserbrief HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), p. 179.

<sup>603</sup>J. Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42-52:7 and the Apocalyptic Dimension of Colossians 3:1-6." JBL 108/1 (1989), p. 93.

<sup>604</sup>E. Grässer, "Kol 3:1-4," p. 123-151.

<sup>605</sup>See Gnllka, Kolosserbrief, pp. 171-172 and Lincoln, Paradise, pp. 122-123, 131-134.

<sup>606</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 202. Also DeMaris, The Colossian Controversy, p. 144.

Levison argues that the two documents have a three-fold relationship: 1) the relationship between spatial and temporal terminology; 2) the meaning of "things above;" and 3) the meaning of things "upon the earth."<sup>607</sup>

### Spatial and Temporal Terminology

The Old Testament employs spatial terminology in reference to heaven and earth. The terms are used to contrast the dwelling of God in heaven or on the mountain, with the habitation of human beings below or down on the earth (Gen. 11:5; Exod. 19:20; 24:9, 10; Ps. 14:2; Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:13).

The spatial concepts of Colossians 3:1-2 and the temporal terminology of 3:3-4 are found quite clearly in 2 Baruch 51:8-10:<sup>608</sup>

For they shall see that world which is now invisible to them, and they will see a time which is now hidden to them. And time will no longer make them older, for they will live in the heights of that world and they will be like the angels and be equal to the stars.

Such spatial dualism is found in other apocalyptic writings as well (1 En. 1-36; 37-71; 72-82; 2 En.; Apoc. Abr.;<sup>609</sup> TLevi; 3 Bar.; TAbr.; and the Apoc. Zeph.).

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<sup>607</sup>Ibid.

<sup>608</sup>The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch is dated anywhere from A.D. 90 to 120. The work cannot be any earlier than A.D. 70 since the destruction of Jerusalem is assumed. The latest possible date for the document is the Jewish Revolt c<sup>f</sup> 132-135 (See Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 42.). J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity (New York: Crossroads, 1984), pp. 179-180, and A. Klijn, "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 1:616-617, date 2 Baruch somewhere in the first two decades of the second century A.D., because of their belief that it is dependent on 4 Ezra (90-100 A.D.), although Klijn admits that the two may be mutually dependent upon a common tradition. But P. Bogaert, Apocalypse de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire 2 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 1:271, dates it as early as A.D. 95. It is certainly difficult to date 2 Baruch precisely within this time period, but I do think it is likely, as I hope to show, that the two are dependent on a common apocalyptic tradition.

<sup>609</sup>On spatial dualism in the Apocalypse of Abraham see R. Rubinkiewicz, "'La vision de l'histoire dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham.'" ANRW, 2:19.1, p. 149.

While some have suggested that such spatial notions originated with Hellenistic Jewish apocalypses,<sup>610</sup> such an emphasis can also be found in apocalypses of Judean origin, such as 2 Baruch and the Apocalypse of Abraham.<sup>611</sup> Here is an example where the distinction between Hellenistic and Judean apocalypses may not be helpful.

In many of these apocalypses we find an emphasis on the heavenly realm and its contrast to that which is of the earth-- heaven as the place of righteousness and the earth as the place of wickedness (cf. 1 En. 1:2; 6:2; 9:1-11; 12:4; 15:3; 37:2; 53:1). Such spatial dualism also often includes the dualism of light and darkness (1 En. 58:5).<sup>612</sup> This ethical use of spacial terminology is present in Colossians, "where seeking the things above" refers to a change, a transformation in the life of the believer, while the contrast is to put one's mind on "the things of the earth," some of which is specifically referred to in 3:5-9.

Perhaps one of the more striking passages related to Colossians, because of its mention of food and drink, is found in the Apocalypse of Abraham which shares a common apocalyptic tradition with 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra.<sup>613</sup>

And the unclean bird spoke to me and said, "What are you doing, Abraham, on the holy heights, where no one eats or drinks, nor is there upon them food for men. But these all will be consumed by fire and they will burn you up. Leave the man who is with you and flee! For if you ascend to the height, they will destroy you" (13:4-5).

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<sup>610</sup>J. Collins, "The Genre Apocalypse in Hellenistic Judaism," Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979 ed. D. Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), pp. 544-545.

<sup>611</sup>On the origin of these two documents respectively, see Klijn, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 1:617, and R. Rubinkiewicz, Ibid, p. 683.

<sup>612</sup>See H. Huppenbauer, Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten (Zürich: Zwingli, 1959), pp. 103ff.

<sup>613</sup>G. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature, p. 298.

Along with this comes the whole notion of hiddenness, especially in reference to wisdom. We are told in the wisdom writings and some of the apocalypses that wisdom is hidden away in heaven.<sup>614</sup>

But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living....It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air....God understands the way to it, and he knows its place (Job 28:12-13, 21, 23; cf. Sir. 1:1-10; Prov. 1:20-33; 2 Bar.; 1 En. 42; 4 Ez. 4:5-5:13).

In Colossians 3:1 then there may be an implicit reference to the mystery Paul spoke of in 1:26-27, in which God in Christ now includes the Gentiles in his saving purpose. In Christ, then, the Colossian Gentiles have access and may seek the heavenly wisdom (1:28; 2:2) because wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (2:2-3), who is exalted above. The Colossians have been raised with Christ who is seated at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1; cf. Mk. 12:36; 14:62; Acts 2:34-35; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Pt. 3:22). They, therefore, do not need to seek a worship experience with the hosts of heaven in order to gain wisdom; for Christ who is seated in a position of power over the angels can impart to them what the philosophers insist only they can have. The philosophers may have access to the angels of heaven,<sup>615</sup> but the Colossians have access to Jesus Christ, the one seated in heaven at the right hand of God, thus suggesting that the philosophers' practice in 2:18 in actuality falls short of what the Colossians experience in Christ.

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<sup>614</sup>H. Conzelmann, "Paulus und die Weisheit," *NTS* 12 (1966), pp. 236, 242, points out that there are various "types" of hidden wisdom in the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature (cf. Dt. 30:12-14; Prov 30:3-4; Job 28; Sir. 1:1-10; 1 En 42).

<sup>615</sup>Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 195, suggests that *θέλων τῶν ἀγγέλων* in 2:18, might convey the sense of worship the Colossian philosophers "wished-for," thus suggesting that their desire to worship with the angels is nothing more than overactive fancy.

This notion of wisdom's hiddenness in the heavenly realm is obvious in 2 Baruch, where wisdom is more closely identified with the law than in other Jewish apocalypses.

O Lord, my Lord, you are the one who has always enlightened those who conduct themselves with understanding. Your law is life, and your wisdom is the right way. Now show me the explanation of this vision. For you know that my soul has always been associated with your law, and that I did not depart from your wisdom from my earliest days (38:1-4; cf. 44:14; 48:24; 51:3-4; 77:15-16).

There is also a reference to the revelation of the law and the hiddenness of God's purposes in Deuteronomy 29:29:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of his law.

In 4 Ezra the revelation of this hidden wisdom will come only after the dawning of the new age:

But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, because it is for you that paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand (8:51-52; cf. 6:25-28; 13:52).

It is in this apocalyptic tradition that a direct relationship is drawn between the spatial terminology of "things above" and "things below," and the temporal terminology of "hiddenness" and "revelation." Such eschatology is used to reinforce the notion that one's hope does not rest upon the earth, but upon the revelation of that which is currently hidden-- the realm above.<sup>616</sup>

The connection between hiddenness and the revelation of the law suggests another implicit meaning in Colossians 3:1. As the spatial terminology may harken back to themes of wisdom and knowledge earlier in the letter, in order to

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<sup>616</sup>Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42-52:7," p. 97.

suggest the inadequacy of the philosophers pursuit of wisdom from a blending of Jewish apocalyptic and mystical elements, so here there may also be an allusion to the inadequacy of the regulations of the law, since the substance of those regulations is found in Christ. Such regulations have been cancelled (2:14). They are a "shadow" (2:17). They will perish (2:22). They are human (2:22). They merely have an appearance of wisdom (2:23).

#### Things Above

It has been suggested that this idea of τὰ ἄνω is indebted to the Hellenistic conception of the divine world (Aristotle, *Meta.* 1.8 [990a]; Plutarch, *Isis and Osirus* 11.376D; Diels I, 448.33-451.19; cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.207; *Quis Her.* 281-283).<sup>617</sup> It is very possibly the case that here we see some influence from Platonic cosmology,<sup>618</sup> but it is too extreme to see in this as a "reawakening Platonism."<sup>619</sup> The philosophers then would have understood τὰ ἄνω in a literal, topographical sense. Paul and Timothy, therefore, would be refuting a literal notion of τὰ ἄνω, by employing an Old Testament influenced Pauline perspective, which does not place the emphasis on the "where" of the above, but on the "how" of the above, that is, the spiritual can be lived in corporeal existence. While I do agree that such a realized perspective is present in Colossians, there is no need to conclude that the philosophy was a reawakening Platonism. Indeed,

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<sup>617</sup>Gnilka, Kolossierbrief, p. 172.

<sup>618</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 205.

<sup>619</sup>As Schweizer, Colossians, p. 175, suggests.

Paul's conception of τὰ ἄνω was likely similar to those at Colossae. He was not debating where it was, though Paul likely thought it was "above." His concern was to point out that the Colossians already have access to the "above" in Christ.

Thus to put τὰ ἄνω in Colossians 3:2 against the background of a reawakening Platonism is unnecessary, and not in keeping with the best evidence. Not only is the notion of "that which is above" a major theme in Jewish apocalyptic literature, as I will demonstrate shortly, it also is found in several places in the Old Testament (Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; 20:4 (LXX); Dt. 4:39; 5:8; Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:13).<sup>620</sup> Moreover, the Hellenistic notion lacks the eschatological perspective, found in Colossians and in Jewish apocalyptic,<sup>621</sup> which makes the connection of Colossians to the latter more logical.

Lincoln states that it would be incorrect to read Paul's claim τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε simply in a spiritualized sense.<sup>622</sup> Here is a "transcendent dimension with its own reality."<sup>623</sup> The ethical dimension of the "things above" is quick to follow in chapter 3, but the reality of this spatial notion is more than moral obligation.

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<sup>620</sup>Lincoln, Paradise, pp. 116-118, argues for a Hellenistic cosmology quite forcefully. Yet considering his own emphasis on the Jewish apocalyptic nature of Colossians 3:1-4, as well as his claim that the problem in Colossae is based on elements of the Jewish tradition (p. 113), I do not think a Hellenistic cosmological dualism is a necessary nor a preferred conclusion.

<sup>621</sup>Bearing in mind, of course, that "Hellenism" is a very broad category which includes Hellenistic Judaism. The evidence indicates, however, that the Jewish nature of the passage makes the best sense of the passage and its surrounding argument.

<sup>622</sup>Against Schweizer, Colossians, p. 178.

<sup>623</sup>Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet, p. 124.

The entreaty to "seek the things above" is founded directly on the hidden/revealed schema. According to 2 Baruch the  $\tau\acute{\alpha}$   $\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$  is a reference to paradise where the angelic hosts dwell.

For they shall see the world which is now invisible to them, and they will see a time which is now hidden to them....For they will live in the heights of that world...For the extent of Paradise will be spread out for them, and to them will be shown the beauty of the majesty of the living beings under the throne, as well as all the hosts of the angels, and those who are withheld by my command so that they may stand at their places until their coming has arrived. And the excellence of the righteous will then be greater than that of the angels (51:8-12).

It is at the end of the present age when the angels and Paradise will be revealed to the righteous (4:3, 7; 6:5). This is the heavenly world. It is parallel to the phrase in Galatians 4:26,<sup>624</sup>  $\acute{\eta}$   $\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$   $\text{\textit{Ierousal\eta\mu}}$ ,<sup>625</sup> which has its roots in Jewish apocalyptic literature, including 2 Baruch:

Or do you think that this is the city of which I said: "on the palms of my hands I have carved you. It is not this building which is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him-- as also Paradise. After these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I also showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me-- as also Paradise. Now go away and do as I command you (4:2-7).<sup>626</sup>

Here we have the themes of things above, Paradise, and hiddenness together in

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<sup>624</sup>But see Schweizer's criticisms against a parallel between Galatians 4:26 and Colossians 3:2 (Colossians, pp. 156-157.). I simply think Schweizer does not take sufficient account of the Jewish apocalyptic literature at this point.

<sup>625</sup>See Lohse, Colossians, p. 132.

<sup>626</sup>See the discussion in Dunn, Galatians, pp. 253-254.

one passage. This notion of τὰ ἄνω connected with the heavenly Jerusalem is found in other Jewish apocalyptic documents (4 Ez. 7:26; 13:36; 2 En. 45:2) as well as the New Testament (Heb. 8:5; cf. Ex. 25:40; Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22-23; Rev. 3:12; 11:1-3, 8-11).

It is the perspective in these passages that the earthly things are simply a poor copy of what is hidden above. Thus Paul can tell the Colossians in 2:17 ἃ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, an idea that, in Hebrews, is connected to the status of the law in light of the coming of Christ, as has been argued earlier (Heb. 10:1).<sup>627</sup>

From a moral perspective Jewish apocalyptic characterizes that which is above as pure and spotless. "...a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled in which are abundance and healing" (4 Ez. 7:123; cf. 2 Bar. 4:3, 7; 51:9, 16; 53:3, 5, 10-12; 54:15). That which was lost in Adam's sin will be restored to the righteous.<sup>628</sup>

In Jewish apocalyptic, Paradise and the angelic hosts are kept hidden until the final revelation (2 Bar. 51:7-11). Colossians and Jewish apocalyptic share a coinciding outlook on τὰ ἄνω, but they differ on the timing of the final revelation of such things. This we will turn to later on. Next, however, we must investigate the apocalyptic background of τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

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<sup>627</sup> Hebrews here is obviously concerned with the status of the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial codes, which does not appear to be a concern in Colossians. As I already suggested, however, I do think the correlation between Hebrews and Colossians here, which are both concerned with certain aspects of law in some sense, should not be missed. Both authors do refer to certain aspects of the law as "a shadow."

<sup>628</sup> Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42-52:7," p. 103.

## Things of the Earth<sup>629</sup>

A very important proposal for the background of τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς comes from Schweizer, who finds the framework of the phrase in something other than Jewish apocalyptic. Schweizer,<sup>630</sup> drawing on Reitzenstein,<sup>631</sup> uses Philo to clarify τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Philo draws a comparison between the Logos "which is clothed in cosmic elements, the soul which is clothed in bodily elements, and reason which is clothed in virtues or vices"<sup>632</sup> (*Fug.*110-112). Moreover Philo develops ethical parallels between Logos, soul, and reason (*Quis Her.* 282-283), and draws a list of five vices and five opposing virtues (cf. *Col.* 3.5ff.).

There are, however, two considerable weaknesses in Schweizer's argument. First, Philo's perspective lacks the eschatological outlook apparent in Colossians 3:1-4. The Colossians are to put on the virtues and put off the vices because the new age has dawned. For Philo one lives virtuously to be in harmony with nature.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>629</sup>Aletti, *Colossians*, p. 218, notes that τὰ ἄνω and τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in Colossians 3, do not correspond exactly; that is, as "things above" and "things below" or "things of heaven" and "things of earth" do. I think it is a mistake to make too much of this. Clearly, τὰ ἄνω refers to the heavenly realm. See Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, p. 131.

<sup>630</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, pp. 182, 187-189. It will also be important to discuss the Iranian background of this material, as proposed by Gniska (*Kolossierbrief*, pp. 179-180.) and Lohse (*Colossians*, p. 137.). We will discuss this in the next chapter.

<sup>631</sup>R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* 3 ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), pp. 265-275.

<sup>632</sup>Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42-52:7," pp. 105.

<sup>633</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

Second, for Philo one obtains virtue when the soul is separated completely from the body (*Ebr.* 69). The vices join themselves to members of the body (*Op.* 69-71; *Leg. All.* 1.105-108; 2.55-56; *Gig.* 31, 60-66). This estrangement of the soul from the body is absent from Colossians.

The apocalyptic background, once again, turns out to be quite informative. 2 Baruch deals with the eschatological transformation of earthly members into resurrection and the splendor of glory.

But further, I ask you, O Mighty One; and I shall ask grace from him who created all things. In which shape will the living live in your day? Or how will remain their splendor which will be after that? Will they, perhaps, take again this present form, and will they *put on the chained members* which are in evil and by which evils are accomplished? Or will you perhaps change these things which have been in the world, as also the world itself? (49:1-3).

Also 83:1-3:

For the Most High will surely hasten his times, and he will certainly cause his periods to arrive. And he will surely judge those who are in his world, and will truly inquire into everything with regard to all their works which were sins. He will certainly investigate the secret thoughts and everything which is lying *in the inner chambers of all their members which are in sin.*

Here, along with our discussion of τὰ ἄνω the contrast between the resurrected bodies transformed at the eschaton, and the untransformed earthly members is made clear. Sin is present in humanity's bodily members (2 Bar. 49:3 and Col. 3:5; cf. Rom. 6:13, 19; Jas. 4:1). Such bodies cannot inherit the world above where Paradise and the angelic host are found.<sup>634</sup> Here is an eschatology that only makes sense in a Jewish apocalyptic perspective.

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<sup>634</sup>Cf. Paul's discussion of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

## Conclusion

I have argued that the best way to read Colossians 3:1-4 is against the background of Jewish apocalyptic literature. I have drawn rather heavily on 2 Baruch suggesting not that there is a literary relationship between the Colossians 3:1-4 and 2 Baruch, but that both share a similar apocalyptic perspective.

Following Levison I have suggested that both documents have a three-fold apocalyptic perspective: 1) the relationship between spatial and temporal terminology; 2) the notion of "things above;" and 3) the idea of things "upon the earth." I have also drawn on other Jewish apocalyptic documents to strengthen the argument. All of these themes can be found quite clearly in Jewish apocalyptic literature.

The importance of this discussion is to discover how this background informs the argument of the letter itself. It is to this matter we now turn. I hope to show the place of Colossians 3:1-4 in the argument of the preceding two chapters.

## INTEGRATION

### Eschatology

The foundation for the Colossians' theological and moral orientation is eschatological in nature. The final revelation has yet to take place, but there is a sense that while the "not yet" aspect is a reality, the already feature of Paul's eschatology here is just as real. The future hope is present.<sup>635</sup> In 3:1 *Ei* betrays

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<sup>635</sup>Gnilka, Kolossierbrief, p. p. 174.

the assumption that what is said in the verse is indeed true in the present: "Since, you have been raised with Christ..."<sup>636</sup> does not introduce a measure of uncertainty. The Colossians are in a risen state indeed.<sup>637</sup> The aorist *συνηγέρθητε* suggests that since the Colossians were raised with Christ in the past, they are currently alive with Christ in the present.<sup>638</sup> It cannot be doubted that the new life in Christ has a hidden character because Christ has not yet been revealed (making "hiddenness in Colossians a historical not a mystical concept")<sup>639</sup>, but in Christ the new age has indeed broken into the old one, and this means a change in the life of the believer. The believer has already been raised with Christ and therefore lives differently here and now. At the same time, however, that resurrected life has yet to be completely revealed.<sup>640</sup> Thus, I think Lohse's<sup>641</sup> statement that the train of thought developed here as "you have been raised with Christ for new life, is not quite right. Rather, the idea being conveyed is, "You have been raised with Christ and have new life. So become what you already are."<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>636</sup>BAGD, p. 219c.

<sup>637</sup>Eadie, *Colossians*, p. 207.

<sup>638</sup>M. Wolter, *Kolosser*, p. 167, states, "Weil Christus erhöht, d.h. >>droben<< ist, wird das Mitauferwecktsein der Gemeinde allein darin zur gegenwärtig wahrnehmbaren Realität, dass sie sich an diesem, seit Ostern ausschliesslich christologisch identifizierbaren >>Droben<< ausrichtet (>>sucht<<) und von ihm bestimmen lässt (>>denkt<<).

<sup>639</sup>Lincoln, *Paradise Now Not Yet*, p. 129.

<sup>640</sup>Moule, *Colossians*, p. 111.

<sup>641</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 132.

<sup>642</sup>See Gnllka, *Kolosserbrief*, p. 174. Also Wolter, *Kolosser*, p. 166.

The already nature of this eschatology is bound up with the believers' participation in Christ in the present.<sup>643</sup> Thus one similarity between the eschatology of Colossians and the eschatology of Jewish apocalyptic literature, in particular, 2 Baruch, is the imperative, based on eschatology, that the faithful reject earthly things, and concentrate on eternal realities (cf. 2 Bar. 48:48-50; 52:6-7).<sup>644</sup> This not only applies to the moral life in the argument to follow in Colossians 3:1-4, but it also pertains to what has been stated in the previous part of the letter-- the identity of the Colossians is bound up with Christ. Any identity marker found apart from Christ is earthly, including those things in the law which had become associated with the identity of God's people. The Gentile believers in Colossae are firmly rooted in the new age by virtue of Christ, and they are to break completely from the old one. If the Colossians accept the distinction between *περιτομή και ἀκροβυστία*, if they attempt to "complete their salvation"<sup>645</sup> by accepting these badges, it is tantamount to a return to the old age. We will now explore this matter in relation to 3:1-4 a little further.

#### Things Above and Things of the Earth

Concerning the Colossians eschatological reorientation, O'Brien states,

Paul is thus employing spatial categories in a qualitative manner...to describe two spheres which correspond to the eschatological schema

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<sup>643</sup>See Lincoln, *Paradise*, pp. 122-134 for a discussion of the Pauline emphasis on the already nature of eschatology.

<sup>644</sup>Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42-52:7," p. 97.

<sup>645</sup>This is Hooker's way of expressing what the Colossians were considering ("False Teachers," p. 327).

of the two ages. Here τὰ ἄνω stands for the heavenly world and the new aeon. It has to do with what is ultimately essential, transcendent and belonging to God...and although "seeking the things above" has a definite ethical significance...τὰ ἄνω is not to be defined solely with reference to ethical categories. The Colossian Christians have already participated in the world to come, the powers of the new age have broken in upon them, *they already participate in the resurrection life of Christ.*<sup>646</sup> Thus their aims, ambitions, indeed their whole orientation is to be directed to this sphere.<sup>647</sup>

Right from the beginning of the letter Paul wants to remind the Colossians that their whole Christian existence is bound up with Jesus Christ. To participate in the new life in Christ is to be directed toward τὰ ἄνω. The emphasis on wisdom and spiritual understanding-- σοφία καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ-- (1:9; cf. 1:28) can be found only in Christ. Indeed Christ is the wisdom and understanding of God. He is not simply a clue to where wisdom can be found or a key that unlocks wisdom.<sup>648</sup> He is the embodiment of wisdom. If Christ is their life (a phrase reminiscent of Galatians 2:20<sup>649</sup>), then the Colossians have direct access to the divine wisdom apart from anything else. The Gentile Christians need not look elsewhere.<sup>650</sup>

Therefore, anything connected to Christ can be referred to as τὰ ἄνω. In the paraenesis Paul will connect Christian conduct to Christ (cf. 3:13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24), but prior to chapter 3 he is obviously arguing more broadly to

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<sup>646</sup>The italics are my emphasis.

<sup>647</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 99.

<sup>648</sup>Wright, Colossians, p.95.

<sup>649</sup>Aletti, Colossiens, p. 220.

<sup>650</sup>Moule, Colossians, p. 86.

embrace every aspect of the Christian life, including the search for wisdom and knowledge. The term πνευματικός in 1:9 connects such wisdom and understanding in Christ to τὰ ἄνω. The same is true of 2:11 with the phrase περιετριβήτε περιτομῇ.

Such wisdom which is above is now accessible in Christ because Christ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος (3:1). This should not be understood to mean that in Colossians τὰ ἄνω is overwhelmed by christology. Colossians 3:1 places Christ at the center of the heavenly domain, meaning τὰ ἄνω finds its focus, its orientation in Christ.<sup>651</sup> It is not a matter of not seeking in the present what can only be revealed at the end of history,<sup>652</sup> but how and where one looks for τὰ ἄνω in the present.<sup>653</sup> The philosophers desire for involvement in angelic praise falls short because it does not place Christ at the center of "that which is above." The Colossians are tempted to look for τὰ ἄνω in a place other than ἐν Χριστῷ.

While Colossians does not explicate in depth what τὰ ἄνω happen to be, other than such wisdom and knowledge is bound up with Christ, it does give us more detail concerning what is not above. Part of what is ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in chapter 2 is that which is specifically mentioned in reference to the law, circumcision (cf. 2:11), legal ordinances (2:14); food and drink observances (2:16); and attendance

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<sup>651</sup>Lincoln, Paradise, p. 124.

<sup>652</sup>Levison, "2 Apoc. Bar.48:42-52:7," p. 104 contends that Paul's answer to "the errorists" (his terminology, not mine) overly realized eschatology, part of which was seeking visions of angels, was to argue the not yet aspect of the final denouement (p. 101) when Paradise and the angelic host would be revealed. Thus, Paul's claim was that by seeking such revelations in the present the errorists were circumventing the divine will, because such revelations were not meant to occur until the eschaton. I find Levison's claim to be intriguing but any suggestion of this is lacking in the text itself.

<sup>653</sup>Lincoln, Paradise, p. 133.

to the festival calendar (2:14). These aspects of the law are not to be observed because they are not part of God's eschatological renewal in Christ. Just as there is a certain lifestyle that is not part of the eschatological renewal in Christ, which will be explicated in the paraenesis (possibly an allusion to Adam), the orientation toward the law is also not part of such a renewal. The Colossians, who like many other Gentiles, may be attracted to the law because of its concrete moral regulations, must not submit to the law; for to do so would be to participate in the old age which is waning away.<sup>654</sup> It would also be the acceptance of an elitism, not of syncretistic visionaries, but based on the prerogatives of ethnic Israel.

In 2 Baruch the present age is depicted as an age of disobedience and is characterized in sharp contrast to the world to come (48:42-43; 48:44-47). Thus the affirmation in Colossians 3:1-4 that the new age has broken into the present is also an affirmation that in Christ that world to come has in some sense already arrived. The old humanity, which is not renewed after the divine image must be stripped off.

The apocalyptic allusion to paradise and the revelation of angels in 3:1-4 provides a way for Paul to move completely from *probatio* to *exhortatio*.<sup>655</sup> The Colossians have been raised with Christ and participate in the new age, which is more of a reality than the old age.<sup>656</sup> Therefore, they should not take up

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<sup>654</sup>Wright, Colossians, p. 132, describes the old age as not yet having "wound up."

<sup>655</sup>Aletti, Colossiensi, p. 218.

<sup>656</sup>Wolter, Kolosser, p. p. 167.

anything which is part of the old age, such as the Jewish ritual of 2:16 and 18, because they are only shadows of the substance of the new age, fully embodied in Christ (2:17).

Moreover, as those raised with Christ, they should live in such a way that reflects what it means to be in the Lord. So 3:1-4 provides the foundation for the paraenesis. Since the Colossians have died and been raised with Christ (the metaphor employed here being baptism),<sup>657</sup> they are part of an ethical renewal based not on circumcision, or Sabbath observance, nor on participation in angelic praise. These things will not renew them in the image of God. As believers in Christ, who is in the image of the invisible God, their inheritance of the life above is bound up with Christ. To be part of God's eschatological renewal involves Christlike behavior. The moral life has a "motivation christologique."<sup>658</sup>

There is still a hiddenness to their lives in Christ, yet to be revealed. This is part of the hidden *μυστήριον*. Yet the revelation of Jesus Christ in the lives of the Colossians is a process already begun as well. The "mystery" revealed is that the Gentile believers are reconciled with Christ, and are being formed after Christ's image to be holy and blameless. The only requirement given to the Colossians to continue on this journey-- *εἰ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε* (1:23). If the

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<sup>657</sup>Lightfoot, *Colossians*, p. 207, paraphrases Paul's argument thus: "When you sank under the baptismal water, you disappeared forever to the world. You rose again, it is true, but you rose only to God. The world henceforth knows nothing of your new life and (as a consequence) your new life must know nothing of the world."

<sup>658</sup>Aletti, *Colossiens*, p. 215.

Colossians submit to the regulations of 2:16 and 18 (cf. 2:21-22), they will have shifted away from the Gospel they first heard.

#### PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST

The fact that the Colossians participate in Christ is crucial to Paul's paraenetical admonitions. It is true that all of the various themes of Paul's ethics in Colossians are inevitably connected to Christ. What Barclay says of Galatians is also true of Colossians-- "Thus in one sense it could be said that all of Paul's ethics derive from 'participation in Christ.'"<sup>659</sup>

A brief summary of the letter reveals this participatory perspective enters into the argument right from the outset. The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (also ἐν αὐτῷ and ἐν ᾧ) appears several times (1:2, 4, 14, 16, 17, 19; 2:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15). The Colossians are commended for their faith ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:4) and they are reminded that they are to lead lives worthy of the Lord (1:10). God has transferred the Colossians εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ (1:13) and in him they have the forgiveness of sins (1:14). The Christ-hymn contains several participatory references in which he is connected to the fullness of God and creation (1:15-20). In the death of Christ's fleshly body the Colossians have been reconciled to God (1:22), but they must remain steadfast in the faith (1:23). Paul claims that he is completing in his own body what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the church (1:24). While this may be a difficult passage

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<sup>659</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 224.

to interpret<sup>660</sup> it nevertheless affirms a participatory aspect of Paul in relation to Christ's afflictions. The mystery of which Paul attests is the presence of Christ in the lives of the Gentiles (1:27; cf. 2:2). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge the Colossians seek can be found in Christ (2:3) and it is in Christ that the Colossians have a firm faith (2:5). The Colossians have received Christ in their lives and they are to continue in him (2:6). Being in Christ is in some way participation in the circumcision of Christ (2:11) which is, at the very least, connected to baptism (2:12).<sup>661</sup> Not only do the Colossians participate in the crucifixion of Christ, they participate in the resurrection as well (2:12-13).

The gradual transition to paraenesis, which begins at 2:20 (as has already been argued) is filled with this participatory language. It is language with a definite moral connection. In 2:20 the authors state, *Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε*; Since the Colossians have been raised with Christ, they are to orient their thinking to the things that are above (3:1-2).<sup>662</sup> Their lives are hidden with Christ (3:3), indeed Christ is their life (3:4). Since this is the case they are to put to death everything that is inconsistent with the resurrection life (3:5-9), and they are to clothe themselves

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<sup>660</sup>For a discussion of the various interpretations of this passage see, J. Kremer, Was an den Leiden Christi noch mangelt. Eine interprattationsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zu Kol. 1, 24b BBB 12 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1956).

<sup>661</sup>For differing interpretations on this passage see Beasley-Murray, Baptism, pp. 152-153; Lähnemann, Kolossierbrief, pp. 121-122; Moule, Colossians, pp. 95-96; F. Zeilinger, Der Erstgeborene der Schöpfung. Untersuchungen zur Formalstruktur und Theologie des Kolosserbriefes (Vienna: Herder, 1974), pp. 144-145.

<sup>662</sup>Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 54.

with the new selves being renewed in the image of the creator (3:10-14). The peace of Christ should rule in them, and the word of Christ should dwell in them (3:15-16). Indeed, all should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus (3:17). The Colossians' everyday way of life should reflect that which is proper for those in Christ (3:18, 20, 22, 24), and their task as Christians is acknowledged as received from the Lord (4:17).<sup>663</sup>

Since there is no doubt of the importance of this participatory language in Colossians, a more indepth look into the nature of this language and what it means for the paraenesis is necessary. There are two recurring themes in the use of this language: cross and resurrection. We now turn to these in detail.

#### New Life in Christ

O'Donovan claims that "Christian ethics depends upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead."<sup>664</sup> Paul and Timothy in Colossians would agree. The resurrection makes the believer strong, able to endure all things patiently (1:11). The Colossians have been transferred into the βασιλεία τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, in whom the Colossians find forgiveness that is only possible because of his resurrection (2:13). The cross of Christ and his resurrection are kept close together at all times throughout the letter; especially in 2:11-15 where mention is made of the Colossians' burial with Christ in baptism, and their resurrection

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<sup>663</sup>Cf. Aletti, Colossiensi, p. 208.

<sup>664</sup>O. O'Donovan, Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 13.

with him through faith.

Perhaps most striking are the ἐν Χριστῷ references that point to Christ's involvement in creation and its reconciliation as well as his place in the life of the Gentile believers (1:16-17; 19-20; 22-23; 2:6; 2:13; particularly 2:9-10). As Gentile believers the Colossians participate in the life of Christ, which is the mystery hidden throughout the ages and generations (2:26).<sup>665</sup> Colossians 1:27-28 compares well to Galatians 4:19. In 1:27 the Colossians are told not that they are in Christ but that Christ is in them (cf. also Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 3:17). Paul's ministry and that of his companions has one goal: ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον<sup>666</sup> ἐν Χριστῷ. In verse 29 the authors shift to the first person plural-- εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ. Κόπος in Greek literature not only refers to physical exhaustion<sup>667</sup> it can also refer to a person as though beaten.<sup>668</sup> Though Paul likely has in mind the difficulty of his labors for the gospel in general (cf. 4:12), a reference to his sufferings must not be excluded in 1:24.<sup>669</sup> It is certainly a

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<sup>665</sup>See O'Brien, Colossians, p. 87.

<sup>666</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 111, connects τέλειος to Dt. 18:13 and to Qumran. Against Lohse, Colossians, p. 87, Schweizer argues that no connection can be made here to initiation into the mysteries at this time period.

<sup>667</sup>A. von Harnack, "Κόπος (Κοπιᾶν Οἱ Κοπῶντες) im frühchristlichen Sprachgebrauch." ZNW (1928): 1-10

<sup>668</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 90.

<sup>669</sup>Most commentators do not include the idea of Paul's sufferings in 1:29. See Lohse, Colossians, p. 79; Martin, Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), p. 67; Dibelius-Greeven, Kolosser, p. 24; Harris, Colossians, p. 74, states that 1:29 refers "to Paul's own devotion as an individual pastor." However, Schweizer, Colossians, p. 112, makes reference to Paul's ministry and "all the trouble and activity," and Pokorný, Colossians, p. 105, n.66, connects κόπος indirectly to martyrdom. See also V.

somewhat emotional reference to speak of toiling and striving to bring people to maturity in Christ.

So in Colossians 1:27-29 we find similarities with the three elements in Galatians 4:19-- 1) Christ is present in the midst of the congregation (notice the plural pronoun both in Colossians and in Galatians) and present in their lives.<sup>670</sup> 2) There is reference in Colossians 1:28 to spiritual development; that is, the Colossians are growing into a state of maturity in Christ (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ), presented in the context of eschatological judgement (ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον-- cf. 3:10).<sup>671</sup> In Galatians Paul refers to their spiritual development as Christ being formed in them,<sup>672</sup> again with eschatological connotations.<sup>673</sup> Clearly the Colossians' maturity in Christ is not possible without teaching "in all wisdom" (cf. 1:9). Divine wisdom is indispensable for the Colossians' way of life. 3) Paul makes an emotional reference to his own labor, work, and his concern for the believers' welfare. The participationist language in Galatians 4:19 is obvious. Paul uses the image of a mother in labor pains which expresses deep concern and

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Pfitzner, Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 110f.

<sup>670</sup>H. Lietzmann, Galater HNT (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), p. 28, renders the phrase μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῆ Χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν as "bis Christus, in euch Mensch geworden ist." See also Schlier, Galater, p. 214. On Colossians see Aletti, Colossiens, pp. 141-142 and Pokorný, Colossians, p. 103.

<sup>671</sup>Dunn, Colossians, pp. 124-125; *contra* Gnllka, Kolossierbrief, p. 104; Lohse Colossians, p. 78, note 80.

<sup>672</sup>Bruce, Galatians, p. 212-213.

<sup>673</sup>Again Dunn, Galatians, pp. 240-241 makes this connection here as well.

genuine affection for the Galatians.<sup>674</sup> The image of birth-pangs continues to highlight the eschatological character of the current process of the Galatians' salvation with a view to the future (cf. Mk. 13:8).<sup>675</sup> While the birth-pangs image is absent from Colossians 1:29, nevertheless, the eschatological nature of 1:29 is clear. With that final day of maturity in view, Paul expends all of his energies in the employment of his ministry.<sup>676</sup> There can be no other task, nor can there be any cessation of Paul's work.

The essential point of Colossians 1:27-29 and Galatians 4:19 is the same-- it is Paul's purpose to bring the Galatian and the Colossian congregations into the image of God, by bringing them into the image of Christ, who is the image of God as claimed in the Colossian Christ-hymn (cf. particularly Col. 3:10).<sup>677</sup> This is possible because of the power of God through the resurrection of Christ that works in the life of Paul and the church (cf. 1:11; 2:12; also Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; 6:10).<sup>678</sup>

The foundation of the moral instruction in Colossians is the community's participation in the cross and resurrection of Christ. Paul and Timothy constantly remind their readers of this throughout the paraenesis. In 2:20 we read, "If with

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<sup>674</sup>The imagery here is not only unusual but strained. Christ is being formed in the Galatian believers, but Paul is the one who undergoes the labor pains.

<sup>675</sup>B. Gaventa, "The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19." Studies in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), pp. 191-194.

<sup>676</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 90.

<sup>677</sup>See Dunn, Galatians, pp. 240-241 and Wright, Colossians, p. 94.

<sup>678</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 91.

Christ you died ἀπό τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?" The Colossians are admonished "to put to death" all that is ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (3:5), as they have stripped off τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον "with its practices" (3:9). The first paraenetical reference to the resurrection comes in 3:1- - "If therefore you have been raised with Christ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε. Thus the Colossians must "put on the new self" (3:10) with its practices revealed in 3:12-17). Such new "clothing" is κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν (3:10). We will now look more specifically at these; first, the references to the cross, and second, the references to the resurrection.

#### The Cross in the Paraenesis

In 2:20 participation in the death of Christ is death to the world of regulations against which Paul has been arguing in the letter. The meaning of κόσμος has been understood differently and the interpretation has largely depended upon the explication of the στοιχεῖα. Schweizer suggests that κόσμος in 2:20 means basically the same thing as τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.<sup>679</sup> Bandstra defines "world" here as "the whole sphere of human activity."<sup>680</sup> Whatever "world" means exhaustively in this context, it is certainly a reference to the way of life not in keeping with the one who is crucified with Christ. More specifically in Colossians it refers to two things: 1) the lifestyle of the Colossians before their conversion (3:7), and 2) the distinctive regulations of the Torah, that the local synagogue

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<sup>679</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 165.

<sup>680</sup>Bandstra, The Law and the Elements of the World, p. 69.

in Colossae was insisting the Colossian Christians needed if they were to lay claim to the distinctive heritage as God's people (cf. again 2:16-19 and 2:21-23). The fact that all the powers have been subjected to the Lordship of Jesus Christ means that not only are the Colossians free from the fear of forces that harassed them prior to their conversion, but they must make sure not to submit to any others after their conversion.<sup>681</sup>

In their death with Christ, the Colossians experience in their lives together the eschatological tension of being *in* the world, but not *of* it.<sup>682</sup> It was this world that held them captive, as it was a world that held them in "the power of darkness" (1:13). This is reminiscent of Romans 7:6 where Paul explicitly states in reference to the Torah: *νυνὶ δὲ κατηγορήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα*. Colossians 2:20-21 is definitely similar to Galatians 4:8-10 where Paul after reminding the Galatians of their enslavement as pagans to *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*, warns them that to observe the badges of ethnic identity spelled out in the Torah, is to return to enslavement under the *στοιχεῖα*. In Colossians Paul's language is "couched in similar language."<sup>683</sup>

The verb *δογματίζω* refers to the same thing as the noun *δόγματα* in 2:14--the regulations of the Mosaic law,<sup>684</sup> in particular the distinctive badges of identity

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<sup>681</sup>Hooker, "False Teachers," pp. 327-328. See also E. Percy, Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe (Lund: Gleerup, 1946), pp. 160-169.

<sup>682</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 152, uses this old familiar phrase. He states that the death of Christ "makes new life in this world possible."

<sup>683</sup>Hooker, "False Teachers," pp. 327-328.

<sup>684</sup>See above, pp. 135-137.

(cf. Eph. 2:15). Again as in 2:14 these regulations are affirmed as done away with in the crucifixion of Christ, in which the Colossians participate. Thus their life excludes guidance through the practice of the *δόγματα*.

The Colossians have died to the old order and they are part of the new order hidden with Christ in God. They are not to "set their minds" (*φρονέω*) on the things to which they have died. *Φρονέω* refers to more than an intellectual activity. It is an expression of will and motives.<sup>685</sup> Here Paul has in mind the overall direction and orientation of the Colossians' way of life. It is not to be set on "earthly things," that is, anything Christ abolished in his dying. They must have the same direction and orientation as Christ Jesus (*τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*-- Phil. 2:5).

In dying with Christ their lives are hidden in him along with "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). Hidden treasure, as discussed in the previous chapter is spoken of in Jewish apocalyptic literature in which a mystery is given by a gift of God to the elect. 1 Enoch 46:3 reads,

This is the Son of Man, to whom belongs righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells. And he will open all the hidden storerooms; for the Lord of the Spirits has chosen him, and he is destined to be victorious before the Lord of the Spirits in eternal uprightness.<sup>686</sup>

The notion of the believer's life as hidden with Christ in God has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it indicates that Christ is all-sufficient for moral guidance and

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<sup>685</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 163.

<sup>686</sup>This is E. Isaac's translation in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:34. See Moule, *Colossians*, p. 112, who connects the concept of "hiddenness" in 3:3 with *ἀποκρυφοί* ("store up") in 2:3.

direction since the Colossians' lives are bound up with Christ who is the wisdom of God.<sup>687</sup> On the other hand, it means that the Colossians are secure and unable to be touched by the old world to which the Colossians died.<sup>688</sup> This does not mean, however, that the Colossians cannot fall back into that old world on their own initiative. This is why they need to orient their lives to the things above. The Colossians have indeed died to the old age. They must take their minds off those things.

Therefore, even though they have in fact "died to the things of the earth," they must put them to death in their daily walk (v. 5). The new life to be manifest fully on the last day is to be revealed in the present.<sup>689</sup> Here is a lifestyle resocialized within the body of Christ, the church.<sup>690</sup> The word *ἐνδύσασθε* may betray a baptismal catechism.<sup>691</sup> Yet, as in Galatians, there is only one explicit reference to baptism in the letter-- 2:12. So while baptism could very well be the imagery used here, it could also be imagery appropriate to baptism though not connected to it.<sup>692</sup> Nevertheless, as in Galatians there is similar

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<sup>687</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 83.

<sup>688</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 166.

<sup>689</sup>A. Williams, Colossians CGT (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), p. 125.

<sup>690</sup>E. Schweizer, "Gottesgerechtigkeit und Lasterkatalogue bei Paulus (inkl. Kol und Eph)." Rechtfertigung. Festshrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), p. 475f.

<sup>691</sup>Käsemann, Essays, pp. 149-168. Also Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, pp. 122-123; J. Smith, "The Garments of Shame." HR 5 (1966): 217-238.

<sup>692</sup>Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 49.

language here concerning dying with Christ to the old way of life.

The vices in verses 5-8 are what the Colossians are "to put to death" in their lives.<sup>693</sup> In addition to the specifically Gentile vices listed (v. 5), others are mentioned as well (v. 8). The Colossians are to "lay aside" (ἀποτίθημι) these things, again suggesting the imagery of "taking off." Such things as seething hatred (ὄργη),<sup>694</sup> vehement rage (θυμός),<sup>695</sup> hurting evil (κακία),<sup>696</sup> berating human beings in the image of God (βλασφημία),<sup>697</sup> and filthy and abusive language (αἰσχρολογία)<sup>698</sup> must be abandoned.

In verse 9 the vice the Colossians are to avoid is lying. God cannot and does not lie (cf. Gal. 1:20; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 11:31; 1 Tim. 2:7), therefore the Christian who is being renewed in the image of the creator in Christ should not lie

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<sup>693</sup>The vice list will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. It is germane at this point, however, to treat it briefly.

<sup>694</sup>G. Stählin, "ὄργη." TDNT, 5:420f. Cf. 1QS 4:10. See S. Wibbing, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament und ihre Traditionsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Qumrantexte BZNW 25 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1959), p. 94.

<sup>695</sup>F. Büchsel, "θυμός," TDNT, 3:167f.

<sup>696</sup>W. Grundmann, "κακία," TDNT, 3:482-484. Cf. 1QS 4:11. See Wibbing, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament, p. 94.

<sup>697</sup>H. Beyer, "βλασφημία." TDNT, 1:621-625. Cf. 1QS 4:11; CD 5:12. Again see Wibbing, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament, p. 93.

<sup>698</sup>Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 212. While both meanings may be included in this term, in this context since the issue appears to be vices that strike at the heart of the unity of the community, abusive is probably the more prominent meaning. Schweizer, Colossians, p. 193, notes that this term can refer to spreading vicious gossip.

either.<sup>699</sup> It is not in keeping with the image of God in Christ which is being renewed within the believer (v. 10). It is in this image that the Colossians have been clothed. All these vices listed in verse 8 if practised would destroy the community, eating away at its unity. Since such behavior would be inconsistent with those being renewed in the creator's image, it is a failure to live truthfully in accordance with that image.

The decisive point here is another reminder that the Colossians have "stripped off the old man" and "put on the new."<sup>700</sup> Here ἀπεκδυσάμενοι may allude back to 2:15 where Christ "stripped" the "rulers and authorities." As Christ stripped them and exposed them to public ridicule, so the Colossians are to strip their old selves and everything that gives the old self its identity, and they are to look upon those things with disdain. Here again their way of life is connected to their participation in Christ's death.

#### The Resurrection in the Paraenesis

Simply stripping off the old self is not sufficient. The new self has to be put on. This is possible because the Colossians have been raised with Christ. It

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<sup>699</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 141, note 44.

<sup>700</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 194. The aorist participles ἀπεκδυσάμενοι and ἐνδυσάμενοι have been interpreted by scholars in two ways-- in an imperatival sense, indicating what the Colossians should be doing at present (cf. Moulton Grammar, p. 180-183, and Lohse, Colossians, p. 141), or as true participles describing past events-- "you stripped off" (cf. Martin, Colossians, p. 106; C. Masson, Colossiens CNT 10 (Neuchâtel: Delachaux, 1950), p. 143. I see no reason to choose between the two senses, as I think both are present in the paraenesis itself. The act of the believer "stripping off" and "putting on," and its relation to Christ's death and resurrection, seem to carry both connotations.

is an important argument fashioned in the paraenesis. In 3:1-4 the Christian moral life has a "world-transcending aspect."<sup>701</sup> There is a goal in mind in the resurrection of Christ-- to raise the believer to new life.<sup>702</sup> A transfer has taken place from the things that are on the earth to the things above (cf. John 8:23) described in 1:13 as "the kingdom of the beloved Son."<sup>703</sup> The body of Christ is the church by virtue of its dependence upon Christ rooted in the resurrection. Thus to be raised with Christ is to be part of the body of Christ. Christology has an ecclesiological dimension.<sup>704</sup>

Since the Colossians participate in the resurrection of Christ, they must live their daily lives as resurrected people. They are admonished τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. While there is an earthly/heavenly dichotomy in Hellenistic thinking,<sup>705</sup> the background here appears to be Jewish (cf. Jub. 2:2, 11, 30; also Gal. 4:25f.), as a connection is made between spiritual and "fleshly" natures.<sup>706</sup> The Colossians should "seek" (ζητέω) "the things above" which suggests a specific orientation of will.<sup>707</sup> Such an orientation means that one's thoughts should dwell

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<sup>701</sup>O'Donovan, Resurrection and Moral Order, p. 14.

<sup>702</sup>E. Grässer, "Kol 3, 1-4," p. 148.

<sup>703</sup>See Sappington, Revelation and Redemption, p. 201.

<sup>704</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 158.

<sup>705</sup>See Schweizer, Colossians, pp. 172-173.

<sup>706</sup>Ibid.

<sup>707</sup>H. Greeven, "ζητέω." TDNT, 2:893. Also Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," p. 54.

on these heavenly matters as the verb φρονέω in 3:2 implies.<sup>708</sup>

The Colossians should seek and dwell in thought on the things above because, Paul reminds them, ἀπεθάνετε γάρ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ. ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῆ, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν,<sup>709</sup> τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ (3:3-4). Their lives do not belong to them, they belong to Christ. Christ's concerns must be their concerns as well.<sup>710</sup> Here the Christian life is not displayed simply as how one should behave, but how one should think is equally important. The appeal to focus one's thoughts on Christ and indeed think as Christ (3:1-4) is logically prior to the moral admonitions. The character of Christ is the character the Colossians should display (cf. Phil. 2:5-11). Verse 10-- καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν, is a call to Christian character. Here we have integration between being and doing. In order to live differently, the Colossians must think differently. Christ's resurrection makes this possible as it has ushered in the new order revealed in the life of the church.

"Being clothed with the new man" is a notion that likely comes from the catechetical traditions which had as their source Genesis 1:26f.<sup>711</sup> Here we have

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<sup>708</sup>Martin, Colossians, p. 101.

<sup>709</sup>The manuscript evidence favors the second person pronoun ὑμῶν. See Metzger, Textual Commentary, p. 624.

<sup>710</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 160.

<sup>711</sup>J. Jervell, Imago Dei. Gen 1, 26f im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen FRLANT 76 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), p. 232.

a communal reference to new humanity in Christ,<sup>712</sup> betraying the theme of Christ as the second Adam.<sup>713</sup> This theme is always employed by Paul in reference to Christ as risen and exalted (1 Cor. 15:21f.; 15:45).<sup>714</sup> The resurrection marks the beginning of this new<sup>715</sup> humanity.<sup>716</sup> This new humanity in Christ is the renewal of creation, marred by sin, into what God intended for creation to be all along. Since the Colossians participate in Christ's resurrection, they are to live as that renewed humanity (cf. Rom. 7:22; 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:24). Here in 3:1-10 we have an argument saying in effect what Paul said in Galatians 3:27-- ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνδύσασθε. Moreover, the same point that is made following this in Galatians is also made in Colossians: Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision in this new humanity are of no consequence.

If it is the case that these distinctions are to be seen as no longer significant, then what is the connection to be made between the christologically participationist language of Colossians and the integration of the paraenesis in the argument of the letter, especially as it relates to the "new perspective?" In

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<sup>712</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 190.

<sup>713</sup>Hooker, "False Teachers," p. 107.

<sup>714</sup>Dunn, Christology, p. 107.

<sup>715</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 142, n. 61, observes that νέος in verse 10 is likely used stylistically in reference to τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον.

<sup>716</sup>Ibid., p. 108. Cf. also Jervell, Imago Dei, pp. 258-260; D. Stanley, Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1961), pp. 125ff. On the notion of "new man" see R. Harrisville, "The Concept of Newness in the New Testament." JBL (1955): 69-79; J. Behm, "νέος." TDNT, 4:898-401.

what way can Paul and Timothy reject Judaism as necessary for the Colossian Gentiles, and yet at the same time commend to them a moral way of life that appears particularly Jewish? This is the subject of the next section.

#### PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST, PARAENESIS, AND THE "NEW PERSPECTIVE"

As we suggested in the introductory chapter, if Colossians is a response to Jewish critique of the Colossian church, if the synagogue is dismissing the claims of the Gentile Christians that they share in the inheritance of Israel, and if the paraenesis is Jewish in character-- still to be established in more detail-- it raises some significant questions for the relationship between who one is and how one lives. If all of this is true then how is it that the writers of Colossians can argue against the necessity of the Gentile Christians' identification with the badges of Jewish ethnicity, claiming instead that the Colossians participate in the new life in Christ, while at the same time retaining a fundamentally Jewish orientation throughout the letter, including the paraenesis? If theology and ethics are integrated in Colossians, and if theology and ethics were indeed integrated in Judaism, what is to be made of the seeming integration between the Colossians' participation in the life of Christ and the exhortations by Paul and Timothy that the Gentile Christians live a moral way of life in Christ that is Jewish in character?

We begin this discussion by reviewing our basic affirmations in chapter three. It was in that chapter that we discussed the Israel motif, specifically as it related to the Colossian authors' discussion of Jesus and wisdom, Christ as the

embodiment of Torah, and the echoes of the Exodus present in the work of Christ.

In addition, the parallels we have drawn between Colossians and Galatians are themes intrinsically connected to Israel's own self-understanding as the people of God. This self-understanding is employed by Paul and Timothy for the purpose of arguing that the Colossian Gentiles are indeed the people of God because Christ and his work are sufficient for them.

Thus we suggested along with the consensus of scholarship that Jewish wisdom language is used of Christ in Colossians just as it is employed elsewhere in the New Testament (again Mt. 11:27-30; [cf. Sir. 51:23-27]; Jn. 1:1-18; [cf. Wisd. 9:9; Sir. 24:8; 1 En. 42:2]; 1 Cor. 8:5-6; [cf. Prov. 3:19; Wisd. 8:4-6]; Heb. 1:1-3a; [cf. Wisd. 7:26]). In the Christ-hymn (1:15-20) Jesus is presented as the wisdom of God reflecting along with the other major elements of the hymn a Jewish world view. As Jewish wisdom is present in creation and redemption, so in Colossians 1:15-20 Christ's role in creation and redemption, creation and new creation, is emphasized. Therefore, for Paul and Timothy all that can be said of wisdom can now be said of Jesus Christ.

We also took note of the connection between wisdom and Torah made by Sirach (24:1-3, 8-9, 23-24) and Baruch (3:9-15; 4:1-4; cf. 1QS 3, 8) highlighting the fact that Paul and Timothy present Jesus as the embodiment of Torah. As the law is sufficient for the people of Israel because it embodied God's wisdom, so Jesus is sufficient for the faith and practice of the Colossians as God's people. In addition, the presentation of Christ as the fullness of God suggests a parallel

between God's election of Israel (Ps. 44:3; 147:11; 149:4) and God's unique election of Jesus Christ in which God is continually present with his people (Dt. 12:5, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2; Ps. 67:16; 131:13-14; Is. 8:18; 49:20; Mk. 1:11).<sup>717</sup>

All of this is precipitated by 1:12, where Paul and Timothy draw on typical Jewish identity language, which would have recalled the notion of Israel as God's inheritance (Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 12:12; 18:1; 32:9; Josh. 14:3-4 18:6-7; 19:9, 49, 51; Jer. 10:16; 12:9-10; 51:19; Sir. 24:12; 44:23; 45:22; Cf. 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kgs. 12:16). Not to be missed as well is the eschatological nature of 1:12-13 (cf. Dan. 12:13; Wisd. 5:5; 1 En. 48:7). As the people of God who share in the inheritance in Christ, the Colossians are then admonished in 3:1 to seek the things above where Christ dwells.<sup>718</sup>

Schweizer's argument that the paraenesis is integrated into the argument of the letter as a response of healthy worldliness to an ascetic philosophy is correct in that Paul and Timothy never suggest withdrawal from the world.<sup>719</sup> On the contrary, as we have observed thus far, and will continue to do so, the Colossians are to bring their earthly lives and their relationships under the transforming power of the risen Christ. The weakness in Schweizer's argument as we have already suggested (pp. 50-52), is his proposal that the Colossian philosophy is a kind of ascetic Pythagoreanism. The paraenesis provides a way

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<sup>717</sup>See Feuillet, "Le Création," pp. 236-238.

<sup>718</sup>See, for example, the comments by R. Schnackenburg God's Rule and Kingdom (New York: Herder, 1963), p. 298.

<sup>719</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, particularly pp. 213-220.

for the Colossians to live in the world, not as response to those who would withdraw from it, but as an affirmation that the Colossians must live in the world as God's elect against the philosophers who deny that election.

Thus, all of the Jewish themes mentioned in the Christ-hymn and returned to throughout the letter-- wisdom, fullness, knowledge, mystery, Torah, and Exodus-- are integrated together in order to identify the Colossians as God's chosen. 1QS 11 is particularly interesting as it refers to all these notions in relation to Israel's chosenness.

From the spring of his justice is my judgment and from the wonderful mystery is the light in my heart. My eyes have observed what always is, wisdom that is hidden from mankind, knowledge and understanding (hidden) from the sons of man, fount of justice and well of power and spring of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. To those whom God has selected he has given them an everlasting possession; until they inherit them in the lot of the holy ones. He united their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the Community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages. (11:5-8).

Therefore, as obedience to the law was the consequence of Israel's election, so Paul and Timothy remind the Colossians that their obedience is also an outworking of their election as they participate in Christ. This integrated perspective of identity and living, being and doing, does not begin with the paraenesis. It can be seen prior.<sup>720</sup> Even before the Christ-hymn, the authors

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<sup>720</sup>An intriguing attempt to deal in a systematic way with the integration and interplay between theology and ethics, doctrine and paraenesis is J. McClendon's systematic theology in which his first volume is devoted to ethics (Systematic Theology: Ethics [Nashville: Abingdon, 1980]) and the second to doctrine (Systematic Theology: Doctrine [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994]). His third volume on philosophical questions has yet to be published.

affirm their prayers for the Colossians that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding (1:9). These themes placed together reveals the Jewishness of this prayer.<sup>721</sup> Clearly the knowledge of God's will was critical to faithful Jews as well as to the first Christians (Pss. 40:8; 143:10; 2 Macc. 1:3 TIss. 4:3; Mt. 6:10; 7:21; Mk. 3:35; 14:36; Lk. 12:47; Acts. 21:14; Eph. 5:17; 6:6; 1 Th. 4:3 Heb. 10:36; 13:21; 1 Pt. 3:17; 1 Jn. 2:17). Knowledge of God's will comes from knowing the law (Ps. 40:8; Bar. 4:1-4; 4 Ez. 8:12; Rom. 2:18).

The purpose of knowing God's will, of being filled with wisdom and understanding, for the Colossians is so that they might lead lives worthy of the Lord (περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου, 1:10). The difference between Paul and Timothy and the Colossian philosophers is that, while the philosophers continue to affirm belief in the Torah as the surest way to know the will of God, and to be filled with wisdom, the writers to the Colossians, find that divine will, fulness and wisdom, embodied in Jesus Christ (1:28; cf. Rom 8:4, 13-14; 12:2; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25).

In 1:25-28, after the Christ-hymn these themes reoccur, again in the context of living a way of life pleasing to God (ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ, 1:28). It is important to note that Paul closes his paragraph on his ministry to the Gentiles in 1:24-29 by stating εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει (1:29). He then continues the theme of his striving in 2:1 (Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), once again connecting the themes of wisdom, fulness, knowledge and mystery to the

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<sup>721</sup>See Lohse Colossians, pp. 25-26.

Colossians' way of life in Christ (2:2-3). Even 1:22-- παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ-- reflects the connection between election and Torah obligation.<sup>722</sup> Arnold argues that Paul's reference to Christ as "mystery" is a way of telling the Colossians that they need not seek after other so-called mystery cults and their teaching.<sup>723</sup> While Arnold is correct to observe that Paul is drawing on Jewish wisdom tradition transferring the role of wisdom to Christ, he misses the fact that Paul's emphasis on wisdom and knowledge in 1:24-2:4 focuses on God's mystery as his plan to include the Gentiles in his redemptive purposes.<sup>724</sup> Arnold does note that the term is rooted in the notion of the secrecy of God's plan of salvation (1QpHab 10:14, 11:1; 1QS 5:11),<sup>725</sup> but fails to see in Colossians that the plan is centered on the Gentiles. It is precisely this emphasis on the Gentiles now included in Christ, that should cause us to think of what this might reveal in reference to the nature of the Colossian philosophy. It is difficult to imagine a kind of syncretism involving a Phrygian mystery cult calling into question the redemptive status of the Colossians because they are Gentiles, but it is precisely this emphasis on the Colossians' salvation

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<sup>722</sup>"They have dealt corruptly with him, they are no longer his children because of their blemish' (Dt. 32:5).-- Even though they are full of blemishes they are called sons. So R. Meir: as it is said, 'his sons are [full of] blemishes.' R. Judah said: They have no blemishes, as it is said, 'his sons have no blemishes' (*Sifre Deuteronomy*. 308)." These passages are quoted in Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 96. Sanders presents of a wealth of material from the Old Testament and the rabbis on this subject (see pp. 84-104).

<sup>723</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, pp. 270-274.

<sup>724</sup>See Dunn, Colossians, pp. 28, 119-120.

<sup>725</sup>Arnold, The Colossian Syncretism, p. 271.

in Christ as Gentiles that Paul and Timothy want to affirm (1:27). Therefore as the Colossians have received Jesus as Lord-- Torah embodied, God's fulness, God's wisdom-- as Gentiles, they must continue to live in him (*ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε*, 2:6), and in Christ they have the resources to do so (2:2-3).

The whole discussion of the Colossians' identity in Jesus Christ sets the stage for the so-called polemical core in which Paul and Timothy argue that since Christ is sufficient for the Colossians, they should not be persuaded by the philosophers who have disqualified them because they want to lay claim to Israel's inheritance without following the rules, failing to adhere to the badges of identity so crucial for the people of God Israel. Jesus is supreme in that he embodies wisdom previously ascribed to the Torah. They should, therefore, seek him who is above even the angels which the philosophers supposedly "worship." It is in Jesus that the Colossians find their identity as God's chosen ones. They, therefore, have what they need to live lives fully pleasing to him (1:10, 23; 2:6-7).

By centering all these Jewish themes on Christ, Paul and Timothy attempt to take away from the philosophers the emphasis on wisdom and the knowledge of God's will as revealed in the Torah. Such wisdom and knowledge are, for the Colossian Gentiles, to be found in Christ. It is this identity in Christ that is necessary for the way the Colossians live. Thus for all the differences between Paul and Timothy and the Jewish philosophers, they seem to share a very similar Jewish perspective in which one's identity as the people of God is integrated with how one lives. The difference is found in where each side locates that

identity, but each location shares similar themes and perspectives. Thus the paraenesis of Colossians and its connection to the Colossians' identity in Christ reveals, as we hope to show, an attitude and outlook similar to the philosophers' Torah observance in which one fulfills the obligations of the Torah because one's identity is found as a member of the people of God Israel.<sup>176</sup> The Colossians, as God's chosen ones in Christ, are also to fulfill their obligations as the elect in Christ. Ὡς οὖν παραλάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε (2:6).

#### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued two things linking this chapter to my main thesis. First, the background of Colossians 3:1-4 is apocalyptic and, therefore Jewish. 2 Baruch and Colossians 3:1-4 share a similar eschatological perspective. They are not literarily dependent upon one another, but share an apocalyptic outlook that reflects Jewish apocalyptic literature in general. Both documents affirm that what is hidden will indeed be revealed. What has been revealed in apocalyptic literature is the law, the wisdom of God (cf. 2 Bar. 51:3-5; also see Dt. 29:29). What has been revealed according to Colossians is Christ, the wisdom of God (1:15-20), who seated at God's right hand (3:1), makes paradise accessible. The Colossians, therefore, are not to "shift" (μετακινέω; 1:23) to anything whose substance is not found in Christ (2:17). This includes the law and its regulations. These things are "of the earth." New life in Christ is sufficient for their way of

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<sup>176</sup>Again Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism pp. 84-107; Sandmel, Judaism, pp. 237-238.

life. Eternal realities are embodied in Christ.

Second, the christological participationist theme found in the first verses of chapter 3 is clearly linked to the dominant themes of chapters 1 and 2, further suggesting integration of the argument from chapter 1 through chapter 4. In Christ the Colossians participate in God's eschatological renewal. They must orient themselves toward that renewal, which means ritual observances of the law and participation in angelic liturgy are excluded (prior to 3:1-4) as well as a lifestyle of immorality, associated with the lives prior to conversion (the argument subsequent to 3:1-4). These things they must put to death.

Colossians 3:1-4 highlights themes present throughout the preceding portion of the letter. The hidden/revealed motif once again emphasizes the *μυστηρίον* hidden, but now revealed in Christ. It also touches upon the notion of divine wisdom revealed in the present age, while acknowledging there is more yet to be disclosed at the final denouement of history. The notion of *τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* harkens back to the reference in 2:11 to "circumcision without hands," which I suggested in a previous chapter, was an implicit reference to the notion "circumcision with hands," i.e. "circumcision in the flesh," and to *χειρόγραφον* in 2:14. This allows Paul to connect the law and its ritual observances to *τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, since they are products of the earthly hand. The death and resurrection themes (which are the major motifs of the letter) in 3:1-4 continue to be emphasized from the preceding argument.<sup>727</sup> Moreover, as the argument continues, the paraenesis will take up matters that bear directly upon the worship of the Christian community at

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<sup>727</sup>Gnilka, *Kolossarbrief*, p. 171.

Colossae-- something of importance already in the letter. All of this confirms how integrated the Colossian paraenesis is with the theological argument, and therefore that the paraenesis also reflects the Jewish character of what was at issue.

Moreover, I have raised issues of how the argument in Colossians and the integration of the paraenesis can be related to the "new perspective." Here I suggested that while Colossians rejects the necessity of the Gentiles' identification with the badges of Jewish identity and also ethnicity, Colossians continues to affirm a Jewish understanding of the moral life exhorting the Gentile Colossians to live their lives in this understanding. Paul and Timothy locate all the Jewish themes that identified a Jew as chosen of God in the person of Christ, thereby arguing that Christ is sufficient for the Colossians' salvation and their way of life. The emphasis in the letter on the supremacy of Christ (1:15-20; 2:9, 15, 17) is important for the identity of the Colossians as God's chosen ones, as well as how they are to live (3:1-2, 15, 17). As Torah observance was a direct outworking of God's election of Israel, so the Colossians are to live a life pleasing to the Lord, detailed in the paraenesis as an outworking of being God's chosen ones in Christ.

Christians have already been raised with Christ. They have been incorporated into the body of Christ.<sup>728</sup> But what exactly does this mean? What are the specifics of being clothed with new life in Christ? How do we see more specifically this connection between theology and ethics, identity and practice,

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<sup>728</sup>Moule, Colossians, p. 114.

chosenness and obligation? To this we now turn.

## V. VICES AND VIRTUES 3:5-17

### INTRODUCTION

We have established the Jewish apocalyptic background of the introductory verses of chapter 3 and have shown how the christological participationist theme in the first 4 verses of chapter 3 is integrated into the preceding argument of the letter. Moreover, we have suggested that Paul and Timothy parallel the Colossians' chosenness in Christ and their walking with Christ, with the Colossian philosophers' Torah observance as a direct outworking of their chosenness as members of Israel. The task now is to look at the first major section of paraenetic material found in 3:5-17. As with the previous chapter I will divide this chapter into two major sections-- background and integration.

### BACKGROUND

The background of the vice and virtue lists in the New Testament is contested, especially in light of the fact that such lists can be found in one form or another in a wide variety of literature. Such lists can be found in Stoicism (e.g. Diogenes Laertius 7:110-114), Judaism (e.g. Dt. 27:11-28:6; Wisd. 8:7 and 14:25), particularly Qumran (1QS 4:2-12; 18-26), and Philo (*Sacr.* 32). It seems, therefore, that simply finding such ethical lists, or related ones in literature will not be sufficient to elucidate their background. An analysis of the New Testament lists in the context in which they are used and the lists themselves is necessary. The current assignment, therefore, is to survey the suggested backgrounds of the New Testament ethical lists in an attempt to reveal their origin.

## Iranian Influence

Reitzenstein argued that the background of the ethical lists in Colossians could be found in the Iranian tradition of the five good and evil deeds which make up a person's members.<sup>729</sup> Each list in Colossians, vice (3:5, 8) and virtue (3:12), is based on a five-fold count. This "pentaschema"<sup>730</sup> is founded on Iranian anthropology. Based on this Käsemann argued that Paul had in mind the Iranian myth of the two cosmic men<sup>731</sup> based upon Iranian dualism.<sup>732</sup> Kamlah argued that the New Testament ethical lists were based on an Iranian two-fold form-- a descriptive list which ended with the promise of deliverance and the warning of judgement, and a paraenetic catalog whose background could be found in the Hellenistic mystery cults.<sup>733</sup> Dibelius-Greeven argued, however, that it was quite unlikely Paul had any such kind of connection in mind. He simply utilized the five-fold enumeration which may have come from Iranian tradition, even though he was not aware of it.<sup>734</sup> In addition, Käsemann had to employ sources which are dated later than Colossians in order to make his argument.

The connection between the vice and virtue lists in Colossians and Iranian

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<sup>729</sup>R. Reitzenstein, Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen, pp. 338-351.

<sup>730</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 137.

<sup>731</sup>E. Käsemann, Leib und Leib Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit BhTh (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), p. 150.

<sup>732</sup>E. Kamlah, Die Form der Katalogischen Paränese im Neuen Testament, WUNT 7 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), pp. 214-215.

<sup>733</sup>Ibid.

<sup>734</sup>Dibelius-Greeven, Kolosser, p. 41. Cf also Lohse, Colossians, p. 137. Contra Schweizer, "Gottesgerechtigkeit und Lasterkataloge bei Paulus," n. 40 and 41 who argues that the author of Colossians was consciously aware that he was accommodating this material.

mythology is remote at best.<sup>735</sup> The lists of five virtues and vices in Iranian (and Chinese literature) are not vices and virtues as much as they are elements or glorified spiritual beings, which then are made to represent vices and virtues, as one proponent of the Iranian background demonstrates.<sup>736</sup> The connections also drawn from Diodorus and Philo suggest the same conclusion. Here the five elements are (though the order of the list is different) wind, fire, dry, moistness and gaseousness. The problem with connecting this to Colossians is there is simply no suggestion in the letter that we have a connection between the vices and virtues mentioned and these elements, regardless of the interpretation one gives to τὰ στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου. The only direct connection is the number five.<sup>737</sup> It seems quite tenuous, therefore, to argue for an Iranian background.

Moreover, such a view does not explain the eschatological orientation of the previous 4 verses, which are clearly connected to verse 5 and following. Since an Iranian setting cannot adequately account for the apocalyptic orientation of the passage as well as the specific vices and virtues listed in Colossians, it is best to look elsewhere for its framework.

#### Stoicism and Hellenism

In 1931 in the presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, B.

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<sup>735</sup>See Martin, Colossians, p. 103.

<sup>736</sup>H. Lommel, "Symbolik der Elemente in der zoroastrischen Religion." Zarathustra, pp. 255-257.

<sup>737</sup>Barth, Colossians, p.401, n. 24, believed the 5 vices and 5 virtues to be an accidental occurrence in reference to the number.

Easton argued that the background of the New Testament ethical catalogues was Stoic in nature,<sup>738</sup> where such lists were indeed common.<sup>739</sup> Easton, however, goes beyond the Stoic background to argue that the New Testament ethical lists were influenced by Hellenistic Judaism and what he referred to as "pure Greek."<sup>740</sup> Even though Easton argues for a Hellenistic Jewish background, the emphasis clearly seems to be on the Hellenistic aspect. He states, "...where Jewish authors adopt the Hellenistic terminology...they are arguing as Greeks and not as Jews."<sup>741</sup> This does not mean that there are no Jewish elements in the catalogs. Certainly the notion of idolatry as the root sin and cause of every other vice is Jewish. Stoic writers would not have given such prominence to this vice.<sup>742</sup> Nevertheless, for Easton Hellenism is the more prevalent background.

Easton gives two examples in support of his argument. He briefly mentions

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<sup>738</sup>B. Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists." JBL 51 (1932), pp. 1-12. Easton's argument was not new in this respect. Prior to 1931 scholars generally agreed that Stoicism was the background of the vice and virtue lists, as Easton states on page one of his address.

<sup>739</sup>See Lietzmann, An die Römer, HNT (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), pp. 35-36. Cf. M. Reesor, "The Stoic Categories." American Journal of Philology 78 (1957), pp. 63-82.

<sup>740</sup>Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," p. 1. Exactly what Easton means by "pure Greek" is difficult to say. I suspect it refers to a Greek background "untainted" by outside influences. Such a view is, of course, no longer tenable (see Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, pp. 1-5.), as is the idea that there is such a thing as "pure Judaism."

<sup>741</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>742</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

Philo's list of 147 vices in his *Sacrifices of Cain and Abel* (32).<sup>743</sup> He spends more time on Wisdom 14:25, 26:

Πάντας δ' ἐπιμιξ ἔχει αἷμα καὶ φόνος, κλοπὴ καὶ δόλος, φθορὰ, ἀπιστία, ταραχὴ, ἐπιτορκία, θόρυβος ἀγαθῶν, χάριτος ἀμνησία, ψυχῶν μiasmōs, γενέσεως ἐναλλαγὴ, γάμων ἀταξία, μοιχεία, καὶ ἀσέλγεια.

Easton sees in this list characteristics similar to most other lists: 1) the vices are selected at random, 2) there is little effort made to classify them, and 3) the order of the list is based on assonance and paranomasia.<sup>744</sup> It was Easton's view that the New Testament lists basically contain the same characteristics except for Galatians where "a real attempt has been made to adapt the list to the context,"<sup>745</sup> and Colossians 3:5, 8 where the lists are mainly traditional "but Paul has made them serve his immediate purpose excellently."<sup>746</sup>

Easton concludes that the Beatitudes is the only New Testament list "of a purely Jewish origin."<sup>747</sup> There is a direct relationship between Stoicism and the New Testament catalogs. The Christians employed such catalogs because they found it agreeable to Gentile converts who were already familiar with such catalogs.<sup>748</sup>

The major weakness with Easton's thesis is that the four cardinal virtues

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<sup>743</sup>Ibid.

<sup>744</sup>Ibid.

<sup>745</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>746</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>747</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>748</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

of Stoicism (σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις, δικαιοσύνη, ἀνδρεία) and their corresponding vices are not present in any of the New Testament catalogs.<sup>749</sup> The form of the ethical catalogs is hardly sufficient to prove Stoic influence, since such lists are present in other Hellenistic literature as well as in Judaism. Indeed Easton admits there are Jewish aspects to the New Testament catalogs, such as the claim that idolatry is the root of all vice or sin.<sup>750</sup> The problem with Easton's argument is not that there may be similarities between the ethical lists of the New Testament and Stoicism (as well as Hellenism in general). The question is whether Stoicism is a source for the lists. This seems quite unlikely since there is little evidence for Stoicism from the content of the lists themselves. In Stoicism the virtuous life is informed by what is natural.<sup>751</sup> In Colossians, one can only live virtuously through transformation in Christ. Moreover, for Stoicism, the path to virtue necessitates the overcoming of suffering and affliction through retreat into oneself and reliance on one's own sufficiency. The communal character of the Colossian church and the emphasis on Christ's sufficiency in the letter, surely do not suggest a Stoic framework for the ethical catalog.<sup>752</sup> Similarity of form alone does not demonstrate borrowing. If there was any kind of borrowing from

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<sup>749</sup>Wibbing, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge, p. 86.

<sup>750</sup>Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," p. 2.

<sup>751</sup>D. Schroeder, "Lists, Ethical." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible ed., K. Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), supplement, p. 546.

<sup>752</sup>Schrage, Ethics, p. 220.

Stoicism it was certainly limited.<sup>753</sup>

Schweizer sets the ethical lists specifically within the context of a Platonic Pythagorean worldview.<sup>754</sup> This worldview pictured the cosmos as a great human body with the elements as parts of the cosmos. The individual human being was considered to be a smaller cosmos within the larger one-- a microcosmos within the macrocosmos. Philo sets the elements of the world in parallel with the members of the human body (μέλος in Col 3:5) and their corresponding vices (*Quis Her.* 153; 208; 282; *Sac.* 108). As mentioned in the last chapter, the virtuous person needed to move to the "things above." What this meant was the separation of the body from its members and the corresponding vices through strict asceticism.<sup>755</sup>

Moreover, there are other aspects of the ethical lists that suggest this background. Schweizer too mentions the number 5 and the significant role it plays in Pythagorean speculations.<sup>756</sup> Schweizer also finds a significant parallel with Philo and his discussion of "putting on the garments" of the high priest in Leviticus 21:10:

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<sup>753</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 179.

<sup>754</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 188.

<sup>755</sup>H. Diels, "Alexander Polyhistor in Diogenes Laertius VIII," pp. 24ff in Fragmente der Vorsokratiker ed. W. Kranz (Berlin: Weidmann, 1974), pp. 448:33ff. For a fuller discussion of this text and Schweizer's treatment of it see chapter 2.

<sup>756</sup>Schweizer, "Christianity of the Circumcised, pp. 251-252. See Diels, Fragmente, 1:110:12; 410:2; 429:12, 24, 26; 369:14; 108:21; 412:16; 440:13; 2:242:37ff.; Diodorus 11:1).

And the priest that is chief among his brothers, the oil having been poured upon the head of the anointed one and having been consecrated "to put on the garments" (ἐνδύσασθαι τὰ ἱμάτια), will not take the mitre off his head, and will not rend his garments.

Philo asserts that the putting on of the garments of the high priest signifies the *logos* which puts on the world; that is, the four elements (also a Stoic idea). He also maintains that this refers to the soul which puts on the body and to the wise man who puts on the virtues. (*Fug.* 110).<sup>757</sup>

Schweizer's conclusion that the problem at Colossae was "a kind of Pythagorean philosophy,"<sup>758</sup> adorned with Hellenistic mystery religions and Judaism,<sup>759</sup> explicates well, as far as Schweizer is concerned, the context of the ethical lists of chapter 3.

Yet, Schweizer's argument has its problems. First, it is not entirely clear in Colossians that Paul is attempting to connect the virtues and vices with the elements of the cosmos. At best the association is implicit.

Second, Barth is probably correct to urge caution in using the number 5 in the list of virtues and vices to argue for a religio-historical background.<sup>760</sup> Schweizer himself admits the possibility that the list of 5 vices and virtues is merely coincidental, as well as in Philo.<sup>761</sup> In addition the five-fold ethical list

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<sup>757</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>758</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>759</sup>Schweizer's position on the background of Colossians is discussed on pages 53-55.

<sup>760</sup>Barth, *Colossians*, p. 400, n. 24.

<sup>761</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, pp. 186-187.

was also characteristic of Jewish wisdom literature.<sup>762</sup>

Third, Schweizer also recognizes the Jewish flavor of the content of the lists. The notion of "putting to death" the members, that is of the vices within them, is understood, from the perspective of the Jewish view of sins located in the members."<sup>763</sup> Moreover, most of the particular vices and virtues mentioned in Colossians are very Jewish terms used in Jewish ways, as I will argue in the next section. Some virtues mentioned in Colossians, such as "humility" (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) were not considered virtues in Hellenistic philosophy.

Fourth, Schweizer's background for the ethical lists in Colossians does not take adequate account of the apocalyptic background of 3:1-4. Indeed, as will be shown, the ethical lists fit quite well into Jewish apocalyptic thought. This apocalypticism integrates the ethical lists into the surrounding material, as well as the rest of the letter. Schweizer neglects the apocalyptic nature of this material.

Thus, it seems that while the form of the ethical lists can be found in Iranian dualism, Stoicism, and Hellenistic philosophy, the content of the lists (as well as the form) reflects most adequately a Jewish framework.

#### Judaism

P. Carrington suggested many years ago that the background of the ethical

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<sup>762</sup>See Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, p. 139; Wolter, *Kolosser*, p. 185.

<sup>763</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.

lists in the New Testament could be found in an early Jewish proselyte catechism.<sup>764</sup> He makes his argument in three parts. First, there was an important form of Jewish religious instruction in the New Testament period that was oral and traditional in character.<sup>765</sup> Second, this instruction was also used for proselytes. Third, there is a common catechetical model in the New Testament catalogues patterned after this instruction. Carrington's first point is not critical to this study, but the second and third are. A brief discussion of each is therefore appropriate.

Carrington argues that this oral instruction given to those wishing to become proselytes was based on the Holiness Codes of Leviticus 17-26. The proselyte, according to Carrington, was initiated into the community of faith after diligent instruction. The rites of initiation were baptism, circumcision and the offering of a sacrifice. The connection here between this catechism and the Holiness Code of Leviticus is that baptism was a precursory rite which cleansed the proselyte from defilement due to the disregard of the prohibitions of Leviticus 17 and 18.<sup>766</sup>

It was this background and its relation to the ethical lists, connected with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, that led Carrington to conclude that the early

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<sup>764</sup>P. Carrington, The Primitive Christian Catechism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940). Also G. Klein, Der älteste Christliche Katechismus und die Jüdische Propaganda-Literatur (Berlin: Reimer, 1909); D. Daube, "Forms of Old Testament Legislation." Proceedings of Oxford Society of Historical Theology (1944-1945), p. 36 ff.

<sup>765</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>766</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

church understood itself to be a new Levitical community. The baptismal catechesis of the Holiness Code reflects four characteristics of the community: 1) do not walk as the Gentiles (Lev. 28:1-5); 2) avoid the three major sins (Lev. 17-18); 3) the reception of the Spirit and the call to holiness (Lev. 19:2); and 4) love for one another (Lev. 19:18).<sup>767</sup>

It is this argument that brought Carrington to his third claim. He studied the ethical catalogues of the New Testament and discovered a standard catechetical model. The pattern was four-fold: 1) put off all evil; 2) submit yourselves; 3) watch and pray; and 4) resist the devil.<sup>768</sup> In the chart Carrington constructs on this pattern in relation to the New Testament ethical lists, the catalogue in Colossians contains the first three aspects.

Carrington's proposal that an early Jewish proselyte catechism provides the background for the New Testament catalogues is rather flimsy.<sup>769</sup> Vögle has

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<sup>767</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>768</sup>Ibid., p. 31. Carrington gives each section a Latin title-- 1) *Deponentes*; 2) *Subiecti*; 3) *Vigilate*; and 4) *Resistite*.

<sup>769</sup>D. Schroeder, "Lists," p. 546. Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p. 79, admits that there is no concrete evidence for a formal Jewish catechesis behind the New Testament catalogs, but neither does he believe that the thesis has been successfully refuted. He, therefore proceeds with his argument on the assumption that such a catechesis did exist. I am somewhat more cautious than Cannon. I do not proceed on the same assumption, although I cannot imagine that there was little to no instruction for proselytes. The question is whether the New Testament catalogs borrow from such catechesis. If the Jewish material from which the New Testament ethical lists draws was catechetical, then the answer is certainly "yes." But just what material was used in catechesis is a difficult question to answer.

argued clearly that there is no proof that such a catechism ever existed.<sup>770</sup> This does not necessarily mean, however, that there was no instruction given to potential proselytes, and that the early Christians may have drawn from this in their tutelage.<sup>771</sup> The instructional material of Sirach 1-7 was indeed appropriated for Christian instruction in such documents as the Didache, Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the letter of James.<sup>772</sup> So while there is no proof that a formal Jewish catechism existed, there probably was instruction taking place (it is hard to imagine instruction was absent) which may have become quite uniform through centuries of use. As we will see, the ethical lists of Colossians have quite a Jewish "ring" to them.<sup>773</sup>

Of more interest is Carrington's suggestion that the ethical catalogs are based on the Holiness Code of Leviticus. Furnish rightly claims that it was

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<sup>770</sup>Vögle, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge, pp. 97-99. See also V. Furnish, Theology and Ethics, pp. 38-44.

<sup>771</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, pp. 73-75. Yet, it must also be noted that no pre-baptismal instruction is encouraged in Acts (cf. 2:38; 8:36-38; 16:33).

<sup>772</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>773</sup>On the debate over the extent of Jewish missionary activity see L. Feldman, "Jewish Proselytism." Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), pp. 372-408; M. Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century." The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 53-78; Levinskaya, Acts, pp. 19-33; S. McKnight, A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), his conclusions on pp. 116-117. The fact that Judaism in the first century was likely not a zealously missionary religion actively involved in proselytizing, does not necessarily preclude some kind of formal catechetical instruction for proselytes, although, as just stated, there is no proof that one ever existed.

unlikely that Paul or his churches thought of themselves as part of a neo-Levitical community.<sup>774</sup> There is certainly no direct hint of this from the Pauline corpus, although it cannot, in the final analysis, be excluded with certainty. What seems clear, however, is that similarities exist between the Holiness Code and the ethical lists of the New Testament. What this may mean is that there is not so much a conscious drawing from Leviticus, but a restatement of a moral tradition which goes back to the code itself. But just what are the similarities?

Colossians echoes the basic theme of the Holiness Code "You will be holy, for I the Lord am holy" and perhaps more importantly, "You shall not be like the Gentiles (Lev. 18:2-3; 19:2; 20:22-26).<sup>775</sup> The Colossians are reminded that they now "share in the inheritance of the saints in light" and they have been brought into the "kingdom of God's beloved Son" (Col. 1:12-13). They are also brought to the recollection that the saving work of Christ brought them out of their former ways of hostility toward God (1:21). Paul then goes on to state that they are the recipients of God's mystery "hidden throughout the ages" (1:26-27), signifying that they are indeed Gentiles.

Moreover the vice list in Colossians is oriented toward sexual immorality, something which belonged to the Jewish polemic against Gentiles and idolatry.<sup>776</sup> By the time of Colossians Israel had developed a polemic against such immorality

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<sup>774</sup>Furnish, Theology and Ethics, p. 41.

<sup>775</sup>These parallels follow Cannon's argument on pp. 80-81 of The Use of Traditional Materials.

<sup>776</sup>Bruce, Colossians, p. 269. See also McEleney, "Vice Lists," p. 217.

and idolatry (Is. 44:9-20; Wisd. 14:22-31; Rom. 1:18-32). The Holiness Code clearly prohibits sexual immorality (Lev. 18:6-23; 19:20-23; 20:10-21). In addition the vices listed in Colossians 3:8 are parallel to some of the prohibitions in Leviticus 19:11-18.<sup>777</sup>

"You shall not steal.... You shall not go around as a slanderer....You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin....You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people."

We find these same parallels in the virtue list of Colossians 3:12-14, which climaxes with the admonition, ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην. Leviticus 19:18 culminates with the command καὶ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν.<sup>778</sup> In the virtue lists of the New Testament love is the one virtue found in all of the lists.<sup>779</sup> The fact that the virtue list in Galatians begins with love suggests its primacy among the virtues there as well. Its place is probably meant to convey what Colossians meant to communicate-- love is the supreme Christian virtue. It is the summation of all of the virtues of grace.<sup>780</sup>

Thus the ethical catalogs of Colossians parallel (intentionally or unintentionally but drawing on a tradition rooted in Leviticus) Leviticus 17-19:

- 1) Do not walk as the Gentiles (Lev. 18:1-5 and Col. 3:5-7).
- 2) Avoid sexual immorality and other sins (Lev. 18:6-ch. 21 and Col. 3:5-9).
- 3) Be holy (Lev. 19:2 and Col. 3:1-2, 10-13).
- 4) Love one another (Lev. 19:18 and Col. 3:14).

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<sup>777</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p. 80.

<sup>778</sup>Cf. also Leviticus 25.

<sup>779</sup>Dunn, Galatians, p. 309.

<sup>780</sup>Ibid.

It must also be noted that the vice list condemns things denounced more or less in the Decalogue or elsewhere in the Law (cf. Prov. 6:17-19; Jer. 7:9; Ezek. 18:5-17; Hos. 4:2).<sup>781</sup> The Holiness Code of Leviticus would itself have been considered as part of the Law.

I am less certain about Carrington's claim that here we have in New Testament ethical catalogs a Christian baptismal catechesis. There are certainly some good arguments in favor of this. Baptism is mentioned in 2:12. Earlier in Colossians Paul has *reminded* his readers of certain basic things they already know, but should think on in reference to their current situation (1:4c, 7; 1:23; 2:6-7). The fact that such lists are present throughout the New Testament may indeed reflect a developed Christian catechesis of some kind. This is surely true by the time of the Didache. Just how well developed it is by the time of Colossians is difficult to say. The similarities of the ethical lists in the New Testament suggests there may have been some uniformity, but the pattern was not so stringent that tailoring to the specific situation was excluded.

What is not entirely clear, however, is whether this instruction is to be connected to pre-baptismal catechesis or is instruction used at the time of the letter to explicate what it means to live in Christ, of which baptism is one of the metaphors employed. The very mention of baptism (2:11-13) presupposes that the Colossians have a previous notion of what baptism is supposed to signify, so this may indeed argue for some form of baptismal catechesis in this material. Paul and Timothy want to remind them of the commitment they made in their baptisms. This

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<sup>781</sup>McEleney, "Vice Lists," p. 217.

harkens back to 2:6: "Therefore as you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, continue to walk in him." They must not waver from the faith in which they were instructed at the beginning of their Christian walk. So while there is nothing which explicitly reveals a baptismal catechesis here, Paul is reminding the Colossians of what they first learned. It is likely that their first instruction was prior to or shortly after their expressions of commitment in baptism.<sup>782</sup>

Adding strength to the thesis that the ethical catalogues have a Jewish background is the moral dualism of human inclination toward good or evil. This perspective is clearly present in early Christian literature which present the Two Ways-- one being good, the other being evil-- such as Barnabas 18-20 and the Didache 1-6. What is important for this study is not the prominent place of this dual instruction in the early Christian literature, but that its roots are thoroughly found in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature. Deuteronomy 30:15-16 reads,

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and Yahweh your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess (cf. Jer. 21:8; Ps. 1:6; Prov. 2:12-13; 4:18-19).

This theme is carried into other Jewish literature such as 1 Enoch 90:1-4:

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<sup>782</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p.93, is clearly confident that the ethical catalogs reflect a primitive Christian baptismal catechism. He believes that this position has yet to be adequately refuted. He states, "It is firmly based on probability." While I am inclined to think that some kind of catechism is present in the lists in some form, I am not sure just what form of the material goes back to such a catechism. I am also not sure how one firmly bases a view on probability.

Now, my children, I say to you: Love righteousness and walk therein! For the ways of righteousness are worthy of being embraced; (but)<sup>783</sup> the ways of wickedness shall soon perish and diminish. To (certain) known persons, the ways of injustice and death shall be revealed as soon as they are born; and they shall keep themselves at a distance from (those ways) and would not follow them. Now to you, those righteous ones, I say: Do not walk in the evil way, or in the way of death! Do not draw near to them unless you be destroyed! But seek for yourselves and choose righteousness and the elect life! Walk in the way of peace so that you shall have life and be worthy! (cf. 2 En. 30:15; TAsh. 1:3-5; TLevi 19:1; TJud. 20:1-5).

Two ways thinking can also be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Manual of Discipline (1QS) the "ordinances of the entire assembly" (1:1) are recounted, conferring blessings on those who walk in God's ways (2:2-4) and curses on those who refuse (2:5-18).<sup>784</sup> The significance of the Manual is the list of vices and virtues found in chapter 4. Among the virtues listed are righteousness, truth, fear for God's judgments, humility, patience, compassion, perpetual goodness, holy minded, a controlled nature, abundant love, purity, and modesty (4:2-8). Among the vices-- greed, unrighteousness, wickedness, falsehood, pride, deception, insolence, folly, passion, lewdness, filthy ways, unchastity, and blasphemy (4:9-14).

Now it is true that the categories of good and evil-- the Two Ways-- was also present among the Greeks.<sup>785</sup> Nevertheless as Childs has argued the Two

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<sup>783</sup>The brackets highlight words added by the translator, in this case E. Isaac, OTP.

<sup>784</sup>J. Audet, "Les Affinities litterares et doctrinales du Manual de Discipline." RevBib 59 (1952), pp. 219-238. Cf. Wibbing, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge, pp. 118-120.

<sup>785</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p. 92.

Ways was a central motif in Israel's worship.<sup>786</sup> The covenant and its renewal was always connected with Israel's ethical responsibilities with the pronouncement of blessings on those who hold to the covenant and curses on those who reject it. For Israel this was more than simply a rhetorical way to argue. It was a way to contrast those inside and those outside the covenant.<sup>787</sup>

Colossians fits well into this Two Ways motif with its discussion of above/below, putting off/putting on. Moreover, the virtuous life in Colossians is predicated upon the fact that the Colossians are "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved" (3:12). The Colossians, therefore, are to live as God's elect (again cf. 1QS 4; 1 En. 90:1-4; Dt. 30:16), a notion deeply imbedded in the framework of Jewish theology.<sup>788</sup>

One last facet of the Jewish nature of the ethical catalogs, and related to the previous aspect, is the suggestion by Schroeder that the lists reveal the

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<sup>786</sup>B. Childs, Memory and Tradition in Israel SBT 37 (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 45-89. Also A. Alt, "The Origins of Israelite Law." in Essays on Old Testament History tr. R. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 81-132; G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology tr. D. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:192ff.

<sup>787</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p. 92.

<sup>788</sup>Wright, The New Testament, pp. 260-261, notes, "The compilers of the Pentateuch saw the initial fulfillment of the covenant in the events of the exodus (Exodus 2:24f.), and thus understood the Torah as the covenant document which, grounded upon the faithfulness of Israel's god (on Wright's use of the lowercase "g" in "god" see pages xiv-xv), provided for his people the way of life by which they should express their answering fidelity to him....The emphases throughout are on the promises made to Abraham, blessing as the consequence of covenant fidelity, the land as the gift of Israel's god to his people, and Israel as holding the place of honour among the nations." See also Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, pp. 21-23.

theme of eschatological judgment, or the prophetic Day of the Lord, which will bring salvation to the righteous and punishment to the wicked (Dt. 27-28; Jer. 21:8; Ezek. 18:5-9, 14-17).<sup>789</sup> This has already been seen in the motif of the Two Ways. In addition the element of eschatological judgment with vice lists is prevalent in the literature (TIss. 3-4; 7:2-6; TBen. 6; TAsh. 1-2, especially 2:5; TReu. 3; TJud. 16; TMos. 7; 2 En. 10:4-6; also Jub. 21:21; 23:14b; 1QS 4:18-19).

### Conclusion

The background of the ethical lists of the New Testament has been analyzed and the following conclusions have been drawn. First, there is virtually no evidence to suggest an Iranian influence on the Colossians lists. The fact that Colossians lists five virtues and five vices, in keeping with Iranian dualism is simply not sufficient.

Second, the form of the lists is certainly similar to the vice and virtue lists found in various forms of Hellenistic philosophy, and it is also true that some of the virtues and vices listed may be similar, but this is not adequate to argue that the ethical catalogs come from a Hellenistic background. There may be some Hellenistic content to the lists, but there is even more content foreign to Hellenism. The four cardinal virtues of Stoicism are absent from every New Testament catalog. Certain virtues in the New Testament, such as *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, were not considered to be virtues among the Greeks. In addition, the place of forgiveness in the virtue material in Colossians, surely does not reflect a Greek

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<sup>789</sup>Schroeder, "Lists," p. 546.

context. The need for forgiveness does not reflect virtue at all, and yet the necessity of forgiveness follows right behind the list of virtues in Colossians 3:12. For example, there is no account of forgiveness anywhere in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics.<sup>790</sup> It is only mentioned briefly and then in an off-handed way.<sup>791</sup> It is clearly not connected to any account of the virtues. Indeed, in classical Greek literature, χαρίζομαι is not used in conjunction with any discussion of virtue.<sup>792</sup> The virtuous life in Stoicism as well as other Greek philosophies is informed by what is natural. In Colossians virtue is informed by participation in the new life in Christ, which transforms the person. In Stoicism, in particular, the way to virtue is possible only when one vanquishes suffering by retreating into oneself and discovering one's own self-sufficiency. In Colossians the way to righteousness is only possible in Christ, because Christ alone is sufficient. Indeed, the meaning of suffering in Colossians is understood differently from Stoicism (Col. 1:24). The goal of virtue in Stoicism is indifference to the world. In Colossians the believer is to throw off the things of the earth. This is not

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<sup>790</sup>Tr. M. Ostwald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

<sup>791</sup>Aristotle writes, "As for what is called 'good sense,' the quality which makes us say of a person that he has the sense to forgive others, (i.e., sympathetic understanding,) and that he has good sense, this is a correct judgment of what is fair or equitable. This is indicated by the fact that we attribute to an equitable man especially sympathetic understanding and that we say that it is fair, in certain cases, to have the sense to forgive" (1143a.20-25). I am grateful to Stanley Hauerwas for directing me to this passage.

<sup>792</sup>See H. Esser, "χάρις." NIDNTT, 1:116 who notes that χαρίζομαι is used mainly to refer to doing something pleasant for someone. It is not used with God as its subject until the second century A.D. (Aelius Aristides). Also H. Conzelmann, "χάρις κτλ." TDNT, 9:375.

indifference.

Philo too doesn't provide enough of a background for the ethical catalogs. It is not clear that Paul connects the virtues or vices to the *στοιχεία*. Moreover, the *στοιχεία* in Colossians are understood negatively. This is not the case with Philo.<sup>793</sup> Again Philo connects the virtues with what is natural. Furthermore the Philonic and broader Hellenistic context cannot take ample account of the apocalyptic background of Colossians 3:1-4, which is integrated with the argument of ethical lists.

It also needs to be said, that while the language of the ethical lists is virtue language, it is not the kind of virtue language found in Hellenistic philosophy. The Greek word *ἀρετή* is mentioned only once in the New Testament (Phil. 4:8) and here it is used in an atypical fashion. Here *ἀρετή* is set in a corresponding manner to the other terms listed, rather than as the overall label for the words enumerated.<sup>794</sup>

In general it has been said that the reason why *ἀρετή*, in the Greek sense,<sup>795</sup> does not play a larger role in the New Testament is due to its

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<sup>793</sup>It is certainly possible that Paul may have connected the vices with the *στοιχεία*, as he connects matters of food and drink, etc., but this is not explicit. He likely would not have coupled the *στοιχεία* with the virtues.

<sup>794</sup>Schrage, *Ethics*, p. 217.

<sup>795</sup>I think it is true that when most people talk about Greek conceptions of virtue, they do not refer to Greek conceptions as much as Athenian ones, since the great Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, were all from Athens (See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 135). There are, however, other Greek conceptions of virtue often ignored-- Homeric and heroic societies, for example, as well as the virtues of the early Greek tragedies. These latter perspectives on virtue do not fit completely with what we often label as the "classical" Greek

anthropocentricity and its individuality,<sup>796</sup> but I doubt this to be true. First of all, the accounts of virtue in a Greek context always presume some cosmic order which dictates the place of each virtue in human life.<sup>797</sup> Thus the emphasis is not on the human being, but on the cosmic order and how the human being fits into it. Secondly, there is no concept of individuality in the ancient world comparable to the individualism of Enlightenment philosophy. The Athenian accounts of virtue (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) as well as all other Greek accounts, presuppose the city-state as the context for the moral life.<sup>798</sup> So Greek conceptions of virtue are not human-oriented, nor individualistic.

It seems to me that the New Testament virtue and vice lists do not fit neatly into Greek conceptions because it is difficult if not impossible in classical Greek thought to talk about the moral life in the context of grace and forgiveness, two notions not found in Greek moral literature.<sup>799</sup> It would not have been possible for Aristotle to insist like Paul, that the Colossians live virtuously, and at the same time forgive each other as they were forgiven. For the Greeks the presence of such grace and forgiveness did not mean virtue, but the lack of it.

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conception.

<sup>796</sup>R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-1955), p. 121; O. Bauernfeind, ἀπειθή, TDNT, 1:460.

<sup>797</sup>A. MacIntyre, After Virtue, p. 142.

<sup>798</sup>For a full discussion of this see *Ibid.*, pp. 121-145.

<sup>799</sup>Which is why ταπεινοφροσύνη can be a virtue in the New Testament and not in Greek literature. Humility implies the presence of both grace and forgiveness.

Thus the ethical lists of Colossians fit very well into a Jewish framework. Israel too had its ethical lists, but Colossians reflects more than the form of these Jewish lists, they also reflect a Jewish context. Forgiveness is a critical part of virtuous living, and *ταπεινοφροσύνη* and *πραΰτης* as virtues are quite congenial in Judaism. Moreover, the ethical lists are not incidental to the apocalyptic material which precedes it. Chapter 3 highlights in a concrete way the affirmation of 2:6-- "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him."<sup>800</sup> We have seen that there are similarities between the ethical catalogue in Colossians and the Holiness Code of Leviticus, the notion of the Two Ways and the inclination toward good and evil, the condemnations of the Decalogue (in reference to the vices) and the concept of eschatological judgment. If any of this material in Colossians chapter 3 is catechetical in nature (and I think this is entirely possible), than it is material drawn from the moral precepts of Judaism.

What we have here is not necessarily a conscious borrowing from the Holiness Code or any other specific place, but rather a Jewish framework of which the Holiness Code is an integral part. That the early church drew from this framework for its catechetical instruction should not be surprising. Such instruction was integral to their context. We will continue to see this context as we turn to the matter of the integration of Colossian ethical lists into the previous argument of the letter.

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<sup>800</sup>A. Verhey, The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 109, refers to this Pauline concern between what it means to belong to Christ in relation to the Christian's moral identity, as a "eschatologically charged atmosphere" where the Christian participates in the new age while still vulnerable to the old.

## INTEGRATION

In the previous chapter I highlighted the apocalyptic nature of Colossians 3:1-4. Both τὰ ἄνω and τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς find their background in the apocalyptic literature of Judaism (cf. again 2 Bar. 4:2-4; 49: 1-3; 51:8-12; 4 Ez. 7:26; 13:36; 2 En. 45:2) in which the present age is characterized as an era of rebellion against God and contrasted sharply with the world to come. Colossians 3:1-4 claims that the new age has broken into the present and that the world to come has in some sense already appeared. So the Colossians must strip off the old humanity, which is not renewed after the divine image, and put on the new humanity of the new age because the Colossians have been raised with Christ.

The ethical lists give specificity to τὰ ἄνω and τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Here we have moral details which make concrete the affirmations made earlier-- the Colossians participate in the new life in Christ, and they need to put to death those things that run contrary to that life, as well as put on those things which are in keeping with what it means to be raised with Christ.

The task now is to integrate the ethical lists into the argument of Colossians. I will highlight specific vices and virtues in the ethical lists, raise the question as to whether this material is tailored, and try to place the lists in the argument of the letter.

### The Vices in Colossians

I continue now to make a case for the Jewish concerns of the letter, as well to bolster the argument that the target of the letter is Jewish. To do so with the

vice lists is also to continue the argument for integration. I will highlight specifically those vices which were used in Judaism against the Gentile lifestyle.<sup>801</sup> The reason for this concerns the argument of the entire letter. Lest the Colossians take the writers' affirmation that they are God's chosen as Gentiles to mean they can live as Gentiles, as Judaism tended to characterize Gentile immorality and idolatry, Paul and Timothy employ a typical Jewish polemic against Gentile immorality to remind the Colossians, that as God's chosen in Christ, their walk, their way of life in Christ rules out Gentile standards of life. An analysis of these terms, therefore, will be presented, followed by a discussion of the place of this list in the letter.

### **Πορνεία**

**Πορνεία** can refer specifically to prostitution, and generally to all sorts of extra-marital sexual behavior (e.g. homosexuality, paedophilia, and fornication).<sup>802</sup> Cult prostitution in the Hellenistic world in Asia Minor was common.<sup>803</sup> Prostitution in general was accepted in the Hellenistic world because sexual intercourse was understood as natural as eating and drinking.<sup>804</sup> The same was not true of the Judaism of Paul's day. **Πορνεία** did refer to a wide range of extra-

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<sup>801</sup>It is important to note that these vices are also listed in Galatians, which I believe is due, not so much to the conventional character of the lists, as it is to the Jewish concerns of both letters.

<sup>802</sup>H. Reisser, "πορνεύω." NIDNTT, 1:497.

<sup>803</sup>Dunn, Galatians, p. 303.

<sup>804</sup>F. Hauck and S. Schulz, "πόρνη κτλ." TDNT, 7:582.

marital activity<sup>805</sup> including incest (TRub. 1:6; TJud. 13:6), marriages between relatives prohibited by rabbinic law (Str-B 2:729-730) and other sorts of "unnatural" sexual relations (TBen. 9:1).<sup>806</sup> Πορνεία was not viewed positively.

Deuteronomy 23:17-18 reads:

None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute (πόρνης) nor the price of a dog into the house of Yahweh your God in payment for any vow, for both these are abhorrent to the Lord your God.

According to Jubilees such behavior is unforgivable (33:13, 18). Similar condemnations are also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 1:6; 4:10; CD 2:16; 4:17, 20). In the Greek world it was often permissible for a married man to have extra-marital-intercourse as long as his civil marriage was not violated. Yet such behavior was often forbidden for the wife.<sup>807</sup> In some Jewish writings, however, the unfaithful man was condemned as well. In Sirach 23:16-27 a negative picture is given of the ἀνθρωπος πόρνος along with the unfaithful wife.

It is in the Wisdom of Solomon that πόρνεια is connected to the idolatry of the Gentiles: Ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας ἐπινοία εἰδώλων, εὑρεσις δὲ αὐτῶν φθορὰ ζωῆς (14:12; cf. Jer. 3:2, 9; Ezek. 23:8). To commit πορνεία is to live as the Gentiles. Πόρνοι refers to polytheists (*Leg. All.* 3:8) who are sons of harlots (Dt. 23:1f.; Philo, *Mig. Abr.*

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<sup>805</sup>In the LXX the πόρνεια word group is used to render the Hebrew זָנָה.

<sup>806</sup>Against this see B. Malina, "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication?" *NovT* 14 (1972), pp. 10-17. For a response to Malina see, J. Jenson, "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina." *NovT* (1978), pp. 161-184.

<sup>807</sup>See Hauck and Schulz, "πόρνεια κτλ." *TDNT*, 7:583.

69; *Mut.* 205).<sup>808</sup> Care was taken to prevent Jewish entanglement with Gentiles who were always suspected of such behavior (*Str.-B* 4, 353-414). **Πορνεία** is one of the core words found in the Jewish vice lists of the Diaspora.<sup>809</sup>

### **Ἄκαθαρσία**

**Ἄκαθαρσία** elaborates upon **πορνεία**.<sup>810</sup> It refers to religious and moral impurity.<sup>811</sup> The LXX translates the Hebrew **קִדְוָה** as **καθαρός** linking the term to ritual purity (*Gen.* 7:2; *Lev.* 4:12),<sup>812</sup> and employs **καθαρός** to render **קָדֵשׁ** connecting it to moral innocence.<sup>813</sup> Such purity is regarded as the norm in Israel's worship. **Ἄκαθαρσία** and the worship of Yahweh are mutually exclusive of one another (*Is.* 52:11; cf. *Rom.* 1:24-25; *2 Cor.* 12:21; *Gal.* 5:19; *Eph.* 5:3; *Rev.* 17:4).<sup>814</sup>

While religious and moral purity are concerns often directed to the

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<sup>808</sup>Ibid., 7:588.

<sup>809</sup>Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," pp. 1-12.

<sup>810</sup>A. Vögtle, Die Tugend-- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament: Exegetisch, religions-- und formgeschichtlich untersucht. NTA 16 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1936), pp. 223-225.

<sup>811</sup>Plato, *Laws* 4, 716e.

<sup>812</sup>H. Link and J. Schattenmann, "**καθαρός**." NIDNTT 3:103.

<sup>813</sup>F. Hauck, "**καθαρός**." TDNT, 3:417. Likewise **ἀκάθαρτος** and **ἀκαθαρσία** are rendered for **חַמְסִי** and **חַמְסָה**, 3:427.

<sup>814</sup>Link and Schattenmann, "**καθαρός**." 3:104.

Israelites,<sup>815</sup> a definite connection is made in Judaism between impurity and Gentile idolatry,<sup>816</sup> particularly when the term is used with *πορνεία*. There is no doubt that in the Pauline corpus, *ἀκαθαρσία* is used to refer to sexual impurity with definite pagan connotations (Rom. 1:24; 6:19; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:19; 5:3; 1 Th. 4:7). For the Jew, it was a proud thing to contrast his purity with the impurity of the Gentiles.<sup>817</sup> The term *ἀκαθαρσία* "denotes the immoral state of the pre-Christian life."<sup>818</sup>

### Πάθος

In Stoic thought the one who lets him or herself be controlled by his/her emotions can be described with the word *πάθος*. Here in Colossians and in Galatians 5:24 it refers to "shameful passion that leads to sexual excesses."<sup>819</sup> This is a very Jewish use of the term. Ps. Phocylides 194 states, *οὐ γὰρ ἔρως θεός ἐστι πάθος δ' αἰδήλον ἀπάντων*.<sup>820</sup> This is especially true when combined with *ἐπιθυμία* as in 3:5 and Galatians 4:24. The Testament of Joseph states,

For if anyone is subjected to the passion of desire and is enslaved by it,...even when he hears something good bearing on that passion he receives it as aiding his wicked desire (7:8).

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<sup>815</sup>See E. Schürer, History, 2:664.

<sup>816</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 166.

<sup>817</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 138, n. 12.

<sup>818</sup>Hauck, "*ἀκαθαρσία*," 3:428-429.

<sup>819</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 138.

<sup>820</sup>Quoted in Ibid.

## Ἐπιθυμία

While ἐπιθυμία was not always employed in negative fashion<sup>821</sup> (cf. 1 Th. 2:7; Phil. 1:23; Lk. 22:15), the use of the adjective κακὴν in 3:5 along with πάθος and the other vices clearly makes it, in this context, a negative term. In Numbers 11 and Genesis 39 ἐπιθυμία is the longing for sexual satisfaction outside of marriage and is referred to as sin.<sup>822</sup> In the Synoptic tradition and in the Pauline corpus the word often refers to sexual desire (Mt. 5:28; Rom. 1:24; 1 Th. 4:15).<sup>823</sup> In Judaism such desire is prohibited.<sup>824</sup> It is an offense against God who demands complete devotion from his people.

## Εἰδωλολατρία

In classical Greek usage εἶδωλον was not customarily used to refer to images of gods (except for Polybius 31, 3, 13–15).<sup>825</sup> In the LXX, however, the word is used to render Hebrew terms that refer exclusively to pagan gods and the idols used to portray them.<sup>826</sup> Such characteristics are always negative and become

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<sup>821</sup>In early classical literature the word was used in a neutral sense. See H. Schönweiss, NIDNTT, 1:456.

<sup>822</sup>F. Büchsel, "θυμός," 3:169.

<sup>823</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 166.

<sup>824</sup>H. Hübner, EWNT, 2:69.

<sup>825</sup>Noted by W. Mundle, "εἶδωλον." NIDNTT, 2:284.

<sup>826</sup>For example, צַבָּ, 1 Sam. 31:9; 1 Chr. 10:9; 2 Chr. 24:18; Ps. 115:4; 135:15; Is. 10:11; 48:5; Hos. 4:17; 8:4; 13:2; 14:9; Mic. 1:7; Zech. 13:2. פְּסִיל, 2 Chr. 33:22; 34:7; Is. 30:22. סֹסֶל, Ex. 20:4; Dt. 5:8. צֶלֶם, Num. 33:52; 2 Chr. 23:17. תְּרָפִים, Gen. 31:19, 34f. תְּרָפִים, 2 Chr. 14:5; Is. 27:9. גִּלְגָּלִים, Lev. 26:30; Dt. 29:17.

typical in the Jewish polemic against paganism (Is. 44:9-20; Wisd. 12-15).<sup>827</sup> Thus the usage of εἰδωλον and its cognates in the LXX is uniquely Jewish.

The New Testament continues this Jewish polemical usage. The worship of pagan gods is categorically condemned (1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9; 10:7, 14; 1 Pt. 4:3). In the Pauline corpus Gentile Christians were constantly being warned against εἰδωλολατρία not only because pagan temples and idol worship were everywhere, but also because many Gentiles thought it possible to combine the worship of several different cults without any problem.<sup>828</sup> It was therefore good to remind the Gentile Christians that by virtue of their faith in Christ they inherited the strict monotheism of Judaism.

Moreover, in Colossians 3:5 εἰδωλολατρία is connected to covetousness (τὴν πλεονεξίαν). In Jewish thinking "[t]he two sins stood together...and were condemned as part of the horrors of paganism."<sup>829</sup> "My children, love of money leads to idolatry, because once they are led astray by money, they designate as gods those who are not gods" (TJud. 19:1; cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:23-27; 1QpHab 6:1; 8:11, 12; 1QS 10:19, 11:2). Πλεονεξία puts the focus of life upon humanity and not God. The distinction between creator and creature is blurred, and idolatry is the result (cf. Mt. 6:24).<sup>830</sup> Covetousness lacks the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:10, 11; Eph. 5:3). While πλεονεξία can have broader

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<sup>827</sup>F. Büchsel, "εἰδωλον." *TDNT*, 2:377.

<sup>828</sup>N. Wright, *The New Testament*, p. 155.

<sup>829</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 183.

<sup>830</sup>F. Finkenrath, "πλεονεξία." *NIDNTT*, 1:138.

connotations than sexual immorality,<sup>831</sup> it can have sexual undertones (cf. 1 Th. 4:6).<sup>832</sup>

### Θυμός

Lohse translates this as "vehement rage"<sup>833</sup> and it is a virtual synonym for anger.<sup>834</sup> Josephus often uses the term to refer to anger<sup>835</sup> and the LXX uses the word to render the Hebrew terms **אָרָא, אַרְמָה, אִרְוָה, אַעַב.**<sup>836</sup> Ὀργη and θυμός are frequently used together as is the case in Colossians.<sup>837</sup>

## The Virtues in Colossians

### Σπλάγχνα Οίκτιρμοῦ

In Greek usage of the pre-Christian age an understanding of σπλάγχνα as

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<sup>831</sup>Jer. 22:17; Ezek. 22:27; Hab. 2:9.

<sup>832</sup>Plato and Aristotle used *πλεονεκτήω* to refer to sexual desire. O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 182.

<sup>833</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 140.

<sup>834</sup>Pokorný, *Colossians*, p. 168.

<sup>835</sup>*Ant.* 20, 108: ὀργη καὶ θυμός.

<sup>836</sup>Büchsel, "Θυμός." 3:167.

<sup>837</sup>There is almost no difference between the two in the LXX. In the New Testament θυμός may depict sudden outbursts of anger (Lk. 4:28; Acts 19:28), whereas ὀργή may be a more intentional anger, almost resentment. The presence of both terms in Colossians may reflect this nuance. See H. Hahn, "ὀργή" *NIDNTT*, p. 110.

heart-felt mercy, or simply mercy is not found.<sup>838</sup> It refers mainly to the entrails of sacrificial animals and later the term was used to refer to the sacrificial meal itself where the entrails were eaten (Aristophanes, *The Birds* 984). Although mercy is not part of the pre-Christian Greek usage, from the fifth century B.C. onward σπλάγχνα refers to the location of a person's natural passions-- anger, desire, love.<sup>839</sup> The notion of σπλάγχνα denoting mercy or compassion is found only in Jewish and Christian writings as we shall now see.<sup>840</sup>

The Jews too understood σπλάγχνα to refer to entrails (לֶבַב, Prov. 26:22), but in Proverbs 12:10 σπλάγχνα by itself, without οἰκτιρμός, refers to compassion. The use of the term in this way is more common in the later literature (2 Macc. 9:5; 4 Macc. 5:30; 10:8; 11:19; 15:23; Wisd. 10:5). It is probably the language of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs that resembles most closely the New Testament usage of the term.

In the last days God will send his compassion on the earth, and whenever he finds compassionate mercy (σπλάγχνα ἔλεους), in that person he will dwell (TZeb. 8:2; cf. 7:3, 8:6; TJos. 15:3).

It is only here in Testament of Zebulon that we find the genitive construction σπλάγχνα ἔλεους. This usage may provide the pattern for the genitive in Colossians 3:12.<sup>841</sup> This genitive pattern is also present in 1QS 1:22 (םימחך ריחך) and 1QS

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<sup>838</sup>H. Köster, "σπλάγχνον κτλ." TDNT, 7:549.

<sup>839</sup>H. Esser, "σπλάγχνα." NIDNTT, 2:599.

<sup>840</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 205, states, "In Hellenism there is no evidence to be found for the "bowels" as a seat of mercy before New Testament times."

<sup>841</sup>Barth, Colossians, p. 420.

2:1 (דַּחַן מִחַן).<sup>842</sup>

In the LXX *οικτιρμός* refers preeminently to God who acts compassionately in reference to his people Israel (Pss. 24:6; 50:1; 102:4; 144:9; cf. Neh. 9:19, 27, 28).<sup>843</sup> Connected to God's mercy is the notion that living according to God's will means that God's people will also have such mercy (2 Chr. 30:9; Ps. 106:46; 1QS 4:3. The New Testament picks up the same idea of God's compassion in Christ (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:3). The same is true of *σπλάγχνα*, particularly in reference to Christ's acts of compassion (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; Mk. 1:41; 9:22; Lk. 7:13; cf. Mt. 18:27; Lk. 10:33; 15:20).

### Χρηστός

While in classical thought *χρηστός* originally referred to something that was useful, the noun *χρηστότης* soon came to be used in the sense of moral excellence and perfection.<sup>844</sup> and can be translated "goodness" or "generosity."<sup>845</sup> In reference to persons the term can refer to someone who is worthy, honest and decent (Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 609f; Aristotle, *Poetics* 15, 1454a, 16ff.).<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>842</sup>Köster, "σπλάγχνον κτλ," 7:552, writes, "The translation of דַּחַן מִחַן by *σπλάγχνα*, which was not really introduced in the LXX but in later Jewish writings, and which retains especially the eschatological Jewish element in the Hebrew word is undoubtedly the direct presupposition of NT usage."

<sup>843</sup>Cf. also similar usage of the adjective *οικτιρμών*-- Ex. 34:6; 2 Chr. 30:9; Neh. 9:17, 31; Pss. 85:15; 102:8; 110:4; 144:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2).

<sup>844</sup>E. Beyreuther, "χρηστός." *NIDNTT*, 2:105.

<sup>845</sup>BAG, p. 886.

<sup>846</sup>K. Weiss, "χρηστός." *TDNT*, 9:483.

The LXX employs *χρηστός* in the sense of excellence in reference to things genuine (כוב, Jer. 24:2, 3, 5) and costly (קָדִי, Ezek. 27:22; 28:13 and כֶּבֶד, Dan. 2:32). It is also used to refer to God's goodness and the faithfulness he exhibits to his people (Pss. 25:7; 31:19; 65:11). Such faithfulness is displayed even in the midst of his peoples' sin (Jer. 33:11; also 24:2, 3, 5).<sup>847</sup> At Qumran the believer is to show the same kind of benevolence and kindness that he/she has received from God (1QS 2:24; 5:5, 25; 8:2). In reference to human beings, Philo and Josephus use *χρηστός* in much the same way as classical writers-- referring to kindness, gentleness, benevolence, and graciousness (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:284; 2, 104; *Somn.* 2:94; *Fug.* 96; also as a prominent virtue in *Virt.* 182. Josephus, *Ant.* 2:149; 9:133). *Χρηστότης* in Colossians is a direct outworking of *ἀγάπη*.<sup>848</sup> As God has acted graciously in Christ<sup>849</sup> toward sinners so Christians must act graciously toward others.

#### Ταπεινοφροσύνη

As has already been stated, *ταπεινοφροσύνη* was not considered a virtue among the Greeks.<sup>850</sup> It referred to weakness and humility which were clearly derogatory ideas (Homer. *Odyssey* 17:322f.; Plato, *Laws* 5:728e; 6:774c; 7:791d;

<sup>847</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>848</sup>Beyreuther, "*χρηστός*," p. 106. In Galatians *χρηστότης* is one of the primary gifts of the Spirit.

<sup>849</sup>For a fuller explication of what this means see H. Betz, "The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest (Mt. 11:28-30)." *JBL* 86 (1967): 10-24.

<sup>850</sup>J. Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief* HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder), 1968, pp. 105f.

Euripides *Andromache* 164 f.; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 5:1.5).<sup>851</sup> The Jewish historian Josephus, in writing for the Romans always uses the **ταπεινός** word group negatively (*War*, 4:319, 365, 494; 6:395; *Ant.* 5:115; 7:95; 10:11; 13:415), a radical departure from his own Jewish heritage likely because his audience in its Hellenistic context would have understood the terminology so. Rarely the word is used positively, but when employed so it does not refer to humility, but to obedience, particularly in reference to the laws of the gods.<sup>852</sup>

The New Testament background of **ταπεινοφροσύνη** is clearly to be found in Judaism. In Judaism **ταπεινοφροσύνη** is not shameful but something necessary in one's relationship to God. Grundmann states,

The different estimation of the word group **ταπεινός** in Greek literature and the Bible is governed by the different understanding of man. The Greek concept of free man leads to contempt for lack of freedom and subjection. This qualifies **ταπεινός** and its derivatives negatively. In Israel and post-exilic Judaism, however, man is controlled by God's action. Man must listen to God and obey Him, so that he can call himself God's servant. This gives to the group **ταπεινώ-ταπεινός-ταπεινώσις** a positive sense to the degree that it expresses the doing of acts by which man is set in right relation to God.<sup>853</sup>

**Ταπεινώ** and its cognates are used approximately 270 times in the LXX. It is used negatively in the sense of oppress or afflict (e.g. Gen. 34:2; Dt. 21:14; 2 Sam. 13:12-14; Ezek. 22:10f.), but for the most part this word group refers to what God has done to bring down the proud and haughty and lift up the poor

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<sup>851</sup>For the usage of **ταπεινοφροσύνη** and its cognates see Grundmann, *TDNT*, 8:1-5.

<sup>852</sup>H. Esser, "σπλάγχνα," 2:259.

<sup>853</sup>Grundmann, "ταπεινός," 8:11-12.

and lowly (e.g. 1 Sam. 1:11; 2:8; 7:13; 2 Sam. 22:5, 28; Pss. 10:17-18 [LXX 9:38-39]; 25:18 [24:18]; 31:7 [30:7]; 51:17 [50:17]; 113:7 [112:6]; Is. 2:9, 11, 17; 25:4ff.; 49:13; Amos 2:6-7; Zeph. 2:3; 3:12).<sup>854</sup>

In reference to human beings *ταπεινός* is used positively (Job 5:11; Prov. 3:34; 11:2; 15:33; cf. Eccles. 10:6; Sir. 7:11; 10:15ff.; 11:12f.) as necessary in life's experiences. The covenanters at Qumran referred to themselves as poor and lowly (*אביונים* and *עונים*) which expresses the proper attitude one should have before God.<sup>855</sup> In 1QS humility is enumerated with other virtues-- lovingkindness, truth, faithfulness and patience; it must be nurtured by the community, and they must admonish one another in humility, among other things (2:24; 4:3; 5:3, 25).<sup>856</sup> The same perspective can be seen in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (TBen. 5:5; TJud. 19:2; TJos. 10:2; 18:3). Philo too thinks of *ταπεινοφροσύνη* as a virtue (cf. *Quis Her.* 29, 268).

Jewish apocalyptic literature also expresses the same positive connotation of *ταπεινοφροσύνη*.

But even in this respect you will be praiseworthy before the Most High, because you humble yourself, as is becoming for you, and have not deemed yourself to be among the righteous in order to receive

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<sup>854</sup>Again there are many references. See Grundmann, "*ταπεινός*," 8:9-11; and Esser, "*ταπεινός*," 2:260-261.

<sup>855</sup>N. Kehl, "Erniedrigung und Erhöhung in Qumran und Kolossa," ZKT 91 (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), pp. 367 ff. "...his sin will be expiated by the spirit of uprightness and humility" (1QS 3:8; cf. also 1QH 17:22).

<sup>856</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 147, n. 105. is correct to point out that the virtues listed in 1QS 4: are not exactly parallel to Colossians 3:12, nor is there any image of "being clothed with the new humanity." Nevertheless he does admit that the parallel, though not exact, does suggest similarity of exhortation in late Judaism.

the greatest glory. For many miseries will affect those who inhabit the world in the last times, because they have walked in great pride. But...it is for you that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established, and wisdom is perfected beforehand (4 Ez. 8:48-52; 1 En. 96:4f., 8; TGad 5:3).

Humility brings with it in the last days reward and the assistance of God.<sup>857</sup>

The New Testament uses the ταπεινός word group positively as well. In the Gospels humility is clearly the way to exaltation (Mt. 11:29; Lk. 14:11; cf. Mk. 10:15). Paul too understands ταπεινοφροσύνη as a necessary virtue of the Christian disciple (Rom. 12:16; Col. 3:12) who is in imitation of his/her Lord, Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:1-11, particularly v. 3; cf. Acts 8:35).<sup>858</sup> Where Paul does use the terminology negatively it is always polemical (2 Cor. 10:1; and of course Col. 2:18, 23). All of this is in keeping with Judaism from the Old Testament to apocalyptic literature to Qumran. Here ταπεινοφροσύνη is not to be understood as weakness, as in a Greek context but as consideration of others and the surrender of one's privileges.<sup>859</sup>

### Πραΰτης

In classical Greek πραΰτης denotes that which is gentle and pleasant (Plato,

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<sup>857</sup>Esser, "σπλάγχνα," 2:261.

<sup>858</sup>For the connection between Christ's humility and exaltation in the New Testament and the Old Testament servant songs see H. Wolff, Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum, pp. 98f.

<sup>859</sup>Martin, Colossians, p. 11; cf. O'Brien, Colossians, p. 201.

*Laws*, 10:888a; Xenophon, *Symposium*, 1, 10).<sup>860</sup> Πραῦτης communicates high ideals and social virtue.<sup>861</sup>

Πραῦς is used 19 times in the LXX and translates Hebrew words that mean poor, humble, and meek (Job 24:4; Ps. 25:9; 34:2; 37:14; 149:4; Is. 32:7; Zeph. 2:3; 3:12; Zech. 9:9). Here in the LXX lack of pride and wealth is converted into a virtue (Sir. 1:27; 4:8; 10:28; Josephus, *Ant.* 19:328; 5:166-168; 6:7-9; 7:117-118). According to O'Brien *πραῦτης* was understood in Hellenistic thought as weakness and, therefore, not a virtue,<sup>862</sup> but Barth argued that *πραῦτης* was highly admired among the Greeks as a virtue contrasted with the vice of uncontrolled rage (*ἀγριότης*, cf. Plato, *Symp.* 197d).<sup>863</sup> This difference of view likely suggests that there was a difference of opinion in Hellenistic thinking as to whether *πραῦτης* should be considered a virtue or a vice.

Nevertheless *πραῦτης* is a virtue also to be displayed by the Christian. It is one of the concrete expressions of Christian love (Gal. 5:23; Col. 3:12-14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Pt. 3:4).<sup>864</sup> In the New Testament there is a divine source for such humility. In Colossians it is one of the results of being elected by God (3:12), in Galatians it is found in the work of the Holy Spirit (5:23), and in Ephesians it

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<sup>860</sup>F. Hauck and S. Schulz, "πραῦς, πραῦτης." *TDNT*, 6:645.

<sup>861</sup>W. Bauder, "πραῦς." *NIDNTT*, 2:257.

<sup>862</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 201.

<sup>863</sup>Barth, *Colossians*, p. 421. See also Lightfoot, *Colossians*, p. 219, who makes the same argument.

<sup>864</sup>Bauder, "πραῦς," p. 258.

is a sign of one's calling (4:2).<sup>865</sup>

### Μακροθυμία

Μακροθυμία in classical writings is rare and refers to "the prolonged restraint of *thymos*."<sup>866</sup> In the LXX μακροθυμία is found only in the wisdom literature and often marks an attribute of God who restrains himself when it comes to the judgment of his people--אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה and יְהוָה יִרְאֶה (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Pss. 86:15; 103:8; Joel 2:13; Nah. 1:3). As with πραΰτης it is the μακροθυμία of God that instructs God's people how to live. God is patient with his people. They must, therefore, be patient with others (Prov. 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:27; 19:11; Sir. 1:23; 5:11; 29:1ff.). In the wisdom literature μακροθυμία is given eminence over other virtues (Prov. 14:29; 16:32; 25:15).<sup>867</sup> As with the other virtues already discussed μακροθυμία has a divine origin. Horst states that μακροθυμία "is no mere endurance, much less feeble indulgence, but a specifically spiritual force which has its source in the δόξα θεοῦ."<sup>868</sup>

### Some Conclusions on the Vices and Virtues

As we proceed more deeply into the matter of integration, several conclusions can be drawn in reference to the vices and virtues themselves in

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<sup>865</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>866</sup>Falkenroth, U. and C. Brown, "μακροθυμία." NIDNTT, 2:769.

<sup>867</sup>Ibid.

<sup>868</sup>J. Horst, "μακροθυμία." TDNT, 4:384.

Colossians. These conclusions are important as the argument for integration continues to progress.

First, some of the vices and virtues in Colossians do make sense in a Hellenistic context. The Stoics viewed πάθος as a vice. As in the New Testament ἐπιθυμία in Hellenism is understood both positively and negatively. The Greeks were also familiar with such virtues as χρηστότης and πραΰτης. And even though μακροθυμία is rare in classical usage it was not unknown. Not all of the vices and virtues, however, make sense in a Greek context. This leads to the second conclusion.

Some of the vices and virtues in Colossians need a Jewish context to make sense. Πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, and εἰδωλολατρία used as vices make sense only in Judaism. Σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, though not unknown in Hellenistic circles, did not carry the notion of heartfelt compassion as it did in Jewish writings. Very importantly ταπεινοφροσύνη as a virtue was foreign to classical thinking. Ταπεινοφροσύνη as a virtue is clearly Jewish.

Third, all the vices and virtues in Colossians do make sense in a Jewish context. Every vice and virtue in Colossians can be found in the writings of Judaism. This does not mean, for example, that πάθος does not carry Stoic connotations in Colossians, but certainly πάθος would also have made sense to a Jew living in the first century. It seems that given the necessary Jewish nature of some of this terminology, and that every term listed can fit into Judaism quite well, we have a further indication of the Jewish nature of this letter.

Fourth, the vices in Colossians highlight a Jewish perspective on the Gentile

way of life with its emphasis on idolatry and immorality. The Colossians are reminded that even though they are not required to observe the badges of identity that would have marked them off as Jewish and therefore as God's chosen, they cannot return to a Gentile way of life so abhorrent to Jewish moral scruples.

Fifth, the Colossians are to put on the virtues as a consequence of "sharing in the inheritance of the saints in the light" (1:12). The virtues listed reveal that the writers' Jewish perspective on walking "worthy of the Lord" (1:10). This Paul and Timothy would have shared in common with the philosophers.

These conclusions also raise the very important question of whether or not the ethical lists of Colossians are tailored to fit the context of the argument or whether they simply reflect "the conventional morality of the time."<sup>869</sup> If the lists are so tailored this will allow a deeper discussion of the place of the lists in the argument of Colossians.

#### The Ethical Lists and Conventional Morality

More than a few scholars have argued that there is nothing distinctive about the ethical lists of the New Testament. To quote Betz again, they "represent the conventional morality of the time."<sup>870</sup> It is recognized that the

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<sup>869</sup>Betz, Galatians, p. 282.

<sup>870</sup>Ibid; cf. J. T. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 68-81. For this perspective on Colossians see, Lohse, Colossians, p. 136: "The exhortations follow traditional forms and sequences of enumeration and do not at all refer to specific problems in the community. However, references and flashbacks to the theme of the whole letter are used to interpret

catalogs in the New Testament do differ in length and sequence of elements, but the differences present, so some argue, do not suggest an attempt by the writers to tailor the lists to fit the current situation addressed in each letter.<sup>871</sup> This is the position taken not only in reference to the virtue and vice lists, but the entire paraenesis as well.<sup>872</sup>

The pattern of the list is conventional. Ethical catalogues are common in non-Jewish<sup>873</sup> and Jewish documents.<sup>874</sup> The content of the lists, however, cannot be adequately described as conventional.<sup>875</sup> The distinctive terminology of each

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this traditional exhortatory material." I find this comment to be flawed for two reasons: First, Lohse nowhere gives any argument to support his assertion that the lists "follow traditional...sequences of enumeration." Second, how is it that "references and flashbacks to the theme of the whole letter" in this passage do not indicate that this material is more than expressive of the conventional morality of the time? If indeed connections are being made in 3:5-17 to the previous argument, one should at the very least suspect that this material, including the vice and virtue terminology, has been shaped to some extent by the writer. If indeed the passage is related to the whole of the letter, then it seems reasonable to think that these exhortations do have something to do with the specific problems faced by the Colossians.

<sup>871</sup>In reference to Galatians Betz states that the vices are nothing more than a "chaotic assemblage of concepts." Galatians, p. 283.

<sup>872</sup>See above n. 752.

<sup>873</sup>See A. Malherbe, Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 138-141.

<sup>874</sup>Wisd. 14:25-26; 4 Macc. 1:26-27; 2:15; 1QS 4:9-11; Philo, *Sacr.* 32; 2 En. 10:4-5.

<sup>875</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 302. Malherbe, Moral Exhortation, p. 138, points out that the Hellenistic catalogs also differed somewhat according to the context of the writing or the values of the author (cf. Plato, *Laws*, 12:963c; *Republic*, 4:427E; 7.536A; Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1:6.9.1362b; 1:9.5-17.1366b; Diogenes Laertius, 7:110-116; Seneca, *De brevitate vitae*, 10:2-4; 22:11; Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2:8.23; 14:8; 16.14; 16:41; 16:45; 18:28; 19:19; 19:26; 22:20; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 4:7.16-8.22;

list is probably best explained as elements addressing a specific situation.<sup>876</sup>

Three particular elements in the context of Colossians gives the ethical lists a more than conventional appearance.

First, the ethical lists need to be understood in the context of the apocalyptic orientation of this entire passage (cf. especially 3:4 and 6). The New Testament lists in the other Pauline letters are also connected to this eschatological hope (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5).

The context of the moral way of life in the lists is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the hope of being united with him.<sup>877</sup> So then the vice and virtue lists become concrete exhortations to the Colossians to throw off the old man that is wasting away and to put on the new man that is being restored to "its original Adamic state" (3:9, 10).<sup>878</sup> The vices are the practices of the old man, τὰ ἐπι τῆς γῆς (cf. 2:18, 23), and the virtue reflect the life of the new humanity, τὰ ἄνω (3:2, 10-11). Earlier Paul has stated that cosmology has a christological orientation (1:15, 20), and now Christ is declared as the orientation for the moral life.

Second, in relation to the previous point, the lists are clearly adjusted to the Christian context. There are no classical Greek virtues such as rationality or

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Dio Chrysostom, *Orations*, 2:75; 3:39-41; 8:8; 49:9; 66:1; 6:6, 9; and Plutarch, *De liberis educandis*, 12B; *De tranquillitate animi*, 465D, 468A; *Ad principem ineruditum*, 782F; *De sera numinis vindicta*, 556B.

<sup>876</sup>Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 213.

<sup>877</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p.170.

<sup>878</sup>Lincoln, *Paradise*, p. 126.

moderation presented as the basis of moral behavior. Rather it is *ἀγάπη* which is emphasized because it reflects God's love.<sup>879</sup> This stands in clear contrast to Aristotle. MacIntyre notes,

For he [Aristotle] has to maintain that men characteristically act rationally, and this implies the concept of human action is such that unless a piece of behavior fulfills some elementary criterion of rationality, it does not count as an action.<sup>880</sup>

That any mention of rationality in connection to the virtues is absent in Colossians and elsewhere in the New Testament is quite striking from the Aristotelian perspective.

As argued in the first half of the chapter, the ethical lists in Colossians represent one form of a less than rigid catachetical tradition. Vices such as *ειδωλολατρία* (absent from Greek vice lists<sup>881</sup>) and virtues such as *ἀγάπη* (quite uncommon in Greek virtue lists) occur frequently in the different New Testament lists suggesting some uniquely Christian consensus in the early catachesis (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Th. 4:3-6).<sup>882</sup> Perhaps most significant of all is that the vice and virtue lists in Colossians concern in general the unity of the church.<sup>883</sup> The vices highlight divisiveness and the virtues emphasize the unity

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<sup>879</sup>See especially Vögtle Lasterkatalog, p. 165ff.

<sup>880</sup>A. MacIntyre, A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century (New York: Collier Books, 1966), p. 73.

<sup>881</sup>See Pokorný, Colossians, p. 164.

<sup>882</sup>For a comparison of the New Testament lists see Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, pp. 54-65.

<sup>883</sup>Wolter, Kolosser, p. 174.

the Colossians ought to have as they participate in the resurrected life.<sup>884</sup> The exhortations in Colossians are made in the second person plural<sup>885</sup> suggesting these admonitions are not exhortations concerned primarily with private morality (as if there is such a thing), but are injunctions prohibiting the kind of activity that ruptures the community, abandoning the kind of unity reflected in the resurrection life. Here again we have an eschatological perspective; for it is the resurrected Christ that will bring all of creation into harmony with God (1:20). Therefore the Colossians are to reflect that harmony in the way they live.

This Christian aspect of the ethical lists and the emphasis on unity in Colossians leads to the third claim, already indicated: the ethical catalogs in Colossians are Jewish in tone. The mention of idolatry and covetousness and humility as a virtue<sup>886</sup> as well as the similarities between Qumran and other Jewish literature have already been demonstrated. Many of the vices listed would have been associated with the Gentile lifestyle, particularly sexual immorality. These vices belonged "to the stock-in-trade of Jewish polemic against paganism...."<sup>887</sup> Any Jewish Christian reading the vice list in Colossians would associate several of the terms previously mentioned with a Gentile way of life. The vice list has been tailored to remind the Gentile Christians at Colossae of

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<sup>884</sup>The theme of unity is also central to the paraenesis in Galatians. See B. Brinsmead, Galatians, pp. 167-168 and Wright, Colossians, p. 133.

<sup>885</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Material, p. 53.

<sup>886</sup>See Schrage, konkreten Einzelgebote, pp. 187-210.

<sup>887</sup>Bruce, Galatians, p. 250.

this way of life in which they once walked (cf. 1:21-22 and 3:7). Why? Precisely to highlight the claim that in Christ Jews and Gentiles stand on equal footing in the covenant. Paul not only rejects the notion that the Gentiles must live as Jews because the badges of Jewish ethnic identity have been deemed obsolete with the coming of Christ,<sup>888</sup> he also uses the vice list to rebuff the idea that the Gentiles can still live as Gentiles. The vice list contains intimations of the Old Testament polemic against idolatry.<sup>889</sup> Christ has freed the Jewish believer to live in fellowship with the Gentile believer without the latter having to conform to the identity markers that set one apart ethnically as Jewish, as one who shared in the promises of the covenant. For the Gentile that has already taken place in Christ. Christ has also freed the Gentile believer from the lifestyle that marks one as Gentile. In so doing he frees the Gentiles from second-class status in the community of faith, and he frees the Jews to live equally in the community of faith with Gentile believers, as they are to practice no longer the kind of immorality that forced the Jew to live separately. The Christian moral life does not consist in living as a Jew or as a Gentile, but as a Christian. In 3:11 Paul emphatically repudiates the idea that one group has any advantage over another in Christ.

A critical note of caution is necessary here. Nowhere in Colossians, Galatians, nor in any other letters does Paul ever suggest that Jewish Christians must

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<sup>888</sup>Martin, Colossians, p. 108.

<sup>889</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, p. 63, and Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," p. 4.

abandon the law and be rid of their Jewish practices. He only argues that the Gentile Christians must not be conformed to them. Colossians and Galatians are concerned, first and foremost, with the status of the Gentile believers in the community of faith, not whether Jewish believers retain their Jewish practices.

The emphasis on Gentile vices and the virtues which promote unity cannot simply be attributed to a general reiteration of traditional material unconnected to the context of the epistle. These lists are indeed tailored to speak to the situation in Colossae. It is not simply traditional material that has been "uncritically absorbed into Paul's ethics."<sup>890</sup> This does not mean that these terms could not be used in a general sense, but the virtues and vices used and the ones omitted were indeed determined, in part, by the current situation.

It has been noted that the virtue lists in Hellenistic Judaism were often used apologetically to demonstrate that what the Torah required was in harmony with the virtues treasured in the Hellenistic world (4 Macc. 1:19; Philo, *Op.* 73; Josephus, *Ap.* 2:170-171).<sup>891</sup> The concrete moral codes of Judaism were very attractive to many Gentiles (Josephus, *Ap.* 2.281-282).<sup>892</sup> Thus in Hellenistic

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<sup>890</sup>Barclay, Obeying the Truth, p. 222.

<sup>891</sup>See *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>892</sup>Meeks, The Moral World of the First Christians (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), p. 102. Josephus writes, "Our earliest imitators were the Greek philosophers, who, though ostensibly observing the laws of their own countries, yet in their conduct and philosophy were Moses' disciples...advocating the simple life and friendly communion between man and man. But that is not all. The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter

Judaism the virtue lists were used as a bridge to promote its morality to the Gentiles, often employing the four cardinal virtues (e.g. Wisd. 8:7; 4 Macc. 1:19; Philo *Ebr.* 23; Josephus, *Ap.* 2:170-171). The significance of this is that in contrast Paul's use of such a list does not promote the Torah, but exactly the opposite-- to let the Colossians know that the new life in Christ is sufficient and they need not resort to the Torah, specifically to the ethnic badges of identity for concrete moral guidance. Their lives are to exhibit life with the risen Christ. This leads us to another significant point.

#### A Return to the Israel Motif/The "New Perspective"

The Jewish nature of this material and the emphasis on Christ's sufficiency makes it possible for Paul to appeal to terminology in the Old Testament which clearly refers to Israel, and apply it to Christ and the church. This has already been discussed in chapter 3, and now this terminology is linked to the paraenesis in verse 12 with the phrase, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι (cf. Num 11:28; Ps. 104:43; Ps. 105:5, 23; Is. 5:1; 43:20; 65:9, 15, 23; Jer. 3:19; Hos. 2:23).<sup>893</sup> Here we have language which can only be understood in light of God's "Old Testament covenant bond"<sup>894</sup> with Israel. In the New Testament ἐκλεκτός,<sup>895</sup> ἅγιος, and

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of food are not observed."

<sup>893</sup>Lightfoot, Colossians, p. 219. He writes, "All three terms ἐκλεκτοὶ, ἅγιοι, ἠγαπημένοι, are transferred from the Old Covenant to the New, from the Israel after the flesh to the Israel after the Spirit."

<sup>894</sup>Barth, Colossians, p. 418.

ἀγαπητός not only refer to the church but to Christ himself (Mt. 3:17; Jn. 6:69; Acts 4:27, 30; Eph. 1:6; 1 Pt. 2:4, 6), and this same connectedness between Christ and the church is clearly present throughout Colossians (cf. 1:12; 15–20; 22; 26, 27; 2:2–5, 6–7, 9–10). In the paraenesis Paul brings his argument from theological affirmation to the moral life. As Israel was loved and chosen by God to be his holy people, so the church is chosen by God to be his holy people (Dt. 4:37; 7:7; Ps. 33:12).<sup>896</sup>

Christ embodies what Israel was to be, and since the Colossians participate in Christ's life, who embodies Torah and, therefore, wisdom, they are to embody all that Christ is. The claims made of Israel in the Old Testament are claims made of the church here in Colossians. The reconciling work of Christ is portrayed as the final Exodus from slavery.<sup>897</sup> As God's elect the Colossians are to wear the virtues exhibited by Christ in his life, virtues attributed to God in the Old Testament.<sup>898</sup> It is by this that the Colossians are to orient their entire lives. As God's chosen these are their obligations.

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<sup>895</sup>Lohmeyer, Kolosser, pp. 144–145, argues that ἐκλεκτός refers to angels. This is highly unlikely. The term is best understood in the context of the entire phrase, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι. This language is so clearly reminiscent of Israel in the Old Testament, that one would be hard pressed to argue for a different interpretation.

<sup>896</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 146. See Wolter, Kolosser, p. 184, who connects this "chosenness" to the phrase "Israel of God" (cf. Gal. 6:16). For a discussion of the phrase Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ see Dunn, The Partings of the Ways, pp. 140–162; R. Hays, Echoes of Scripture, pp. 96–97; Wright, Climax, p. 250.

<sup>897</sup>See above pp. 208–212.

<sup>898</sup>Gnilka, Kolosserbrief, pp. 195–196.

This is what it means to be "clothed with the new man." The notion may come from some loose catechetical traditions which had as its source Genesis 1:26f.<sup>899</sup> Here is a communal reference to the new humanity in Christ,<sup>900</sup> disclosing the theme of Christ as the second Adam.<sup>901</sup> This theme is always picked up by Paul in reference to Christ as risen and exalted (1 Cor. 15:21f; 15:45; also Rom. 5:12-21, though not solely referring to Christ as risen and exalted).<sup>902</sup> The resurrection marks the beginning of this new<sup>903</sup> humanity.<sup>904</sup> This new humanity is the renewal of creation, marred by sin, into what God intended for creation all along. Since the Colossians participate in Christ's resurrection, they are to live as that renewed humanity (cf. Rom. 7:22; 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:24).

So the Colossians are told to live as the people of God precisely because they are the people of God. They need to seek for nothing else in order to obtain such status. Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision are of no consequence. They can live as the people of God as Gentiles by virtue of Christ.

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<sup>899</sup>J. Jervell, Imago Dei, p. 232.

<sup>900</sup>O'Brien, Colossians, p. 190.

<sup>901</sup>Hooker, "Were there False Teachers in Colossae?" p. 328.

<sup>902</sup>Dunn, Christology, p. 107.

<sup>903</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 142, n. 61, observes that νεός in verse 10 is probably used stylistically in reference to τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον.

<sup>904</sup>Ibid., p. 108. Cf. Jervell, Imago Dei, pp. 258-260; Stanley, Christ's Resurrection, pp. 125ff. On the notion of "new man" see, Harrisville, "The Concept of Newness", pp. 69-79; J. Behm "νεός." 4:898-901.

The specifics of being clothed with the new life, of living as "God's chosen," are highlighted further in 3:12-17, in which the crowning point of the Christian life of virtue is love.

### The Clothing of the New Humanity

It is in 3:12-17 that Colossians reflects the last two aspects of the Holiness Code in Leviticus 17-26-- the call to holiness and love for one another. As stated earlier I am not suggesting that Paul is intentionally attempting to model his paraenesis after the Holiness Code, but that the Holiness Code and the paraenesis of Colossians both reflect a wider Jewish pattern, both of which echo the same basic themes.

At this point it should be noted that the paraenesis of Colossians bears some striking similarities with the paraenesis of Galatians,<sup>905</sup> which may suggest not only some similarity of context between the two letters, but it may also reflect a wider problem facing the earliest Christian communities. In Galatians the "law of Christ" (6:2) refers to love and more specifically Jesus' paradigmatic self-giving.<sup>906</sup> It is the kind of love reflected in the teachings of Jesus and the event of his death and resurrection.<sup>907</sup> In Colossians similar ideas are reflected.

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<sup>905</sup>Aletti, Colossians, p. 236.

<sup>906</sup>R. Hays, "Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ." CBQ 49 (1987), p. 274; Dunn Galatians. pp. 323-324.

<sup>907</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 232, suggests that in this passage we may have an "echo of the Jesus tradition." See also Schrage, Ethics, p. 210; Wolter, Kolossier, p. 186.

The Colossians participate in Christ's death and resurrection, and so everything they do is to be done "in the Lord" and "as the Lord"<sup>908</sup> has also done. The Colossians are to forgive one another because Christ has forgiven them (3:13). They are to reflect in their lives the virtues embodied in Christ; the very same qualities ascribed to God-- οίκτιρμός, χρηστότης and μακροθυμία. A single act of forgiveness is not in mind here, but a forgiving way of life.<sup>909</sup> The same kind of daily practice of forgiveness is also in view in Galatians 6:1.<sup>910</sup> The daily practice of forgiveness means that the Colossians must bear with one another (3:13).

Here we find similarity of perspective between Galatians, Colossians, and Judaism. In Judaism God's electing grace in choosing Israel meant, for Israel, an obedient response to the law. The Galatians and the Colossians who are chosen in Christ must too respond in certain ways explicated in the paraenesis of the two letters. Who they are and how they live are inseparable.

The imperatival participles<sup>911</sup> in verse 13 (ἀνεχόμενοι and χαρισζόμενοι) are admonitions tied to the virtues to be put on in 3:12.<sup>912</sup> These are virtues

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<sup>908</sup>On the textual difficulty with κύριος in 3:13 see Metzger, Textual Commentary, p. 625.

<sup>909</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 207.

<sup>910</sup>See H. Schlier, "ἀνέχομαι." TDNT, 1:359f.

<sup>911</sup>On the use of the participle and the imperative see Moulton, A Grammar, pp. 180-183; D. Daube, "Participle and Imperative in 1 Peter." Appended note in E. Selwyn, The First Epistle of Peter (London: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 467-488; Lightfoot, Colossians, pp. 214-215; Lohse, Colossians, p. 141.

<sup>912</sup>Lohmeyer, Kolosser, p. 146.

concerned primarily with unity in the community.<sup>913</sup> They are virtues reminiscent of the life of Christ,<sup>914</sup> and it is important to remind the Colossians of Christ's life because they are in Christ and they participate in him. As they have put on Christ they are to live as Christ. It is a life of selflessness where personal interests are not to be the center of one's life.

The language of being clothed with these virtues is Jewish (referring to a spiritual change).<sup>915</sup> Martin proposes that the language of taking off and putting on garments could be a response to the Cynic conversion ritual where one took off the old cultural garments and put on the Cynic cloak.<sup>916</sup> There is nothing in the surrounding context of 3:11, however, that would support such a claim. Instead, the terminology of 3:12 (ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι) suggests a Jewish orientation to the notion of "putting on," reflecting once again a Jewish moral context.<sup>917</sup> Nevertheless, there is something decisively Christian about the context in which these virtues thrive. This does not mean that these virtues were

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<sup>913</sup>W. Meeks, "In One Body: The Unity of Humankind in Colossians and Ephesians." in God's Christ and His People eds., J. Jervell and W. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), p. 214. See also Hooker, "Were there False Teachers in Colossae?" p. 329.

<sup>914</sup>R. Yates, "The Christian Way of Life: The Paraenetic Material in Colossians 3:1-4:6." EQ 63 (1991): 245.

<sup>915</sup>Cf. Is. 61:10; Zech. 3:3-4.

<sup>916</sup>Martin, Philosophy and Empty Deceit, p. 194.

<sup>917</sup>W. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 138, rejects this language as a metaphor linked to the mysteries and argues that the whole range of metaphors of clothing used in Judaism was so familiar in the conventional language of Judaism, that the early Christians could have appropriated this language quite easily.

unknown outside of a Christian framework, as already mentioned, but the Christian reorientation indicated by "in the Lord" provided a perspective not possible in a Hellenistic or Jewish context. It reorients one's life to virtues not in Greek philosophy (ταπεινοφροσύνη). It makes it possible for the Gentiles to be the people of God without the distinctive marks of Judaism. "The Christian community lives by reflecting in its life the gospel which it proclaims. The gospel is formulated in 3:13b: The Lord has forgiven you."<sup>918</sup> In Colossians the willingness to forgive and be forgiven is critical to participation in the resurrection life. "Christ's activity" is "the basis for his [Paul's] admonition."<sup>919</sup> Christ's work of reconciliation described in the first chapter now appears in the form of moral command. The believers' lives are shaped by their participation in Christ and by his example.

Verses 12-13 crescendo with the command in 3:14: ἐπὶ πάνσιν δὲ τούτοισι τὴν ἀγάπην. As in Galatians love is the central virtue or grace<sup>920</sup> of the Christian

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<sup>918</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 171.

<sup>919</sup>Schweizer, Colossians, p. 207.

<sup>920</sup>The place of forgiveness in this material raises the question as to whether these "virtues" listed in Colossians should more properly referred to as "graces." While there is clearly an element of something unmerited here, the Colossians are told to "put on" these things, suggesting action on their part, which would be in keeping with the classical idea that the virtues are to be acquired. Perhaps St. Augustine's famous pronouncement, "He who made us without ourselves will not save us without ourselves" (Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis-- Quoted in J. Wesley, "The General Spread of the Gospel." Wesley's Works [Peabody: Hendrickson, reprint, 1984], 2:281.)-- is helpful in thinking about the relationship between what God has done and what we must do in the process of salvation. It seems to me, therefore, that both terms, grace and virtue, have a place here. Perhaps they can be referred to as virtues of grace.

life.<sup>921</sup> As love binds together all the good dispositions of character, so it binds the community in "perfect harmony."<sup>922</sup> Again this love stands not simply as an abstract, sentimental notion. It is the love which the Colossians have experienced by virtue of their participation in Christ, and which was exemplified in the life and death of Christ. It is the kind of love which can only be practiced in the church which has died to the old order and has been resurrected to participate in the new.<sup>923</sup> Love is the bond of unity between Jews and Gentiles.

Love is the supreme Christian virtue of grace<sup>924</sup> as suggested in the phrase ἐπὶ πάντιν δὲ τούτοις, which may refer to the outer garment, which holds all the other garments in place.<sup>925</sup> Love leads to peace. Love is the cardinal virtue and peace is the eschatological goal.<sup>926</sup> But again it is important to notice that we do not simply have peace in general, but the "peace of Christ"-- more participatory

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<sup>921</sup>Vögtle, Lasterkataloge, pp. 158ff., and Schrage, Ethics, pp. 249ff. Lohse, Colossians, p. 147, writes, "All these virtues are the fruit of the Spirit. And in putting them on, the renewal comes to light which the new man, created by God, both experiences and realizes."

<sup>922</sup>Contrast Epictetus 208a where friendship is judged as the σύνδεσμος πασῶν τῶν ἀρετῶν.

<sup>923</sup>Aletti, Colossiens, p. 232. "L'Eglise est sans aucun doute le lieu où chaque croyant se renouvelle sans cesse à l'image de son créateur, dans la mesure où s'y donnent à vivre des relations nouvelles entre hommes nouveaux."

<sup>924</sup>See Käsemann, Leib Christi, p. 151. Against this view see Dibelius-Greeven, Kolosser, p. 43.

<sup>925</sup>Moule, Colossians, p. 123.

<sup>926</sup>Pokorný, Colossians, p. 173. The genitive here is not qualitative, but telic. See E. Larsson, Christus als Vorbild: Eine Untersuchung zu den paulinischen Tauf-- und Eikontexten ASNU 23 (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1962), p. 221.

language.<sup>927</sup>

It is God's will that his people live in peace and harmony. This is not the kind of peace that can be found simply through dialogue and mutual understanding; for it is the "peace of Christ." It is in Christ that this peace is possible and finds concrete expression. Those distinctions and lifestyles that stand in the way of this peace have been abolished and can no longer be tolerated. It is Christ's love embodied in his life, death and resurrection, and his teaching which gives expression to the kind of peace that is to reign in the midst of the congregation. The believers in Colossae, even though they are Gentiles, participate in this unity which is God's new creation. Therefore everything they do (πάν ὃ τι ἐὰν)<sup>928</sup> should be done, not according to the Torah, but ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (1 Cor. 5:4; 6:11; Phil 2:10), a phrase which originates in primitive Christianity<sup>929</sup> and likely connected to the Hebrew שְׁמִי.<sup>930</sup> As wisdom found a home in Israel (Sir. 24:8), so the word of Christ should be at home in the church.<sup>931</sup> In all things they are to give thanks to God as David

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<sup>927</sup>That the subject of worship is the focus of 3:16-17 may suggest that there was some discord in the worship of the gathered community in Colossae. This will be examined more fully in the next chapter on the *Haustafel*.

<sup>928</sup>This is a Semitic expression. See K. Beyer, Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament 1, 1. SUNT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 169.

<sup>929</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 152.

<sup>930</sup>G. Dellling, Die Zueigung des Heils in der Taufe (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), p. 54.

<sup>931</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 150.

himself did according to Sirach.<sup>932</sup>

### Conclusion

Several things have come to light in this discussion of the ethical lists and their place in the argument of Colossians.

First, the ethical lists do not simply represent the conventional morality of the time, as some scholars have suggested. The pattern of the lists is certainly conventional (though the pattern was also known in Judaism), but not the content. While the content is not completely unique to a Christian context, it is not just appropriated either.<sup>933</sup> I believe the same is true of Colossians. That there are similarities between the paraenesis of Colossians and Galatians, as well as similarities in the argument proper of both letters, is the result of the integration of the argument of both letters, a similar problem to be addressed, and it is reflective of a wider problem in the early church, of which Colossians and Galatians are only two expressions.

Second, the ethical lists give concrete expression to the exhortation to put off the old man and be clothed with the new, to be rid of the things of the earth and set one's mind on the things above. They are oriented to fit a Christian context as their very way of life. Everything, including their worship, is to be done *ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ* (3:17). This reflects Paul's earlier mention of his

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<sup>932</sup> ἐν παντι ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ [David] ἔδωκεν ἐξομολόγησιν ἀγίῳ ὑψίστῳ ἡματι δόξης (47:8).

<sup>933</sup> Hays, "Christology and Ethics," p. 270. "This reading imputes--unintentionally, no doubt-- a peculiar bathos to Paul's position: the eschatological spirit of God is given as a gift of grace to the nations through the death of God's Son on the cross in order to enable Christ's people to live in accordance with the conventional standards of cultured persons! Is it conceivable that Paul held such a view?"

prayers for the Colossians so that they may walk *ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου* (1:10). Such a walk can only be accomplished in all wisdom (3:16). Thus the sufficiency of Christ, the wisdom of God, is all the Colossians need. The ethical lists are bound up with the person and work of the resurrected Christ. The hallmark of the Christian life of virtue, is not to be found in the cardinal virtues of classical Greece, but in love and forgiveness (3:13-14). As Christ has forgiven them (cf. 1:14) so must the Colossians forgive one another. Here again the participationist motif is highlighted. To participate in the resurrection of Christ means that the believer must love "above all" (3:14). The goal of the Christian moral life is the *imitatio Christi*. The virtues listed are reminiscent of the life of Christ and his teaching, and the vices run contrary to that life.

Third, the ethical lists likely reflect a wider and unfixed catechetical tradition based on Judaism, where the concern expressed in the virtue list is the unity of the church, and where the concern stated in the list of vices is mainly sexual immorality and idolatry-- vices that will destroy the unity of the community. The concern over sexual immorality and idolatry is clearly Jewish in character and would have been of concern to Jews in their relationship with Gentiles in the church. As Christ has created a new people where Gentiles did not have to live as Jews, that is, take on the badges of Jewish ethnic identity, so Christ created the possibility that Gentiles need no longer practice the immorality and idolatry specifically associated with the Gentile way of life.<sup>934</sup> To

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<sup>934</sup>The vice list would not only have served to reprove the Colossians who were practicing such things, it would have also reminded them of their former way of life (cf. 1:21-22). See B. Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, p.

insist that the Gentiles take up the yoke of the law undermined the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. In addition, the Gentile way of life also undermined such unity, as it by necessity forced Jewish believers to withdraw from the community, because Jews rightly could not tolerate such practices.

Thus the ethical lists in Colossians are not entirely beside the point in reference to the argument. This discussion comes under the theme of the new life in Christ in which all believers participate, Jew and Gentile. Such unity in Christ has created a community where there are no social or ethnic distinctions to be made. Love and forgiveness are essential to this unity.<sup>935</sup>

Fourth, the Jewish nature of the entire letter also allows Paul to draw on Jewish themes and imagery to argue his case. Of particular note is the Old Testament imagery of Israel now applied in Colossians to the church. The church made up of Jews and Gentiles by faith are ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι (3:12; cf. 1:12). The church is the fulfillment of God's plan for creation (cf. 1:18). Yet, it is a plan that cannot be understood apart from his plan for Israel and in Jesus.<sup>936</sup> The paraenesis of Colossians remains steeped in a Jewish context and the Colossians are admonished to live in that moral context because they are the people of God in Christ.

Thus the Colossians as God's new creation, the church, whose foundation is

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<sup>935</sup>See Barclay, Obeying the Truth, pp. 168-169, whose discussion of the place of the vices and virtues in Galatians runs along some similar lines.

<sup>936</sup>Hays, Echoes of Scripture, pp. 96-97.

the story of Israel defined through Jesus, must in their daily walk live in such a way that makes the new creation a reality. As Israel obeyed Torah in response to God's grace, so too should the Colossians walk in response to God's gracious choice in Christ. This should be reflected in their moral lives as God's people, Jew and Gentile.<sup>937</sup> Colossians 3:12, then, can be viewed not only as a kind of crescendo to the paraenesis, it represents a full circle return to the Colossians' identity, affirmed at the beginning of the letter in 1:12 and 13, maintained throughout the letter in synthesis with admonishments to the Colossians of living in that identity (1:9-10; 21-23; 27-28; 2:2-3, 6-7; 2:20-23), moving to more specific moral exhortation in 3:1-11, with a crescendo and summation once more connecting the Colossians' identity as God's elect with how they are to live as God's elect beginning in 3:12 and concluding in 3:17. This integrated perspective would have been shared by the Colossian philosophers.

This new humanity makes obsolete all the distinctions in the Jewish and Gentile worlds so obsessed with national and racial differences. The church, however, is in Christ and can take no notice of such differences. This new humanity is the renewal of the image of the creator; not merely in the image of God the Father, but of God found in Christ in whom all things were created (1:15-16). As Schrage rightly notes, Colossians presents a "christology of creation."<sup>938</sup> Such eschatological participation is not simply an abstract theological affirmation. It is a way of life and the Colossians are encouraged to

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<sup>937</sup>Martin, The Church's Lord, p. 115.

<sup>938</sup>Schrage, Ethics, p. 248. Cf. also O'Donovan, Resurrection, p. 22.

walk in it. The ethical lists are eschatologically oriented and therefore theologically oriented. They are rooted in the eschatological hope-- the new creation brought into reality in the resurrection of Christ. This same presumption is present in the rules of the household. This is the subject of the next chapter.

## VI. THE COLOSSIAN *HAUSTAFEL* 3:18-4:1

### INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this thesis I have argued that the nature of the Colossian philosophy is Jewish. I have demonstrated this by drawing parallels between Colossians and Galatians, and by highlighting other important Jewish themes in Colossians itself (chs. 1-3). In the second part (chs. 4-6) I have been arguing that the paraenesis of Colossians is not somehow beside the point of the preceding argument but is indeed integrated into the argument of the entire letter. The Jewishness of the philosophy assists in demonstrating this, particularly Colossians 3:1-4, which should be read in the context of Jewish apocalypticism.

Having analyzed the ethical lists in the preceding chapter I have made a case for their integration in the argument of the letter, suggesting that the paraenesis of Colossians for the Gentiles, and Torah observance in Judaism (and thus observance by the Colossians philosophers) shares a similar perspective where ethics is indeed theology. This is seen in the integration of the two throughout the letter as well as in the paraenesis itself. While the vices and virtues in Colossians are not unique, neither do they simply reflect the conventional morality of the time. They are related to the argument of Colossians, and while the form of the lists is conventional, the content reflects Jewish concerns, particularly in reference to idolatry and sexual immorality. Yet there is also a christological orientation to the ethical lists which must not be missed. This orientation cannot be described simply as a slight christianization of the

lists. The Christian life of virtue is founded upon the resurrection of Christ.

We turn now to the second major section of the paraenesis-- the *Haustafel*. This chapter will be divided into three parts. As was done with the ethical lists the first two parts of the chapter will be devoted to background and integration. The question of integration is especially important for the housecode in that it appears to be an independent unit capable of standing separately from the argument of the letter. This is an issue which must be addressed. The third major part of the chapter will therefore be devoted to the matter of the *Haustafel* and the "new perspective" on Paul. The reason for this is simple-- the Colossian *Haustafel* not only raises questions concerning its integration into the argument of the entire letter, but it also seems to undermine the "new perspective" thesis I have tried to argue. If the primary concern of the *Haustafel* is the common concern for *οικονομία* (as I will affirm), then how is this to be understood in light of my argument that the nature of the Colossian philosophy is essentially Jewish? This will be dealt with in the third section of the chapter. Prior to this, however, we must analyze briefly the question of the *Haustafel* as a separate unit within Colossians.

#### THE HAUSTAFEL AS A PARAENETIC UNIT

There is a general scholarly consensus that Colossians 3:18-4:1 forms a distinct paraenetic section. This appears to be confirmed by similar paraenetic exhortations in Ephesians (5:21-6:9), 1 Peter (3:1-7), the Pastorals (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10), 1 Clement (1:3; 21:6-9; 38:2), Ignatius' letter to Polycarp (4:1-

6:1), Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (4:1-6:3), the Didache (4:9-11); and Barnabas (19:5, 7). It is not the purpose of this chapter to detail the similarities and the differences between these paraenetic units.<sup>939</sup> The point being made here is that there are enough *Haustafeln* in early Christian literature to suggest a form (not a formal written unit) which predates Colossians-- the oldest extant form of the *Haustafeln*.<sup>940</sup>

It must be stated, however, that there is no consensus over what texts to categorize as *Haustafeln*. Some scholars understand the house-tables to refer to any duties enumerated, whether related to the church or to the home. Thus admonitions to church leaders as well as counsel on how one is related to the civil authorities, can be classified as *Haustafeln*.<sup>941</sup> Others limit the exhortations to members of the household, excluding church leaders and one's duties to the government.<sup>942</sup> In actuality the disagreement is whether there is a clear-cut, well-defined form concerning wives, children and slaves out of a general concern of domestic ethics, including good household management and civic responsibilities. This will concern us below.

At this point, however, two observations will guide the discussion. First, however one categorizes a *Haustafel* the classification of Colossians 3:18-4:1 as a

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<sup>939</sup>For such comparisons see J. Crouch, The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 9-13.

<sup>940</sup>C. Moule, Colossians, p. 126; Schweizer, Colossians, p. 213.

<sup>941</sup>Crouch, Origin, pp. 12-13.

<sup>942</sup>Even here there is disagreement. See Dibelius, Kolosser, p. 48; W. Lillie, "The Pauline House-Tables." ExpT 86 (1975): 180.

*Haustafel* has never been questioned. Second, Crouch is correct to argue that the similarities between all of the passages in question, from the New Testament to the non-canonical Christian literature, strongly suggest a paraenetic schema "which was adaptable to a variety of situations and available to a number of early Christian moral teachers."<sup>943</sup> So if *Haustafel* is not the correct classification for all the paraenetic units in question, they bear enough similarities to suggest a recognized schema of social ethics. Cannon makes mention of three additional characteristics which suggest the house-codes' traditional nature. First, the *Haustafeln* have a distinctive interest in specific classes of people-- wives, husbands, children, slaves, and masters. Second, and related to the first, the instructions addressed to wives and slaves are found in all of the lists. Third, the very structured form of the *Haustafeln*, particularly Colossians and Ephesians-- address, instruction, reason, and motivation-- help to confirm the traditional character of this material.<sup>944</sup>

Moreover, if 3:18-4:1 were removed from the letter, 3:17 would flow quite well into 4:2 where the themes of thanksgiving and prayer in 3:16-17 continue in 4:2-3.<sup>945</sup> Also there are more *hapax legomena* in the *Haustafel* than in the rest

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<sup>943</sup>Crouch, Origin, p. 13.

<sup>944</sup>Cannon, The Use of Traditional Materials, pp. 109-111.

<sup>945</sup>Indeed, E. Percy, Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe (Lund: Gleerup, 1946), p. 36, points out that the paraenesis reflects a simpler style of writing from chapters 1 and 2. This suggest an earlier source for the *Haustafel*.

of the paraenesis,<sup>946</sup> and the section is introduced without any connecting particle.<sup>947</sup> The sentences of the house-code are short and abrupt, quite unlike the very long sentences of the first two chapters.<sup>948</sup> None of these claims in and of themselves is sufficient to demonstrate the pre-Colossian form of the house-code (which I consider to be doubtful), but together they serve to substantiate the position that the *Haustafel* is in some sense an independent unit with its roots earlier than Colossians.

Now this does not mean that the house-table in Colossians is unrelated to the context of the letter. As we shall see there is a connection to be made between the Colossian *Haustafel* and the previous argument of the letter. Neither should we conclude that the *Haustafeln* of the New Testament and the early church documents are necessarily dependent upon each other literarily.<sup>949</sup> It may simply be that in the early church there was a commonality in the use of the house-code pattern in reference to moral instruction.<sup>950</sup> This, as I will argue,

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<sup>946</sup> ἀθυμέω (3:12), ἀναταπόδοσις (3:24), πικραίνω (3:19), ἀνθρωπάρεσκος (3:22; Eph 6:6), and ὀφθαλμοδουλία (3:22; Eph. 6:6).

<sup>947</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 214.

<sup>948</sup> Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 156ff.; B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 47-48.

<sup>949</sup> Although it appears that the Ephesian *Haustafel* was modeled on the Colossian house-code, J. Dunn, "The Household Rules in the New Testament," *The Family in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 47, suggests that the Colossian *Haustafel* may have provided a model for all of the subsequent extant *Haustafeln*.

<sup>950</sup> As suggested long ago by A. Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903), p. 38.

also suggests that the Colossian *Haustafel* reflects a concern prevalent in the first century Greco-Roman world-- good household management. With all this in mind, it is now necessary to investigate the background of the *Haustafeln*.

#### BACKGROUND

Over twenty years ago Crouch stated, "Historical study of the Christian *Haustafeln* is at an impasse."<sup>951</sup> Crouch made this observation because of the inability of scholars to come to an agreement as whether the New Testament *Haustafeln* reflected a Hellenistic, Jewish, or Christian background. Now some twenty years later Dunn claims, "The debate as to where this material was derived from has rumbled on throughout most of the twentieth century, but should probably now be regarded as settled."<sup>952</sup> It should be regarded as such because of several studies on the *Haustafeln*, most notably the one by Balch,<sup>953</sup> which argue that the framework of the house-codes reflects a wider societal concern for household management (*οικονομία*). It is this position that will be recounted and affirmed in this chapter. In order to demonstrate this it is necessary to survey briefly the different backgrounds which have been suggested for the *Haustafeln*, showing the strengths and weaknesses of each

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<sup>951</sup>Crouch, Origin, p. 32.

<sup>952</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 243.

<sup>953</sup>Balch, Wives. Also D. Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln und antike Ökonomie." NTS 27 (1980-1981): 83-97; K. Müller, "Die Haustafel des Kolosserbriefes und das antike Frauenthema: Eine kritische Rückschau auf alte Ergebnisse." Die Frau im Urchristentum QD 95 (Freiburg: Herder, 1983): 284-290.

perspective. Doing so will confirm what others have already argued-- household management was a major concern of Hellenistic philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. Prior to this, however, we must treat briefly the matter of *οἰκονομία* in the Roman world.

#### The Common Interest in Household Management

It is not possible to treat the matter of *οἰκονομία* in the first century Roman world in depth. This has been done quite well by Balch and affirmed by Dunn. Nevertheless some discussion is necessary for the argument.

Concerning *οἰκονομία* in the Roman world, Dunn makes five observations. First, household management was a common concern of Christians in the third and fourth generations, and this concern centered around the relationships between husbands and wives, fathers and their children, and masters and their slaves. Second, there is no standard pattern being passed along, meaning there was no written form, a catechesis, for example, from which the *Haustafeln* were drawn. Third, the three-fold pattern (husband/wife, father/child, master/slave) reflects the typical family structure of the time. Fourth, the *Haustafeln* undoubtedly reflect the patriarchal character of the first century A.D. This cannot be denied, in spite of such passages as Colossians 3:19 and especially Ephesians 5:25-33. Such passages were meant to temper a husband's treatment of his wife. Egalitarian concerns were not in mind. Fifth, slaves were quite prominent in first century households, and were regarded as part of the household.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>954</sup>Dunn, "Household Rules," pp. 43, 47-48.

Roman, Jewish, and Christian documents clearly reveal the general interest in οἰκονομία. Seneca (*Epistulae* 94:1) is a good example of the importance of the three-pair relationship in Hellenism. Moreover, Judaism shared similar concerns (*Ps. Phoc.* 175-227; Philo, *Hyp.* 7.14; *Decal.* 165-167; *Spec. Leg.* 2:224-241; Josephus, *Ap.* 2:199-208.),<sup>955</sup> as well as Christianity, in addition to the New Testament *Haustafeln* (*Didache* 4:9-11; 1 *Clement* 21:6-9; *Barnabas* 19:5-7; Polycarp, *Philippians* 4:2-3; Ignatius, *Polycarp* 4:1-5:2).<sup>956</sup> All these documents reflect varied interest, in the three-pair relationships of husband/wife, child/father, slave/master.

As we analyze the Colossian *Haustafel* in more detail in relation to Hellenistic philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity, it will become apparent that one cannot simplistically postulate any of these backgrounds as the basis of the *Haustafel*. Each background has a contribution to make because each reflects a concern for good household management. For this reason it is worth reviewing briefly the debate regarding the origin of the *Haustafel* form, since such a review helps clarify both the common and distinctive features of the Colossian *Haustafel*.

#### Hellenistic Philosophy

Dibelius was the first to argue that the source of the Christian *Haustafeln* was to be found in the moral philosophy of Hellenism, especially Stoicism.<sup>957</sup> The

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<sup>955</sup>Crouch, *Origin*, pp. 74-90.

<sup>956</sup>See Balch, *Wives*, pp. 28-55; Dunn, "Household Rules," pp. 50-51.

<sup>957</sup>Dibelius, *Kolosser*, pp. 48-50.

early Christians appropriated this material as the ethic of Jesus was inadequate for life in the world, necessitated by the delay of the parousia.<sup>958</sup> Thus for Dibelius the Colossian *Haustafel* is a slightly Christianized version of a non-Christian code. His study presents several arguments in support of his conclusion. First, the words ἀνήκεν (3:18) and εὐάρεστον (3:20) depict motivations in keeping with Hellenistic philosophy as opposed to Christian motivations. Moreover, Dibelius argues that the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ is clumsy and should be considered to be a Christian addition. The more natural expression would have been τῷ κυρίῳ.<sup>959</sup> In addition Dibelius referred to comparable codes present in Hellenistic Judaism and Stoicism.

It was Dibelius' student K. Weidinger who augmented his mentor's argument.<sup>960</sup> Weidinger suggested that there were a number of Stoic *Haustafeln*, which indicated that the house-codes were borrowed from the popular philosophy of the Roman empire. Weidinger argued that a number of features of the New Testament *Haustafeln* parallel Stoicism, especially the Stoic concept of duty (καθήκον). In the New Testament *Haustafeln* we have nothing more than Christian modifications νόμιμα ἀγραφα-- the fear of the gods, honor to parents, respect and care of the dead, love of friends and allegiance toward country (e.g. Diogenes

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<sup>958</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>959</sup>Ibid., p. 67f. Also Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 158, n. 23; H. Schlier, "καθήκον," *TDNT*, 3:437-440.

<sup>960</sup>K. Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln: Ein Stück urchristlicher Paränese* UNT (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1928), pp. 27-34.

Laertius, 7:108).<sup>961</sup>

It was Cicero who prioritized the duties one had in differing relationships (*De Officiis* 1:58).<sup>962</sup> The first obligation, for Cicero, was to country, then to parents, children, the rest of the family and other relatives. Moreover, the idea of reciprocity of relationship, while not a major emphasis in Stoicism, can nevertheless be found. An example is Seneca's *De Beneficiis* 2:18.1ff.<sup>963</sup> Reciprocity of relationship is, of course, basic to the New Testament *Haustafeln*. So the early church drew on these "house-codes" to provide guidance for Christians and their relationships inside the church, in light of the waning eschatological hope.<sup>964</sup> In this view the New Testament *Haustafeln* are nothing

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<sup>961</sup>Cf. A. Dyroff, *Die Ethik der alten Stoa* (Berlin: Töpel, 1897), pp. 135f., who states, "Nun hatte sich in der griechischen Volksseele eine Reihe von sittlichen Geboten konsolidiert, welche als ungeschriebene Gesetze (νόμιμα ἀγραφα) in der griechischen Tragödie und in den Prozessreden bedeutungsvoll zur Darstellung gelangen. Der Kern derselben war: die Götter fürchten, die Eltern ehren, die Toten begraben, die Freunde lieben, das Vaterland nicht verraten."

<sup>962</sup>In actuality Cicero used Panaetius' work *Περὶ Καθήκοντα* as a foundation for his *De Officiis*. In the *Περὶ καθήκοντα* Panaetius attempts to reorient the task of philosophy from deliberation over the nature of the universe, to service to the state (See Crouch, *Origin*, p. 47).

<sup>963</sup>The passage states, "Quodcumque ex duobus constat officium, tantundem ab utroque exigit. Qualis pater esse debeat, cum inspexeris scies non minus operis illic superesse, ut dispicias, qualem esse oporteat filium; sunt aliquae partes mariti, sed non minores uxoris. In vicem ista, quantum exigunt, praestant et parem desiderant regulam, quae ut ait Hecaton, difficilis est...." Here the word "officium" refers to an equal demand on both people, whether the reciprocal relationship be husband/wife or father/son (Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials*, p. 113).

<sup>964</sup>Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, p. 27-28.

more than vaguely Christian revisions of the Stoic καθήκοντα.<sup>965</sup>

Yet, Stoicism does not account for the deep differences between the New Testament *Haustafeln* and this non-Christian material. Certainly in a broad sense, the *Haustafeln* are somewhat like the material we encounter in Stoic sources. Indeed, the terms ἀνήκεν and εὐάρεστον are characteristic of Stoic morality.<sup>966</sup> This is not sufficient, however, to demonstrate that Stoicism provides the framework for the *Haustafeln*, since what is fitting and pleasing in Stoicism is based on reason or on natural law.<sup>967</sup> These notions are clearly absent from the Colossian *Haustafel*.

First, what we encounter in Stoic and Greek philosophical sources are not really *Haustafeln* but *Pflichtentafeln*; that is, a list a duties.<sup>968</sup>

Second, and more significantly, despite the passage in Seneca the emphasis on reciprocal duties in the Colossian *Haustafel* is not particularly Stoic. Whereas the Stoic functions are listed one by one, the *Haustafel* is listed in pairs.<sup>969</sup>

Third, in relation to the previous point, the distinction made between subordinate and superior is lacking in Stoic sources. The Stoic perspective on

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<sup>965</sup>Cannon, The Use Traditional Materials, p. 112.

<sup>966</sup>Dunn, "Household Rules," p. 6; Gnllka, Kolossierbrief, pp. 211-212.

<sup>967</sup>Schrage, Ethics, pp. 248-249.

<sup>968</sup>D. Schroeder, Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments (ihre Herkunft und theologischer Sinn) (Diss. Hamburg, 1959), pp. 27f.

<sup>969</sup>Balch, Wives, pp. 23-62 demonstrates quite well, that, even though subordinates were not directly addressed, there was a general concern outside of Judaism and Christianity for the subordinates and their duties.

dignity means that Stoic documents are addressed to the prince, freedman, and the dominant man in society. In the Colossian *Haustafel*, however, the subordinate is not only addressed, he/she is addressed first.<sup>970</sup>

Fourth, Stoic duty lists do not mention the specific duties of a person in his/her respective role. In other words, the lists reveal whom one has duties to, but not what those duties are.<sup>971</sup> Duties are listed in the house-code. Wives are to subordinate (ὕποτάσσεσθε) themselves to their husbands, husbands are to love (ἀγαπᾶτε) their wives and not treat them harshly (μὴ πικραίνεσθε). Children should obey (ὑπακούετε) their parents, and fathers are not to provoke (μὴ ἐρεθίζετε) their children. Slaves are to obey (again, ὑπακούετε) their lords κατὰ σάρκα, and lords κατὰ σάρκα are to treat their slaves justly and fairly (τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰδότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε). There is simply nothing parallel to this in Stoic documents.

Fifth, in the Stoic lists of duties, the person is addressed in the singular, the New Testament *Haustafeln* address each group in the plural. The significance of this will be seen in the next major section on integration.

Sixth, in Stoicism moral duties are based on the four cardinal virtues. As was noted in the previous chapter, the four cardinal virtues are missing from the virtue list in Colossians. The motivation of the duties in the *Haustafel* is not to be found in these four cardinal virtues, but in the virtue of love (3:14) ἐν

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<sup>970</sup>See Schroeder, Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments, p. 89.

<sup>971</sup>Witherington, Earliest Churches, p. 44.

κρίω.<sup>972</sup> It is the virtue list in 3:12, and the reference to "love above all" in verse 14 which provides the rationale for the duties outlined in 3:18-4:1. This raises the question as to whether the duties of the *Haustafel* can really be characterized as Stoic if they lack Stoic motivations.

We are forced to conclude that while there is somewhat of a similar schema between the *Haustafeln* and the Stoic list of duties, and that Stoicism shares the same concern for οἰκονομία as the *Haustafeln*, the Stoic source of inspiration of the Colossian *Haustafel* cannot be maintained. "The origin of the form seems to lie elsewhere."<sup>973</sup>

#### Judaism

In reference to the content of the Colossian house-code Judaism appears much more promising. It is certainly the case that the trend in much recent scholarship is to view the content of the Colossian *Haustafel* as indebted to Judaism.<sup>974</sup> Some wisdom texts from Qumran reveal a kind of *Haustafel* instruction present in Judaism (4QSap. Work<sup>d</sup> 2.2.1-9; 4QSap. Work<sup>b</sup> 2.4).<sup>975</sup>

D. Daube suggested a literary connection between the *Haustafeln* and Hebrew

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<sup>972</sup>On the "fear of the Lord" motivation in the *Haustafeln* see Col. 3:22; Eph. 6:5; 1 Pt. 2:18; Polycarp, *Philippians* 4:2; 6:3 1 Clement 21:6; Didache 4:9, 11; Barnabas 19:11.

<sup>973</sup>Balch, *Wives*, p. 10.

<sup>974</sup>See, Crouch, *Origin*, p. 146f.; Dunn, "Household Rules," pp. 6-7.

<sup>975</sup>Noted by D. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London:Routledge, 1996), pp. 83-84.

sources.<sup>976</sup> He argued that the participial imperatives are in fact semitisms (cf. 1QS 1:18ff.).<sup>977</sup> Lohse too argues this even though he rejects the notion that the content is indebted to Judaism.<sup>978</sup> Daube also posits the notion that the use of the definite article with the nominative of address in the Colossian *Haustafel* is a translation of the Hebrew vocative.<sup>979</sup> From these two claims, Daube suggests a literary dependence of the *Haustafeln* on a Hebrew house-code form. This does suggest particular concerns in Judaism that influenced and were incorporated into the New Testament house-codes.

The relationship among members of a family was of interest in Jewish wisdom literature (e.g. Prov. 13:24; 17:17; 19:18, 26; 20:20; 23:13; 27:10, 17, 19). While these proverbs are not strung together, they do make interesting parallels in reference to the New Testament *Haustafeln*. Sirach contains two lists of social duties (7:19-21, 23-30), in which, as in Stoicism, the subordinates are not addressed. Men are addressed as husbands, fathers, masters, and children of old parents.

Hellenistic Jewish lists of duties show a concern for family relations

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<sup>976</sup>D. Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: The Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 90-105. See also Selwyn, 1 Peter, pp. 467-488. Selwyn argues extensively against Moulton, Grammar, 1:180ff., 323ff., who claims that the use of the participle as an imperative is a Hellenistic convention. See also L. Goppelt, erste Petrusbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), p. 172.

<sup>977</sup>In contradistinction to Furnish, Theology and Ethics, p. 39.

<sup>978</sup>Lohse, Colossians, p. 155, n. 8.

<sup>979</sup>Cf. Dunn, "Household Rules, p. 52, "[T]he actual format (address, instruction, motivation) is typically Jewish."

(*Aristeas*, 228, 233, 241, 248), especially in reference to subordinates (*Ps. Phoc.* 175-227).<sup>980</sup> Schweizer argued that the concern for subordinates reflects the Old Testament concern for the weak and helpless.<sup>981</sup> It is also important to note that in Colossians they are addressed as members of the assembled congregation. Moreover, they are addressed as morally responsible subjects.<sup>982</sup>

The previous mention of the motivation of the "fear of the Lord" in the Colossian *Haustafel* and other *Haustafeln* is certainly a Jewish concept (Ex. 1:17, 21; Lev. 19:14, 32; 25:17; Ps. 31:11) as Lohmeyer argued.<sup>983</sup> The entire orientation of the Colossian house-code is centered around the "Lord." Lohmeyer further suggests that Judaism had an actual code devoted to the subordinate classes of wives, children, and slaves. While he was correct to show the interest Judaism had in these classes he simply could not produce convincing evidence that there was an actual Jewish *Haustafel* addressing these classes of people within the

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<sup>980</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>981</sup>E. Schweizer, "Traditional Ethical Patterns in the Pauline and Post-Pauline Letters and Their Development (Lists of Vices and House-Tables)." *Text and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 202.

<sup>982</sup>Philo, *Hyp.* 7.3 (γυναίκας ἀνδράσι δουλεύειν; Josephus, *Ap.* 2:201 (γυνή χειρῶν φησὶν ἀνδρὸς εἰς ἅπαντα τοιγαροῦν ὑπακούετω). Cf. also Philo, *Decal.* 165-167.

<sup>983</sup>Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, p. 156. Lohmeyer suggested that κύριος in Colossians 3:18, 20, 23, 24, and 4:1 refers not to Christ but to God (p. 159). Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 160, proposes, on the other hand, that φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον refers not to God but to Christ. Both are partly incorrect and partly correct. In the LXX θεός is used in conjunction with ὁ κύριος ὁ θεός ὑμῶν. Also θεός and κύριος are used synonymously (cf. Lev. 19:14, 32; 25:17; Ps. 54:23). As Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials*, p. 115, states, "...the phrase 'Lord Christ' (3:25) is unique in the Pauline corpus. It seems likely that 'Christ' is added to 'the Lord' in this text to give the O.T. term Christological meaning."

culture.

In short, like Hellenistic philosophy Judaism reflects a concern for good household management. Within that common concern there are clearly more distinctive Jewish features of the Colossian *Haustafel*. Reciprocity furnishes the framework for the code as a whole, where the subordinate is addressed as a moral agent. The *Haustafel* reflects the Old Testament moral concern for the protection of the weak and helpless. Finally, the great ethical motivation of the *Haustafel* is centered ἐν κυρίῳ. This incentive is in harmony with the Old Testament affirmations of the "fear of the Lord."

However, there are also features of the *Haustafel* that simply cannot be understood against a Jewish background. Thus there are those who have claimed that the New Testament *Haustafeln* are Christian creations.

#### Christianity

The first scholar to argue seriously that the New Testament house-codes were specifically Christian creations was K. Rengstorf.<sup>984</sup> It was Rengstorf who clearly argued that sufficient differences exist between Hellenistic philosophy and Judaism to warrant the suggestion that the *Haustafeln* are more than mildly Christianized versions of Hellenistic or Jewish codes. Moreover, the early church was interested in the ordering of the οἶκος. These concerns were addressed in the *Haustafeln*.

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<sup>984</sup>K. Rengstorf, "Die neutestamentlichen Mahnungen an die Frau, sich dem Manne unterzuordnen." *Verbum Dei manet in Aeternum. Festschrift für O. Schmitz* (Witten: Luther, 1953), pp. 131-145.

D. Schroeder presented the most complete treatment of the *Haustafeln* from this perspective.<sup>985</sup> Schroeder concluded that there was no foundational connection between the *Haustafeln* and Judaism, although he also argued that subordinate exhortations were essentially Jewish and go back to Jesus.<sup>986</sup> Schroeder contended that the *Haustafel* was written by the Apostle Paul himself and was occasioned by the Gospel declaration based on the teaching of the apostles.<sup>987</sup> He wrote it to respond to problems that developed over misunderstandings of his proclamation of equality in Christ.

Schroeder rejects Rengstorf's thesis that the *Haustafeln* are based on an early Christian tradition and instead argues that the *Haustafeln* of the New Testament are later variations of an original Christian house-code no longer extant.<sup>988</sup>

The significance of the Rengstorf and Schroeder theses is that they demonstrate that the *Haustafeln* were not simply borrowed from other sources, but are, in part, a uniquely Christian piece of material. The house-codes are not merely appropriated from non-Christian sources and given a Christian ring. They are not slightly Christianized.<sup>989</sup> To admonish the Colossians *ἐν κυρίῳ* is more than a Christian addition. It provides a completely different orientation. There is no

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<sup>985</sup>Schroeder, Die haustafeln des Neuen Testaments.

<sup>986</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>987</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>988</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>989</sup>Moule, Colossians, pp. 127-128.

good reason to deny that the life and teaching of Jesus did indeed provide motivation for the house-codes, particularly the emphasis on subordination (cf. Mt. 20:25-28).

But does this warrant Schroeder's conclusion that the *Haustafeln* come directly from Jesus, and Rengstorf's argument that the essentially Christian nature of the *Haustafeln* comes from the stories of Jesus' and John the Baptist's childhood? This can hardly be the case, and even if it was, how does this demonstrate its Christian nature? Jesus and John the Baptist were Jewish and raised in typical Jewish homes.<sup>990</sup> If Schroeder and Rengstorf are right on this point, they have simply demonstrated the Jewish nature of the house-codes. There is simply no evidence that Jesus is the one who formulated the subordinate exhortations of the *Haustafeln*. Indeed the emphasis on subordination in Jesus' ministry<sup>991</sup> reflects, not a new element never before seen in Judaism, but rather exhibits a concept very much at home in Judaism.

It is difficult to understand Schroeder's reasoning in which he concludes that the *Haustafeln* are Jewish in nature and therefore must go back to Jesus, and since it goes back to Jesus it must be considered specifically Christian.<sup>992</sup> Moreover, Schroeder's attempt to analyze the *Haustafeln* in order to reconstruct

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<sup>990</sup>See Crouch, Origin, p. 25.

<sup>991</sup>Schroeder, Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments, pp. 115-122, rightly emphasizes the importance of ὑποτάσσω as the primary motivation of the *Haustafeln*.

<sup>992</sup>Schroeder, Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments, p. 152. See also Barth, Colossians, p. 466.

the "original" house-code is completely unconvincing as Crouch has demonstrated.<sup>993</sup>

Schroeder is correct to argue "that the phrase slightly Christianized" is inadequate to explain the Christian orientation of this material around "the Lord." The *Haustafel* does reflect a truly Christian perspective. Yet, it must be said that the *Haustafeln* reflects a wider societal concern for οἰκονομία. This is the one thing that the Stoic, Jewish, and Christian documents in question have in common.

#### Conclusion

The chapter began with an analysis of the Colossian *Haustafel* as a distinct paraenetic unit. There is no reason to reject the growing consensus of modern scholarship that the house-code reflects concerns common to household-management in the wider culture. Any attempt to argue, however, for the existence of a previous Jewish house-code (Lohmeyer), or a Stoic *Haustafel* (Dibelius), or a "subordinate" *Haustafel* that goes back to Jesus has failed. No one has been able to produce a house-code from any of the backgrounds prior to Colossians.<sup>994</sup> Witherington is correct to distinguish between sources of ideas and actual literary sources.<sup>995</sup> Although there may be a small literary connection

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<sup>993</sup>Crouch, Origin, p. 30.

<sup>994</sup>See Lillie, "The Pauline House-Tables," p. 180. Again see Dunn, Colossians, p. 243, who suggests that the Colossian *Haustafel* is the purest form of the house-codes and may have served as a model for later Christian *Haustafeln*.

<sup>995</sup>Witherington, Earliest Churches, p. 47.

between the Stoic καθήκον or the admonitions to men in their family relationships in Sirach, there is enough literary disparity between these sources and the *Haustafeln* to warrant the conclusion that the early church did not appropriate the form from other sources. It should not be assumed that there was a pure form from which the *Haustafeln* were originated.<sup>996</sup>

While there are Jewish elements, and distinctively Christian elements in the Colossian *Haustafel* the framework of the house-codes clearly reflects the general cultural concern for good household management. Admonitions to husbands, wives, children, etc. would be found in any culture where such familial relationships exist. There need not be some literary source behind such exhortations.<sup>997</sup> There is simply no evidence of a literary source from which the *Haustafeln* were derived.

There is one critical question at this point. Does the fact that the Colossian *Haustafel* reflects a wider societal concern for good household management undermine my thesis that the Colossian paraenesis is integrated into the argument of the whole letter? If the *Haustafel* is a unit that can stand alone, is it not somehow beside the point in reference to the previous argument? This is the subject of the next section.

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<sup>996</sup>Dunn, "Household Rules," p. 51.

<sup>997</sup>See L. Hartmann, "Some Unorthodox Thoughts on the 'House-Code' Form." The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 219-232.

## INTEGRATION

As has been affirmed the major concern of the Colossian *Haustafel* is household management. Balch has demonstrated that the house-code of 1 Peter functions apologetically by appealing to household management within the community of faith.<sup>998</sup> The apologetics of the Colossian house-code is alluded to in Paul's exhortation to the Colossians to conduct themselves wisely toward outsiders-- *πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω* (4:5). Thus the logical conclusion to draw from this if indeed the Colossian *Haustafel* functions apologetically, is that like the *Haustafel* of 1 Peter, the Colossian house-code deals with *οἰκονομία* within the community of faith.<sup>999</sup> Martin argues that the *Haustafel* is a culture-affirming response to a culture-denying Cynicism.<sup>1000</sup> If indeed Colossians is a response to Cynic critique, the *Haustafel* would clearly be related to the Colossian philosophy and germane to the argument of the letter. The problem with Martin's argument, however, remains its tangential connection to the rest of Colossians.

But what does the Colossian *Haustafel* have to do with the Colossian philosophy? It is difficult to see how the *Haustafel* bears any kind of connection to the current situation argued in the letter.<sup>1001</sup> If the house-code exhibits more

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<sup>998</sup>Balch, *Wives*, pp. 65-76.

<sup>999</sup>J. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless* (London: SCM Press, 1982), pp. 215-218.

<sup>1000</sup>Martin, *Philosophy and Empty Deceit*, p. 202.

<sup>1001</sup>O'Brien, *Colossians*, p. 219, suggests that the house-code is a reaction against the "otherworldiness" of the Colossian Jews. There is certainly no compelling reason to reject this hypothesis, but as Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 246, notes, "we do not know enough about the Colossian Jews' own household rules to make a firm comparison."

general concerns for good order within the household, then integration with the rest of the letter is not only questionable but unnecessary in understanding the purpose of the Colossian *Haustafel*.

I do not believe, however, that the question of the integration of the *Haustafel* must be answered negatively. The presence of the Colossian house-code in the letter may not be relevant to the Colossian philosophy, but it is integrated in its "orientation and motivation"<sup>1002</sup> by its references to "the Lord," thus connecting it to the orientation and motivation of the Colossians' whole way of life "in Christ." The participationist theme, which, as we have seen, plays a major role in the argument of Colossians, continues in the *Haustafel*. This includes the major motif of unity which also bears importance in the letter.

In this section we will deal with the function of the Colossian *Haustafel* drawing on the argument of the entire letter. We will do this by discussing three things. First, the motivation of the *Haustafel*-- dealing with daily life in light of the new life in Christ. Second, the  $\epsilon\nu\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$  motif and its connection to the christological language of the whole letter. Third, we will explicate the central theme of the *Haustafel*, and an important one throughout the entire letter-- unity. Finally, conclusions will be drawn concerning the integration of the *Haustafel* in Colossians.

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<sup>1002</sup>Dunn, Colossians, p. 246.

## The Function of the *Haustafel*

### Daily Life Oriented Around the New Life

Earlier in this century the tendency in scholarship was to assume that the concerns expressed in the Colossian *Haustafel* were motivated by concerns other than those expressed in the rest of the letter, so that in effect the *Haustafel* was independent of the letter. As has been previously mentioned, it was Dibelius who erroneously argued that the early church's dilemma of the delay over the παρουσία was what occasioned the *Haustafeln*. Faced with continued life in the world, the early Christians had to consider how they would live in their everyday relationships and affairs. The house-code was the result of that consideration. This view continues to have adherents. More recently Pokorný writes,

The adoption of the household codes could not yet have taken place in the era of apocalyptic expectation of an imminent return during which the main letters of Paul were written.<sup>1003</sup>

So, according to this particular view the early church exchanged a neglect of concern over familial relationships, since they were all coming to an end soon, for an orderly life in the world. It would have been quite natural, therefore, to take instruction on how to live in the world from that world. Thus they simply conformed their ethic<sup>1004</sup> by drawing from the traditional household rules found in Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>1005</sup>

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<sup>1003</sup> Pokorný, Colossians, p. 177.

<sup>1004</sup> See MacDonald, The Pauline Churches, pp. 102-105.

<sup>1005</sup> Lohse, Colossians, p. 156.

In the final analysis this means two things in reference to the function of the *Haustafel* in Colossians: 1) the *Haustafel* could only come about on account of the diminishing of apocalyptic expectation; and 2) the traditional cultural values of the house-code and its formal nature mean that it really has nothing to do with the argument of the letter, except in a superficial way. It is material which addressed the common needs in broad circles of the earliest Christian communities.<sup>1006</sup>

Both claims are simply incorrect. The Colossian *Haustafel* is not what resulted from the diminishing of apocalyptic expectation, but rather it is oriented in a apocalyptic context. It is this apocalyptic orientation that makes the *Haustafel* an integrated part of the letter as a whole.

I have already argued that Colossians 3:1-4 is apocalyptic in nature and that the ethical lists are oriented around the eschatological nature of the new life in Christ. This participation in Christ, according to the paraenesis thus far, has implications for daily life, which verses 5-17 of chapter 3 elucidate. It certainly seems appropriate that the *Haustafel* is a continuation of how believers, who experience new life now, are to live in their everyday relations. So one of the functions of the *Haustafel* in Colossians is to clarify further how one is to live in the foretaste of the new age, not how one lives because of the failure of the new age to arrive.

Yet, it must also be said that the concern for good household management in the early church reflects, not only an interest in living in the already

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<sup>1006</sup>Dibelius, Tradition, p. 159.

brought near in Christ, but it also reveals that the early Christians were well aware of the fact that the not yet had still to arrive (this is quite different from a failure to arrive). Thus the *Haustafeln* also betray to some extent a compromise with the form of this age. Yet, accommodation does not adequately describe the character of the Colossian housecode. While the *Haustafel* expresses the concern over good household management, an interest shared in common with Jews and Romans, the orientation by which the Colossians practise οἰκονομία is the same as in every aspect of their lives-- the foundation of οἰκονομία is ἐν κυρίῳ.

In summary, the Colossian *Haustafel* was not the result of the delay of the parousia. It fits well into the apocalyptic orientation of chapter 3. It deals with how one lives in the foretaste of the new age, not how one lives because of its delay. The interest in οἰκονομία was not only a concern of the Romans and Jews, but it was a concern of the Christians who had to continue to live in the already, knowing that the not yet had still to arrive. Living in the already meant living ἐν Χριστῷ. This was seen in the last chapter in reference to virtue. It is also a concern in the *Haustafel*. It is to this that we now turn.

#### Ἐν Κυρίῳ and Ἐν Χριστῷ

The already/not yet tension is highlighted by the participationist theme (ἐν Χριστῷ) found throughout the letter (discussed in chapter four). It is the major theme of the argument of the paraenesis (3:1-4; 13, 15, 16, 17), including the *Haustafel*. Wives are told to perform their duties ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (3:18). Children are commanded to obey their parents, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ (3:20).

Slaves are to obey their earthly masters φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον (3:22, also 3:23-- ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ).

As already noted Dibelius argued that the word ἀνήκεν in 3:18 was a determinant expression which revealed the Stoic nature of the *Haustafel*.<sup>1007</sup> The expression comes into the faith through Hellenistic philosophy. Indeed the unusual use of the word in the imperfect tense, as opposed to the standard present tense in classical literature, suggests Hellenistic influence even more as it refers to that which is considered fitting (i.e. considered fitting by everyone).<sup>1008</sup> What this means for Dibelius, therefore, is that the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ is nothing more than a loosely attached Christian addition. Dibelius attempts to bolster his argument by noting that τῷ κυρίῳ not ἐν κυρίῳ is the more natural expression, suggesting an insertion into the material.

There are two problems, however, with this argument. First, as has previously been mentioned, while it is true that ἀνήκεν is Stoic terminology, there is no appeal to natural law or reason in the *Haustafel*, something of critical importance in Stoicism.<sup>1009</sup> Second, the moral motivation of the *Haustafel* is not centered around ἀνήκεν. The motivation is ἐν κυρίῳ.<sup>1010</sup> The Lord is the criterion for "what is fitting" and denotes the proper attitude within the community of

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<sup>1007</sup>Dibelius, *Kolosser*, pp. 48-50. Also Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, p. 51.

<sup>1008</sup>Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 158, n. 23.

<sup>1009</sup>Schrage, *Ethics*, pp. 248-249.

<sup>1010</sup>Aletti, *Colossiens*, pp. 249-250.

faith.<sup>1011</sup> Unlike Stoicism, Paul and Timothy do not simply assume that there is a natural order of things which determines how persons behave in their household relationships. It is determined by the new order ἐν κυρίῳ.<sup>1012</sup> The *Haustafel* is "based on the law of the new nature."<sup>1013</sup>

Thus I think it is entirely possible that the awkward ἐν κυρίῳ is not the result of a simple christianizing insertion, rather it fits appropriately into the christological language of the entire letter. As discussed in chapter 4 the ἐν Χριστῷ (ἐν ᾧ, ἐν αὐτῷ) language of the entire epistle (1:2, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 27, 28; 2:3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11) describes who the followers of Jesus are and how they are to live. This participationist language is appropriately employed in the *Haustafel*. As the Colossians are to orient their daily lives ἐν Χριστῷ, so are they to orient the household ἐν κυρίῳ. As Schrage notes, "The purpose of the *Haustafeln* is to subject the life of Christians to the Lordship of Christ within the institutions of the secular world."<sup>1014</sup> The context here is the Jewish understanding of submission where God accepts the one who is humble (Job 22:29; Prov. 3:34).<sup>1015</sup> To base the household rules "in the Lord" connects the *Haustafel* to 3:18. More than any other feature, ἐν κυρίῳ links the *Haustafel* to the letter as

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<sup>1011</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>1012</sup>Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, p. 222.

<sup>1013</sup>Wright, *Colossians*, p. 146.

<sup>1014</sup>Schrage, "Haustafeln," p. 21-22.

<sup>1015</sup>See E. Kamlah, "Hypotassesthai in den neutestamentlichen Haustafeln." *Verborum Veritas. Festschrift für G. Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), pp. 237-243.

a whole and confirms that the ethos of the *Haustafel* is the same as that of 1:15-20. Submitting oneself with humility is an important mark of the chosen people. The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ in the *Haustafel* may be awkward grammatically, but it is very fitting theologically. It is appropriate theological language used in the argument of the entire letter. It may also be that the use of κύριος instead of Χριστός is for the sake of the heads of the household who are addressed as "lords according to the flesh." As they discharge their duties as earthy lords they must remember that they are accountable to the heavenly Lord.

The foundation of moral instruction here is the community's participation in the cross and resurrection of Christ. Paul constantly reminds his readers of this throughout the paraenesis. The matter of the Colossians not living as if they still belonged to the world (2:20) is taken up in the *Haustafel*. Their daily relations are to be formed in Christ. The "stripping off of the old man with its practices" (3:9) must be clearly evident in their familial relations. The *Haustafel* is another reminder, along with the ethical lists that they have put on the new humanity. So the Colossian *Haustafel* is integrated into the argument of the letter insofar as it contains the same christological orientation as the previous paraenesis as well as the first two chapters. It is integrated in that its concern is to subject the household under the Lordship of Christ as all of life is to be subject. Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε (2:6).

In summary the motivation of the Colossian *Haustafel* is ἐν κυρίῳ. The phrase is not simply the result of a christianizing insertion. It is part and parcel of the christological language of the entire letter. Moreover, the unity of the people of

God is necessary for those ἐν Χριστῷ. This is a concern of the Colossian *Haustafel* and the entire letter, and represents another aspect of the integration of the two.

### Unity

The *Haustafel* in Colossians is not about equality, it is about unity. As we have seen unity is a major motif in Colossians (1:20, 22; 3:11). Indeed, the entire paraenesis of Colossians "continues the theme of unity in Christ, and order in creation."<sup>1016</sup> The Christ-hymn in this sense sets up the argument for unity in the paraenetic material.<sup>1017</sup> The insertion of τῆς ἐκκλησίας into the hymn serves as a way to connect the cosmic reconciliation in Christ to the daily lives of those in Christ.<sup>1018</sup>

The apologetic function of the *Haustafel* in Colossians also means that the house-code serves as a reminder of the importance of order within the community of faith. The Romans considered the family to be the basic unit of society.<sup>1019</sup> The highly structured and stratified Roman culture benefitted the empire quite

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<sup>1016</sup>Hooker, "False Teachers," p. 329.

<sup>1017</sup>B. Vawter, "The Colossian Hymn and the Principle of Redaction." *CBQ* 33 (1971): pp. 79-80.

<sup>1018</sup>Meeks, "In One Body," p. 214. "On the whole, then, the author of Colossians uses the cosmic imagery, the symbolism of the heavenly enthronement, and the metaphor of changing the body as a garment to reinforce a sense of cohesiveness, unity, and special vocation of the community of Christians."

<sup>1019</sup>D. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* SBLDS 71 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 27-81.

well.<sup>1020</sup> In the empire people were always conscious of their rank and place in society in relation to those around them. For the most part there was very little hope or expectation that such rank or place would change,<sup>1021</sup> and there were no revolutionary movements in the Roman world to change the situation.<sup>1022</sup>

Into this stratified world came the Christian message of unity and freedom of all persons in Christ, made up of worshiping communities from every stratum of society. Such a philosophy could not but help appear as subversive. So as MacDonald points out, the admonitions for subordinates to continue in their traditional roles (in a very familiar framework) would serve to demonstrate to outsiders that the church did not promote household disruption,<sup>1023</sup> and was therefore no threat to the existence of the empire.<sup>1024</sup>

The major function of the Colossian *Haustafel* is to promote unity within the community of faith, which is also made up of households, in order to witness to the wider society that the church is indeed concerned with good *οικονομία*. The *Haustafel* does not reject the patriarchal family structure, but neither does it

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<sup>1020</sup> Meeks, The First Christians, pp. 32-39.

<sup>1021</sup> Although manumitted slaves fared better in the Roman empire than they did, for example, in Athenian culture, a manumitted slave in Roman society, involved in the society and often granted citizenship, would never have been viewed as of the same class as a born freedman. It usually took one to two generations before a freedman's family would be fully integrated into the Roman society. See. J. Harrill, The Manumission of Slaves, pp. 53-54.

<sup>1022</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>1023</sup> Dunn, "The Household Rules," p. 9.

<sup>1024</sup> MacDonald, The Pauline Churches, p. 109.

simply reinforce its cruel characteristics. It provides for transformation within the existing structures, which for all practical purposes were going to remain the same.<sup>1025</sup> The *Haustafel* is concerned with family relations as they are, and affirms those relationships while bringing them under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, thus seeking to transform them. In this sense, Schweizer is correct to speak of "a healthy and sensible" perspective on worldliness present in the Colossian *Haustafel*.<sup>1026</sup>

The *Haustafel* is at once an affirmation of what is and what should be. The "what is" is the reality of the cultural situation-- the old order, the "what should be" is what is in harmony with the new order brought about in Christ's death and resurrection. In the same way, the old order of Torah gives way to the new order in Christ. The Colossians are *ἐν κυρίῳ*. Therefore, their household relations require, "a reforming of traditional social structures, not a mere reproduction or repudiation of them."<sup>1027</sup>

More significantly, the *Haustafel* deals with family relationships within the worshipping community. It has been suggested that worship is not at the heart of this material.<sup>1028</sup> I disagree. The *Haustafel* appears right after instructions on worship, again with the emphasis on unity (3:12-17). These instructions on worship appeal to previous themes-- teaching and exhortation, wisdom and

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<sup>1025</sup>Dunn, "The Household Rules," p. 15.

<sup>1026</sup>Schweizer, *Colossians*, pp. 216-220.

<sup>1027</sup>Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, p. 54.

<sup>1028</sup>E.g. Pokorný, *Colossians*, p. 177.

gratitude. Just prior to the admonitions to wives, the authors exhort them-- και πᾶν ὃ τι ἔαν ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ (3:17). This marks an appropriate transition to the house-code where there is emphasis on familial relationships in daily life which is necessary for the unity of the house-church's worship. "A household that was not unified in Christ and harmonious could not be a good context for orderly worship."<sup>1029</sup> Moreover, a household that was not well ordered could not be a good model for well ordered worship and a well ordered church.<sup>1030</sup> The ends of Christian freedom cannot be achieved by any means possible, especially if they disrupt worship.<sup>1031</sup> After the house-code the theme of worship continues to its logical conclusion. The Colossians are to devote themselves to prayer in thanksgiving.

In summary the *Haustafel* is not about equality, it is about unity. The theme of unity is carried throughout the entire letter, and the house-code is one more way to reiterate the necessity of unity in Christ. The *Haustafel* served the dual function of promoting unity within the family and unity within the house-church. A well ordered family provides a model for a well ordered congregation (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1-6:2), and provides a good example for those outside the Christian community. The *Haustafel* affirms traditional roles and therefore functions

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<sup>1029</sup>Witherington, Earliest Churches, p. 48.

<sup>1030</sup>Dunn, "The Household Rules," p. 11.

<sup>1031</sup>We need to entertain the possibility of Martin's suggestion (Colossians, p. 118) that the admonition for wives to submit to their husbands refers in part to subordination in the congregational assembly. This is not explicitly mentioned, but given the surrounding context as one of worship, it is a possibility.

apologetically as an example of good *οικονομία*. The motivation of the *Haustafel* nevertheless remains christological.

### Conclusion

Concerning the question of the integration of the Colossian *Haustafel* with the rest of the letter it was noted that it does not seem to bear any relevance to the Colossian philosophy. Nevertheless it was argued that the motivation and orientation of the house-code was integrated with the preceding argument in reference to the authors' desire to admonish the Colossians to subject all things, including the household, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Thus the *Haustafel* functions as instruction meant to orient the daily household relations of the Colossian church around the new life they received in Jesus Christ (cf. 2:6-7). In this respect the Colossians' identity in Christ is integral to how they live in their family relations.

The *ἐν Χριστῷ* theme so important in the letter is continued in the *Haustafel*. The instructions given to wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves and master are all based *ἐν κυρίῳ*. It could be said that the *ἐν κυρίῳ* of the house-code matches the *ἐν Χριστῷ* of the previous argument.

Moreover, the theme of unity, also of significance in the epistle is carried over into the *Haustafel*. The house-code does not address egalitarian concerns. It addresses the concern of unity within the household, and because the Colossian church was a house church, the *Haustafel* deals with unity within the worshiping community. Such unity within the family would function apologetically

to those outside the church, demonstrating that the Colossian Christians were not undermining the family unit, but reaffirming it and subjecting it under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God reconciled all things to himself (1:20). The Colossians, therefore, are to be reconciled to each other in the household and the worshiping community.

So the Colossian *Haustafel* is integrated into the letter, insofar as it is oriented around some very critical themes in the argument. It does not, however, appear to deal specifically with anything having to do with the Colossian philosophy. Rather, the house-code deals with the more common concern for good *οἰκονομία*. This brings to the surface one more pertinent question requiring an answer. If the Colossian *Haustafel* has nothing specifically to do with the Colossian philosophy, but reflects a broader cultural concern does this undermine my "new perspective" thesis? Is there doubt to be cast on the argument that the Colossian philosophy is basically Jewish in character? We turn to that question as the final issue.

#### THE HAUSTAFEL AND THE "NEW PERSPECTIVE"

I have argued throughout this thesis that the "new perspective" makes the best sense in reading Colossians. Yet, in supporting the position that the Colossian *Haustafel* is an example of the ancient concern for *οἰκονομία*, an interest common throughout the Roman empire, have I not cast some doubt upon the characteristically Jewish nature of the Colossian philosophy? Certainly the paraenesis of Galatians differs from Colossians at this point. Does this not

undermine my thesis? Several observations are in order.

First, I have argued that the Colossian philosophy is characteristically Jewish; that is, the major themes in Colossians are motifs critical to Jewish identity in the first century A.D. Circumcision, food laws, and the observance of Sabbath and other typically Jewish holy days, were not understood to be on the periphery of Judaism. They were integral to Judaism. Taken along with many other very important Jewish motifs-- Israel, Wisdom, Torah, Exodus, and apocalyptic present throughout the letter, the evidence clearly weighs in favor of a characteristically Jewish concern. Nowhere has it been suggested that every idea and notion in Colossians must be understood as distinctively Jewish. What has been argued is that syncretism is not adequate to describe the Colossian philosophy.

Second, the absence of a *Haustafel* in Galatians does not undermine the "new perspective" thesis of Colossians. The lack of a *Haustafel* in Galatians likely reflects the fact that at such an early date the suspicions of the wider society in reference to the church's undermining of the family had not yet risen. By the time of Colossians and Ephesians (and the other later letters of the New Testament, as well as other Christian documents containing house-codes) the suspicion had had a chance to grow, and the church felt the need to respond. The problem of *οἰκονομία* clearly seems to be a second and third generation issue in the church as demonstrated by the dating of the letters themselves. So the lack of a *Haustafel* in Galatians does not undermine the parallels between it and Colossians. Its absence simply reflects a concern not important or germane to the

Galatian churches.<sup>1032</sup> It is not critical that Colossians and Galatians be alike in every way for my thesis to stand. I have only suggested that the parallels between the two letters are of a significant character and this gives us insight into the nature of the Colossian philosophy.

Third, while *οἰκονομία* was not a uniquely Jewish concern, it was still a Jewish concern, and thus the *Haustafel* does not count against the "new perspective" thesis. Even though, it is difficult to know explicitly that the *Haustafel* is in some way a response to the synagogue, nevertheless, a few things may be suggested. If the *Haustafel* functioned apologetically, part of the synagogue's polemic against the Colossian church may have indeed been an accusation of the church's lack of interest in the good ordering of the household. The Jewish features of the *Haustafel* could have some bearing here. Indeed, a polemic portraying the Colossian Christians as those who want to claim a share in the inheritance of the people of God given to Israel could have some significance. If one of the criticisms from the synagogue was that the Colossians were unmindful of the necessities required to participate as the people of God in order to become rightful heirs of the inheritance, it could very easily give way to the criticism that the Colossians were also unmindful of the good ordering of the household as demonstrated in their confessional elements revealed in

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<sup>1032</sup>It must also be remembered that the problems vexing the Galatian churches were internal. As I have suggested the Colossian philosophy had its roots in the synagogue, meaning the problem came from outside the community of faith. Thus Paul and Timothy may have had an apologetical concern in Colossians that was simply not present in Galatians. This may explain the lack of a house-code of some sort, but I think it much more likely that one had yet to be written. Galatians predates any *Haustafel*.

Colossians 3:11. In a church where husbands, wives and slaves worshiped together, and where slaves could be referred to as "brothers," particularly when "brother" was a term that could refer to a fellow Israelite (Philemon 16),<sup>1033</sup> it is not inconceivable that as part of its polemic the synagogue could have criticized the church for its continued lack of playing by the rules as revealed in its lack of interest for those things that gave Israel its identity as the people of God, as well as its lack of concern for οἰκονομία. There is nothing in the context of the letter or in the *Haustafel* itself to confirm this. At least it can be said that when so much of Colossians is a response to Jewish "disqualifying," it is conceivable (though speculative) that the *Haustafel* is also a response to Jewish criticism. Thus the *Haustafel* in Colossians might have served as one more way to remind the Gentile Christians that, as a church, they could continue to live as Christians, as God' elect, even in the household, without having to accept the cultural identity associated with Judaism. The good ordering of the household was possible without Jewish identity.

Moreover, if the *Haustafel* is partially an affirmation of what should be "in Christ," it could serve as another reminder to the Colossians that they participate in the new order in Christ, as opposed to the synagogue which sees as significant those practices which, according to the authors of Colossians, are only a shadow of what has come to fulfillment in Christ. Thus the house-code would continue to reinforce the all-encompassing and all-sufficient aspect of participation in Christ which guides even family relations.

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<sup>1033</sup>Dunn, "Household Rules," p. 54.

Fourth, and more soberly than the previous point, but much more certain is the fact that while the Colossian *Haustafel* is not specifically Jewish, neither is it specifically Cynic or Stoic. The point here is that while the *Haustafel* cannot be used with certainty to argue for the characteristically Jewish nature of the philosophy, neither can it be used to demonstrate a characteristically Stoic, Cynic, or syncretistic philosophy. We are thus forced to look to the rest of the letter to illuminate in more clarity the nature of the Colossian philosophy, which is precisely what has been done. As has already been argued the letter reveals a characteristically Jewish problem.

Finally, regardless of the background of the *Haustafel*, 3:18-4:1 it is an integral part of the argument of the letter insofar as its orientation and motivation are concerned. So while the house-code may not explicitly bolster the "new perspective" argument for Colossians (though there are implicit possibilities), it further demonstrates the integrated nature of the paraenesis with the entire letter. In this respect the *Haustafel* still reveals the Jewish concern that identity and way of life must be one and the same. It is the rest of the letter which addresses concerns that relate clearly and critically to matters of paramount importance to first century Jews, who in the Roman world, sought to remain distinct as the people of God.

#### CONCLUSION

In the first part of the chapter it was argued that first and foremost the Colossian *Haustafel* serves as an example of good household management; a

concern that was clearly evident in the wider society as a whole. Apologetically this meant that the house-code would be a response to those outside the church who would have accused the Christians of being socially disruptive. The framework of the *Haustafel* clearly reflects this concern for οἰκονομία. The house-code reflects Jewish moral concerns as well.

It was the concern for οἰκονομία that raised the major concern of the next section on integration-- If the Colossian *Haustafel* shares the larger Jewish and Roman concerns for good household management, does this undermine the thesis that the paraenesis of Colossian is integrated into the argument of the letter? The *Haustafel* does not appear to be relevant to the previous argument presented by the authors.

It was concluded that while there is little specific connection to be made between the house-code and the situation being addressed in the epistle (although I did speculate on a few possible ways the *Haustafel* may be a response to the synagogue), the *Haustafel* is clearly integrated into the argument of the letter in reference to orientation and motivation.<sup>1034</sup> It continues to highlight the ἐν Χριστῷ/ἐν κυρίῳ theme and the theme of unity, both very important throughout the letter, as well as emphasizing the integration between theology and ethics.

The *Haustafel* would have given guidance in the daily relations between

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<sup>1034</sup>As M. Knowles, "'Christ is You, the Hope of Glory': Colossians." Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament ed. R. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 180-202, notes on page 199, "In one sense, the content of his [Paul's] admonitions is not new. Plutarch or Seneca, for example, might similarly have admonished wives to be submissive and children to be obedient. But Paul adds the distinctive qualifier: "as is fitting *in the Lord*" (3:18), "for this is your acceptable duty *in the Lord*" (3:20)."

family members. This was not simply material assisting the Colossians in how to live in the shadow of the waning eschatological hope. Its context is indeed eschatological. The house-code is one more example of how the Colossians are to live *ἐν κυρίῳ*, as persons who no longer live in the shadow of what was to come, but in the fullness of what has come in Christ.<sup>1035</sup> This is how the new humanity is to live. This is what it means to see that which is above. Christ has made it possible.

The Colossian *Haustafel* picks up the continued theme of unity in the letter. The *Haustafel* would have reminded the Colossians how they are to live with one another on a daily basis, and more importantly, it would have served to remind them of the necessary order they have in worship as a congregation. Thus in everything the Colossians do, even in worship, they must seek that which is above and focus on him. The unity reflected in the *Haustafel*<sup>1036</sup> is made possible by Christ who has reconciled to himself all things (1:20).

In the last part of this chapter I attempted to answer a major question raised by the study of the *Haustafel*-- Since the house-code reflects the common concern for *οἰκονομία*, does this undermine my thesis that the Colossian philosophy is Jewish in character? In response to this I made several observations. 1) The major themes in Colossians are motifs critical to Jewish identity in the first

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<sup>1035</sup>Ibid., p. 198, "...their life of Christian discipleship is repeatedly said to consist of conformity to the work of God, either within them or in their midst-- as is only fitting if the very nature of the character of God, as revealed in Christ, provides their inspiration (so 1 Cor. 2:9-13, 16; Phil. 2:5)."

<sup>1036</sup>See Meeks, "In One Body, p. 214.

century A.D. Circumcision, foods laws, and Sabbath observance were integral to Judaism. The Jewishness of the philosophy is also seen in other very important Jewish motifs-- Israel, Wisdom, Torah, Exodus, and the apocalypticism present in the letter. One does not need a characteristically "Jewish" *Haustafel* to confirm the argument that the Colossian philosophy is essentially Jewish. 2) The absence of a house-code in Galatians does not count against the "new perspective" thesis. Galatians simply predates a concern which would have warranted the composition of a *Haustafel*. 3) The *Haustafel* was not a uniquely Jewish concern, but it was still a Jewish concern all the same. This does not confirm the "new perspective" thesis, but neither does it count against it. I did speculate, however, that the house-code could be a response to an accusation from the synagogue that the Colossian Christians, who were not playing by the rules of Judaism, were also not playing by the rules of what ordered a good household.

In addition, the *Haustafel* may have served as a reminder to the Colossians that in Christ they were part of the new order which had critical bearing on household relationships. This might have been one last subtle response to the Colossian philosophers whose practice continued to reflect the shadow of a way of life whose substance and fulfillment was found in Christ. Thus the *Haustafel* was another way of reminding the Colossians they could be faithful "in the Lord" as Gentile believers without taking on Jewish identity, even in the household. 4) While the *Haustafel* cannot be said to be uniquely Jewish, neither can it be said to be uniquely Stoic, Cynic, or syncretistic. This means that while we can only speculate concerning the *Haustafel* and its relationship to the characteristically

Jewish problem in the letter, neither can it be used to argue for an essentially Stoic, Cynic, or syncretistic problem.

Once again, the key to the argument that the Colossian philosophy is characteristically Jewish is not to be found directly in the house-code, but throughout the letter that comes prior. What is argued from 1:1-3:17 gives sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is the case.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Two arguments have been made in this thesis. First, the target of the Colossian philosophy is essentially Jewish. The letter is a response to issues raised by the synagogues in Colossae that the Christians there have no right to claim a share in the inheritance of Israel. Colossians is a carefully argued rebuttal justifying those claims of rightful inheritance. Second, I have argued that once Colossians is read in light of this background the paraenesis, so often thought as an unrelated appendix to the argument, is in actuality an integral part of the whole.

In reference to the first argument, I suggested that more needed to be made of the relationship between Colossians and Galatians (a letter which clearly addresses concerns inherent to Judaism). I did precisely this by drawing attention to five parallels between the two letters-- circumcision, Sabbath and special days, food laws, τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and angels, and the unity formulas of Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11. The collective effect of these parallels is to strengthen the argument that the Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish.

Following this I gave added validity to the argument by analyzing other Jewish themes which are conspicuous in the letter-- themes which are clearly steeped in the theology of Israel, and are used in the argument of Colossians. It was demonstrated that these themes are intrinsically related to Israel's own self-understanding as the people of Yahweh. This self-understanding, which I have called "The Israel Motif," is used in Colossians to argue that the Gentile Christians at Colossae are justified in understanding themselves as the people of

God because of the work of Christ.

The three major themes of the Israel Motif present in Colossians are Jesus and wisdom, Christ as the embodiment of Torah, and the Exodus and the work of Christ. Utilizing these three themes I argued that Colossians 1:12-14 would have invoked in the Colossians thoughts of the Exodus. This prepared the way for the Christ-hymn which portrays Christ's work of reconciliation as the final return from slavery. In the hymn the Jewish notions of wisdom, Torah, and Israel are linked together in order to argue that Christ is all-sufficient for the Colossians. I continued the argument that the Christ-hymn is presented in images that would clearly find their home in the Judaism of the first century. These themes reappear throughout the letter and are continually referred to in order to argue, once again, that the Colossians have a place in the inheritance of the people of God through Christ-- the hidden mystery which is now proclaimed.

The first major part of the thesis thus argues to the conclusions that the Colossians were tempted to observe, at the very least, some of the more important regulations of the Torah, and that Paul and Timothy resorted to notions crucial to Jewish identity in order to refute the criticisms levelled at their Gentile Christian readers from the Colossian synagogue.

The paraenetic material in Colossians would normally be read in a manner which runs counter to the Jewish thesis. In contrast, however, I contended with the strand of scholarship which has argued that the best way to read Colossians 3:1-4 is against the background of Jewish apocalyptic thought. Not only does Colossians 3:1-4 highlight the Colossians' participation in God's eschatological

renewal in Christ, but the passage harkens back to themes previously raised--  
 $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ , divine wisdom, and "circumcision with" and "without hands." This transition to the paraenesis proper is as Jewish as anything which has preceded.

Discussion of the paraenesis proper began with an analysis of the ethical lists in Colossians 3:5. Several conclusions were drawn from this analysis. First, the ethical lists do not simply reflect the conventional morality of the time. While the pattern of the lists is conventional, the content is not. Second, the ethical lists give concrete expression to the exhortation to put off the old man and be clothed with the new, to be rid of the things of the earth and set one's mind on the things above. The ethical lists are bound up with the person and work of the resurrected Christ. The hallmark of the Christian life of virtue is not found in the cardinal virtues of classical Greece, but in love and forgiveness exemplified in Christ. Indeed the virtues are reminiscent of the life of Christ and his teaching, and the vices run contrary to that life. Third, the ethical lists likely reflect a wider unfixed catechetical tradition based on Jewish priorities, where the concern expressed in the virtue lists is the unity of the church, and where the concern stated in the list of vices is mainly sexual immorality and idolatry (clearly a Jewish concern)-- vices that will destroy the unity of the community. Fourth, Paul freely uses the Jewish imagery in the letter to argue that the Colossians walk as participants in the new creation. This ties in with the concern of Colossians 1:15-20 etc. Yet, the Jewish character of the paraenesis does not reinforce the idea that the Colossians should live as Jews, that is, they should not accept the badges of Jewish ethnic identity, so bound up with the identity

of the people of God Israel. Living as the people of God involves, for the Colossians, not living as Jews or Gentiles, but living as Christians.

Most significantly I have argued that Colossians is appropriately read against the background of the "new perspective" on Paul. In so doing I have concluded that as Torah observance was considered by Judaism to be the appropriate consequence of Israel's identity as the people of God, so Paul and Timothy exhort the Colossians to obey in response to God's gracious election of them in Christ. The paraenesis represents concrete guidelines for their obedience. Therefore, the writers of Colossians and the Jewish philosophers in Colossae shared a very similar perspective in which who one is and what one does cannot be separated from each other. Being and doing, identity and living are integrated together. Ethics is indeed theology.

Finally, I argued that the major concern expressed in the Colossian *Haustafel* is *οἰκονομία*; a concern evident in the wider society. The house-code functioned apologetically as a response to those who were suspicious of the church's familial relationships and their implications for the social order. It also functioned internally as instruction concerning a well ordered home, and a well ordered worshiping congregation. The *Haustafel* served the dual function of promoting unity within the family and unity within the house-church.

The *Haustafel* was not material meant to assist the Colossians in how to live in the shadow of the waning eschatological hope. Indeed, its context is eschatological. The *Haustafel*, like the ethical lists, is one more example of how the Colossians are to live *ἐν κυρίῳ*.

While there is little explicit connection to be made between the *Haustafel* and the situation of the letter (I have suggested some implicit correlations), the house-code is clearly integrated into the argument of the letter in reference to orientation and motivation. In particular it is integrated in the ἐν Χριστῷ/ἐν κυρίῳ and the unity themes so prominent in the letter, and thus continues to affirm the theology/ethics integration.

In sum, then, it would appear that those in the synagogue, the advocates of the Colossian philosophy, wanted to disqualify the Colossian Christians from sharing in Israel's heritage because they were not playing by the rules necessary to obtain the prize of that heritage (2:16). They ignored the badges of identity so bound up with Israel's identity as the people of God. In response, Paul and Timothy wrote to encourage the Colossians to continue to walk in the way of the one they have received-- Jesus Christ (2:6). They were taught that Christ was sufficient. He remains sufficient for them as God's people. They need nothing else. Thus in the paraenesis, the authors can admonish the Colossians to continue to live as the people of God who share in the heritage of Israel. They are "God's chosen, holy and beloved" (3:12). They are not disqualified as the people of God. They, therefore, must live as the people of God.

This is what the entire letter wants to emphasize-- Who the Colossians are "in Christ" and what it means to live "in Christ." This is central to the argument. Christ is completely sufficient for the Colossians. Nothing else is needed. That is why Paul and Timothy could insist to the Christians in Colossae that no one could disqualify them. The authors of Colossians shared the concern

of those in the synagogue-- the people of God must live as the people of God. The bone of contention was whether or not the Gentile Christians in Colossae could be God's chosen and live as God's chosen without the badges of identity that kept the promises of the covenant only in the hands of ethnic Israel. Paul and Timothy remind the Colossians of what they were taught from the beginning-- they had been raised with Christ and that new life in Christ gave to them, as the people of God, the "new perspective" necessary and sufficient to "lead lives worthy of the Lord."

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