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IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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The Significance of the phrase
"In Christ"
in the writings of St. Paul

Published by
Beacon Hill Press
Kansas City, Missouri

First Printing 1960

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Beacon Hill Press
Kansas City, Missouri

Library of Congress Card No. 60-13196

Printed in the United States of America

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IN CHRIST
By
John B. Nielson

DEDICATED

to

Marguerite,

John,

Merritt,

Patricia,

William

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FOREWORD

No study of the life and teachings of St. Paul would be complete without the paying of a considerable amount of attention to the meaning of the expression "in Christ" and its various correlatives, an expression which is probably the most frequent of all the apostle's characteristic terms. But this expression is sufficiently important to justify the specialized and intensive study which is undertaken in this volume. I, for one, welcome its appearance and predict that a careful reading of it will bring about a greatly enhanced appreciation of the religious experience and Christian thought of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

It has been my privilege to know the author of this book for most of his life, and his parents before him. No one has a more goodly and honored heritage than he, and none has been more consistently loyal to that heritage. I count it a privilege to commend both this book and its author to all for whom a word from me may carry any weight.

J. Glenn Gould

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PREFACE

When the phrase "in Christ" first struck my mind as being highly significant in the thought of Paul, I was pastoring my first church in rural Vermont. Through these intervening years the importance that should be attached to these words in understanding the great apostle has become more and more evident. This volume is sent forth, therefore, in the hope that it will contribute somewhat to a greater appreciation of what it meant for Paul to experience Christ, and of the implications of that encounter for all mankind.

For their counsel and encouragement I wish to express my appreciation to my teachers at Brown University, Rev. Edgar C. Reckard, chaplain, and Professor Ernest Frerichs; and to Dr. J. Glenn Gould, professor of theology at Eastern Nazarene College, under whose preaching ministry my own call to the Christian ministry was crystallized. To my preacher father and my godly mother, who provided for me the example, and inspired in me the love of Christ, I owe more than I can tell.

May I take this opportunity also to thank the various publishers for permission to quote from their publications, and Miss Alice Whiting for her careful and considerate work in typing the manuscript.

Pawtucket, R.I., 1959

John B. Nielson

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following publishers have kindly granted permission to quote from their publications:

Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee: Chapters in a Life of Paul, John Knox.

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Our Hope of Survival, George L. Murray, 1951.

Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, New York: The Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul, W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson.

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Fleming H. Revell Company, Westwood, New Jersey: Commentary on the Whole Bible, Matthew Henry.

Schocken Publishing House, New York: "The quotations from Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, by Gershom G. Scholem, are printed by permission of Schocken Books Inc., New York; copyright 1941 by Schocken Publishing House, Jerusalem, copyright 1946 by Schocken Books, Inc., New York, copyright 1954 by Schocken Books Inc., New York.

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, New York: Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, (art. "Jesus Christ," W. Douglass Mackenzie) 1915; International Critical Commentary, (art. "Second Corinthians," Alfred Plummer); (art. "Romans," William Sanday); (art. "Philippians," Marvin R. Vincent); History of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff's, 1922; A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, (art. "Galatians," John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff); A History of the Christian Church, Williston Walker.

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Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, From Early Christian Fathers. Tr. and ed. by Cyril C. Richardson. Published 1953 by the Westminster Press. Used by permission.

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"To make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."
(Eph. 6:19, A.R.V.)

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."
(II Cor. 5:19)

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."
(II Cor. 5:17, A.R.V.)

IN CHRIST

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Chapter 1

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHRASE

A deep religious experience, an abiding fellowship with his Lord, a rare insight into theological thought, and a practical life of continuing resourcefulness are outstanding features of the life of Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Most of our knowledge of the life of Paul comes from his own pen in the form of Epistles, or letters, numbering about thirteen. They are written to groups as well as to individuals.

A hasty perusal of his letters will reveal an intriguing absorption in a single word. That word is "Christ," and it will be found mentioned many times on nearly every page. On close examination one will find that the word is used in the most varied connections and relationships to describe almost every aspect of his life. In fact, Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21) ^[1]

One will further find that this word takes on a characteristic form in Paul. He combines it in a most significant manner with the preposition en (in). He uses the word "Christ" with nearly every preposition, but the one phrase en Christo, "in Christ," describes Paul's testimony and experience as no other expression seems to do. It is his characteristic expression and a testimony of relationship to Christ — Paul in Christ and Christ in Paul. He summarizes his thought on this matter in these words:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The phrase en Christo is therefore herein offered in the place of other potent Pauline concepts, such as "justification," "reconciliation," and "law," as a better and more complete basis for the understanding of Paul and his message.

The significance of the phrase en Christo in the writings of Paul the Apostle will therefore be pursued in the following chapters. His oft recurring use of the phrase is enough to suggest an unusual importance that he must have conceived to reside in the phrase.

Our task will be to seek to determine: the source of the concept in Paul's thinking and religion, in what connections and relations he used it, the meaning that he discovered or put into it, how he applied the phrase, and its power as a formula for the solution of theoretical and practical problems.

Since mystical experience is so vitally connected with the thought contained in the phrase, it would be well to define mysticism as it is to be understood in this book. Rufus Jones defines mysticism as

"the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage." (Studies in Mystical Religion, 1909.) ^[2]

The immense importance that is wrapped up in Paul's unique phrase en Christo will come to light, it is hoped, as it is cast in its different settings and put under various tests in the succeeding pages.

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Chapter 2

SOURCE OF THE PHRASE

It is our thesis that the phrase en Christo is at the very center of Paul's religion. It is the formula for his gospel which he preached authoritatively everywhere (Gal. 1:8, 12). This formula grew out of a new relation that he held with Christ, a two-way relationship that was a vital union—he in Christ and Christ in him. Christ had become for him not a Person of the historic past that he could contemplate but a live Person with whom he held communion.

Paul's en Christo is a formula of no mean power. He applies it to any situation of life and finds it sufficient. Man is "redeemed," "ransomed," "reconciled," "justified," "adopted," "sanctified," "resurrected," and so on, all in union with Christ. All his relationships in life are sustained in this union with Christ. And he describes all the experience, feeling, thought, and will of the believer as taking place in Him, as we shall see later.

The thought can naturally arise, Where did Paul get such a phrase of such universal application? Whence did it come? Did it arise out of his environment, or his heritage, or did it spring from a crucial experience?

Paul was ideally conditioned for this insight by the environment and heritage that were his. Some such questions as the following must have plagued him as he contemplated the heathen people of the Roman world: Are the Jews the only ones whom God loves? Will the Jews ever rule the world in the face of such overwhelming Roman might? Is there no hope for all these? And his answer had to be, "No hope," until he found the answer in Christ. He pointedly asks, "Is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: if so be that God is one" (Rom. 3:29-30). All who believe are justified "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

Let us look at Paul's environment. Did this concept arise from that?

Paul was first of all a Jew: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). He was not, therefore, a proselyte Jew, as he makes clear. He was also "a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees" (Acts 23:6), which sect he called "the strictest sect of our religion" (Acts 26:5). As regards his loyalty to the all-important law of the religion of his race he says, "As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless" (Phil. 3:6). There is no question as to Paul's race and religion and loyalty thereto.

But Paul was also a Jew of the Dispersion. And as such he was compelled to live in a totally different environment from his kinsmen in his homeland. He was born in the city of Tarsus, capital of the province of Cilicia in Asia Minor. It was a Grecian city under Roman domination, an important seaport with much commerce and as such, a large city. It was temperate in climate, situated on the Cydnus River, fed by the Taurus Mountains. ^[3]

An important Greek university was there, and Strabo says, "'In all that relates to philosophy and general education it was even more illustrious than Athens and Alexandria.' " [4]

The city was Roman in government. Here Paul would see Roman soldiers frequently. Though taught by the synagogue that God was all-powerful he would see that Rome, for the present, was almighty, and gave him what freedom he had in a foreign culture. [5]

Tarsus was "no mean city" (Acts 21:39).

But young Paul (or Saul) was reared in a Hebrew home, his father a Pharisee. This home was a refuge from the sinful world outside. Deuteronomy 6 shows us what Paul's home life would be like. He would continually be reminded of his religious heritage: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah ... And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates" (Deut. 6:4-9).

But it would be a totally different world outside. Paul would see evil of every sort, even to male prostitution (Romans 1:23 ff.). He would see hardened Roman soldiers everywhere. He would hear the traveling philosophers and teachers spreading their false religions at the public square or street corner. [6] He would learn at least three languages: Hebrew at the synagogue for religious purposes, Greek for trading, and Latin for dealing with the government. We know that Paul must have known Greek well when he could stand forth in the middle of the Areopagus at Athens and preach to the Greeks there (Acts 17:22-31).

Paul's worship and education in the synagogue were second best and were made necessary by gentile domination. For the Jew, Jerusalem was the only proper place of worship. Synagogue worship and education were out of sheer necessity, as they are today. Each Jew of the Dispersion hoped to see Jerusalem and worship there at least once in his lifetime. [7] Though the synagogue made it possible for the Jew to encyst himself, as someone has said, in the social organism and to resist assimilation into the surrounding culture, yet he could not wholly avoid the Grecian and Roman influences. So, beside learning Hebrew, he would also learn to read the Old Testament in Greek. He would become acquainted with the monotheism of the Greeks, the mystery religions with their emphasis on sacraments, immortality, and deification. [8] And, what is very important, he would later become thoroughly acquainted with the traditions associated with the law of his fathers when he studied in Jerusalem "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3).

But the striking discovery is this, that though Paul would recognize and understand the gentile mystery religions and grow up in their atmosphere, yet "he cannot have known the mystery religions in the form in which they are known to us, because in this fully developed form they did not yet exist." [9] Besides, there is no concept comparable to in Christ in the mystery religions and literature of the ancient Grecian world. [10] Neither is there the idea of a Redeemer-God in Hellenism, [11] that is, God becoming man in order to redeem. In Hellenism it is always the other way, as it is in the heathen religions; the initiate, by copying the divinity, becomes divine, is deified. [12] But Paul's en

Christo concept is union in the sense of fellowship and identification, but never in the sense of the deification of the believer, that is, the believer becoming God.

The question might be asked here concerning the Greek word *entheos* (in God). For the Greek mind, though similar in form to Paul's *en Christo*, it does not have the meaning of union. It means "inspired by a god." ^[13] The word is not found in the new Testament. ^[14]

Schweitzer concludes that "Paulinism ... is an original phenomenon which is wholly distinct from Greek theology." ^[15]

However brilliantly Schweitzer discusses this aspect of the problem, he misses the real source of the concept, which is Paul's own experience of Christ at Damascus. "All attempts to explain Paul's fundamental doctrine of the Person of Christ except through his contact with the primitive Christian community and through his faith in the risen Christ, have utterly failed. A profound experience was the beginning of his Christology." ^[16] However, this does not mean that Paul did not take advantage of Hellenistic culture to preach his message. As Conybeare and Howson say, Paul was Hellenistic, but not Hellenizing. ^[17] He never hesitated to use Hellenistic terms in which to couch his revelation of Christ and His benefits.

He employed the word *charis*, "grace." For the Greeks this word stood for all that was good and beautiful in their culture. It was but a step to its employment to depict the glories and beauties of the unmerited favor of his God through and in union with his Christ (Gal. 2:16-21; Titus 2:11).

Kurios, "Lord," was another thought-form of the Greeks. It was a common Greek appellation for any deity. Paul seized the word and applied it to his Christ He said Jesus Christ is Lord. He further defined his meaning by adding that He is God manifested in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16). This is all new to the mythical conceptions of the gentile religions. Paul equates his Christ with God.

"Lordship was the essential quality of Jesus, and divine operations are described in terms either of God or of Christ: "the tribunal of God" (Rom. 14:10) is identical with the "tribunal of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10); "the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:35) is identical with "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39); . . . "faith towards God" (1 Thess. 1:8) is parallel to "faith towards Christ" (Col. 2:5)," etc. ^[18]

Paul also used the word *Κυριος* (Lord) to describe God as "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24), as in his sermon on Mars' Hill.

Then there is the word *Χριστος* (Christ), a translation of the Hebrew word for Messiah. Rather than transpose the beloved Hebrew expression, Paul prefers to translate it into a Greek form and fill it full of Messianic content. The meaning of this term, it is hoped, will be brought out in subsequent chapters.

"It has not been proved that anything essentially new was added to his Christology from any of these sources," that is, the mystery religions, Gnostic philosophy, or Stoic philosophy. ^[19]

But Paul was acquainted with their phrases and forms and used them to describe his own unique mystical experience of Christ. The most that can be said is that Paul sought to make himself understood in the gentile world in the language of his day. His ability to transfer Jewish thought-forms into Hellenistic is remarkable. Christ is more than a great being, or emanation, or power, or created divinity. Paul sought "to reveal to them in their own language that which He is essentially for the Christian consciousness." [20]

It must be said that there is scant evidence for Paul's concept in Judaism. In fact Jewish scholarship denies the thought. "The particular aspects of Christian mysticism, which are connected with the person of the savior and mediator between God and man, the mystical interpretation of the Passion of Christ, which is repeated in the personal experience of the individual—all this is foreign to Judaism, and also to its mystics." [21]

On the other hand, the notion of God's dwelling in the midst or among His people is clearly acceptable to Judaism, but never the Pauline interpretation God in man or man in God. In Lev. 26:11-12 we read as follows, "And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people," says God. In Exodus we have the thought again: "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Exod. 29:45). This concept is prevalent in the Old Testament scriptures. The prepositions used here are in "or in the midst of," be-thokh and be-kerev. [22] Judaism says that this has the meaning only of God's tabernacling among men, not union of man with God in the Pauline sense.

Union with God is conceivable to Judaism, but only in eschatological fulfillment. According to Sholem there are at least three stages in the historical development of religion. First is the stage where "nature is the scene of man's relation with God"; second, the moral and religious stage; and last, the mystical stage of immediate awareness of God. [23] Paul refers to these same three stages in Romans where he says, first, that man "changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23); second, that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18); and third, that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

And Paul adds that this final stage of immediate awareness of God in his mutual sense of God in man and man in God is fully reached in a spiritual sense when one is "in Christ." In II Cor. 6:16 ff., Paul interprets these Old Testament passages cited above in the following manner:

"What agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God: even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

It is proper to infer that Paul saw these Old Testament passages in the light of union. He spiritualized the physical connotations of the Old Testament passages and saw them fulfilled in Christ. For did not Paul have such an experience of God in Christ at Damascus? Paul says,

"But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:4-6).

And again, he says,

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; he who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

And,

"For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, etc. (Titus 2:11-14).

One more passage will suffice:

"But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6).

Here we see Paul using the Trinitarian names of God, and using them interchangeably, as we shall notice more fully later. ^[24] Paul is saying no other than that Christ is God.

Paul says that Judaism cannot see this truth because in the reading of the Old Testament a veil remains over the mind, but "it is done away in Christ" (II Cor. 3:14). "But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (II Cor. 3:15-16).

Paul with the Psalmist challenges the whole world to "taste and see that Jehovah is good: blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him" (Ps. 34:8). Paul sees Judaism fulfilled in Christ; Judaism sees itself perverted in the spiritualizing of the Old Testament redemptive message. ^[25]

As we noticed before, Schweitzer understands union with God, as Judaism does, only in eschatological fulfillment, that is, in the life to come. But it is interesting to note that in the Middle Ages, in Germany, Jewish mysticism took an interesting turn. Among the Hasidim, God is described as inhabiting the soul.

"This, we are told, is the true meaning of the word (Deut. 7:21) "for the Lord thy God is in your midst," the "in your midst" being a pregnant reference not to the people — although this is doubtless

the meaning of the Torah — but to the individual. Thus with the aid of mystical exegesis the theory of divine immanence and the conception of God as the inmost ground of the soul is traced back to the Torah itself—an idea wholly foreign to the old Merkabah mystics." [26]

This is exactly what Paul has done. He says that if union with God is possible beyond time why cannot God break the, so to speak, eschatological barrier and be immanent now, as indeed He is in Christ?

D. M. Baillie on this point asks the significant question of those who wish to have God and the Jesus of history without Christology, "Are you sure that you know what you mean by God?" [27] Is God vitally interested in man or did He send someone in His place, or did He come himself? Paul reinforces Jesus' parable of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep and says that God was in Christ reconciling. In the words of Baillie, reconciliation all "takes place within the very life of God himself, for if we take the Christology of the New Testament at its highest we can only say that 'God was in Christ' in that great atoning sacrifice, and even that the Priest and the Victim were none other than God." [28]

It is true that the evidence for the concept of union with God is scant in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament era Paul is one of the first to realize it, as, at Damascus, he did in the moment of the revelation of Christ to himself. This concept before Damascus must have been wholly impossible to Paul; for he was a Pharisee, in the words of Sholem, in the second stage of the development of religion. Paul sought by every means to persecute and waste the Church of Christ, thinking that he was doing service to God. Breathing out threatenings and slaughter he made havoc of the Church (Acts 9:1).

But, according to Paul's own testimony, a sudden experience at Damascus changed all that. And Paul entered into a new experience and relationship with God. And he affirms that it was made possible through and in relation with Christ Jesus. He is so sure of his experience and its universal application to mankind that he says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17).

Here, then, is a unique phrase, that is, *en Christo*, arising, not out of great thinking, but out of a great experience. As someone has said, if this concept came out of Paul's philosophizing, then we have Paul as the originator of a new religion; [29] but Paul makes no such claim. He certifies that this concept was received from God; he defies contradiction; he consulted not with the disciples or apostles, but with God in the Arabian desert. He says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood . . . but I went away into Arabia" (Gal. 1:16-17). "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (I Cor. 11:23).

Paul was wholly untrained for such a view as union with God. Before his conversion his God was afar off, unknowable. His life was one of compulsion. Pharisaical prohibitions were multiplied. While the Greek gods were immanent, his God was transcendent. He was aloof. But suddenly, at Damascus, this was all changed. God's abiding presence in the person of Christ, the Son of God, in present fellowship was so much to the Apostle all the rest of his life, that it overshadows in his epistles even the words and acts of Christ on earth (except, of course, the resurrection, which was

the means of his omnipresence) . . . That was Christianity to him, and out of that, his actual daily experience, comes all his theology. ^[30]

If it were the mere historic Jesus that Paul was believing in, he would have sought out the apostles, ^[31] but we find that he sought out Christ himself. Paul could truly and growingly say, "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more" (II Cor. 5:16). He had put off the prevailing Judaistic conception at Damascus by force of a revelation and saw redemption in spiritual terms instead of only material and nationalistic terms.

Paul was sure of his experience and relationship and could challenge Peter at Antioch without fear. In so many words he said, "Peter, you may add legalistic and physical requirements to faith in Christ if you wish, but you renounce Christ when you do. 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me'" (Gal. 2:14-20) ^[32]

This was an important break with the prevailing Jewish conceptions of knowing God in mystical experience. But as the black light reveals unseen colors, so the light of the glory of God in Christ revealed to Paul new insights which are implicit in the phrase in Christ.

IN CHRIST

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John B. Nielson

Chapter 3

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING OUTSIDE PAUL'S WRITINGS

Out of his experience of Christ on the road to Damascus, then, there came to Paul a realization of the immanence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And through his surrender to the risen Christ he came to realize that he was in sympathy and accord with the aims and work of Christ. Paul says that the love of Christ constrains him to work for Christ. He pleads, therefore, with the world, in Christ's place, that it might be reconciled to God and His saviourhood and lordship (II Cor. 5:19-21). Paul summarizes this experience and mission in the phrase, *en Christo*.

Having placed the source of this unique, and no doubt original, phrase in Paul's own experience, it will be necessary to see if this concept is to be found in the New Testament outside of Paul's writings. Is Paul distinctive and different? Does he contradict the other writers of the New Testament? Or is he in agreement? Let us see.

There are only three instances where the phrase *en Christo* is used outside of Paul. Those instances are all in I Peter, as follows:

"But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ" (I Pet. 3:15-16).

And,

"And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen (I Pet. 5:10-11).

And finally,

"Peace be unto you all that are in Christ" (I Pet. 5:14).

In each of these verses the idea of union is clearly seen, though in the second instance is also the idea of the agency of Christ.

Peter also speaks of the Spirit of Christ operating in the prophets of the Old Testament (I Pet. 1:10-11). He also speaks of the identification of the believer with the sufferings and example of Christ (I Pet. 2:22-24; 4:1, 12-16.), and as a means to future glory (I Pet. 5:1).

The evidence is overwhelmingly, however, in favor of Paul's authorship of the phrase, and according to Alfred Plummer, the use of the phrase in Peter "may be due to Pauline influence."^[33]

The conclusion to be drawn from James is that he, in his one Epistle, does not contradict Paul, but lays his stress on the evidence of the union with Christ as being manifest in a changed life. He is simply stating that to believe in God is not necessarily to be in union and fellowship with God. He says:

"Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. . . For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:18-26).

He is merely stating what Paul had stated before him, that faith in Christ results in a new life, a new creation (II Cor. 5:17).

Turning to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it seems that the primary purpose of the Epistle is to show the agency of Christ in man's redemption (chapters 1 and 2) and the agency of faith as the means of appropriation of the benefits of that redemption (Heb. 11:1 ff.). And though the phrase "in Christ" is not found in the Epistle, the idea is not foreign to it. The believer shares in Christ (Heb. 3:14) and partakes of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4). And "both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11).

But the incarnational aspect of union, that is, Christ becoming manifest in flesh, is a major premise of this Epistle (chapters 1 and 2, especially), and it is emphasized to reveal the extent of God's activity to bring about the restoration of all things to himself through Jesus Christ (2:17; 9:26; 10:12-14; and so on). However, though the Epistle is definite as regards the incarnation and instrumentality of Christ as man's Redeemer, it seems to fall short of the extreme warmth of Paul's *en Christo* (in Christ) in the sense of man's union with Christ.

Paul's concept of mystic union is implicit in the teachings of Jesus as reported by John and the Synoptic authors. It will be well to review especially John's record and understanding of the teachings and acts of Jesus.

John gives us Jesus' parable of the vine and the branches in chapter 15 of his Gospel. In it Jesus teaches that as the branch draws its life and produces its fruit through union with the trunk of the vine, so the believer draws his spiritual nourishment and immortality from Christ and produces the fruits of Christian morality through union with Him. Jesus states that He is the "vine" and that the believers in Him are the "branches." This is all that Jesus meant to teach by the parable. There is no thought of deification of the believer here, for the unbelieving and fruitless branch is destroyed. The emphasis is on the believer's abiding in union with Christ as the source of Christian life and conduct.

In another connection John reports that, as God has given to the Son of God to have life in himself (John 5:26-27) with power to lay it down and power to take it up again (John 10:18), Jesus therefore is able to impart life to whomever He wills, and they shall live forever (John 10:28; 17:2).

In his discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus uses the figure of the new birth to indicate man's mystic union with Christ (John 3:3-6). This figure is echoed in Paul's statement, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). Jesus climaxes His teaching on the new creation with the classic verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In the light of John's First Epistle this verse may be interpreted as follows, that whosoever believes the record that God has given of His Son by being in union with Him has eternal life. This is the meaning of these words,

"for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John 5:9-12).

John witnessed that Jesus meant that eternal life could be imparted only through union with the source of life, Jesus Christ.

Union is also displayed in the Lord's Communion meal. Jesus said, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). In the sacrament of Communion, Jesus taught in its deepest significance the union of the believer with himself. That Jesus did not mean the above acts literally, but symbolically, is seen by His denominating the bread and the wine as symbols of His broken body and poured-out life (Luke 22:19-20). This is an inward and spiritual experience of mystical union. "The mechanical act was nothing, apart from the higher process which constituted its inner meaning, and to which it gave effect." ^[34]

By partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper one symbolizes his identification with Christ, and declares it. In the breaking of bread every "oriental would understand its significance as a symbol of unity." ^[35] Jesus' broken body and poured-out blood were to be the means of continued union with himself and others through Him, and the broken bread and wine were to be continuing symbols of His broken body and blood, a memorial of the union.

Jesus explains the nature of the sacrament by concluding: "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63).

The whole act must be done in a sincere manner or the act but highlights one's hypocrisy and traitorous character. Jesus pointed up Judas as the arch-traitor when He said, "He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (Matt. 26:23). And Paul adds, "Whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (I Cor. 11:27-29).

As a final instance of the idea of union in the teaching of Jesus let us note the prayer of Jesus in John 17. He prays:

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word, ^[36] that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: . . . that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (John 17:20-23).

Paul probably had no access to any written words of Jesus, and he says that he did not confer with the disciples about his experience of Christ, but with Christ himself. From Him he learned by experience the conception embodied in the words of Jesus quoted above. How like these words are the words of Paul when he uses the formulas, I in Christ and Christ in me!

The union that Jesus speaks of here is not union in the sense of deification of the believer or a becoming a part of God, but it is mystic union in the sense of agreement and commitment of the believer to the lordship and saviourhood of the Godhead, in the sense of living and abiding fellowship with God through and in union with Christ.

King Christian of Denmark was quoted by a Danish refugee in Stockholm as saying, "If the Germans want to put the yellow Jewish star in Denmark, I and my whole family will wear it as a sign of the highest distinction." The refugee said that King Christian, who had protested against Germany's persecution of Danish Jews, made the statement to leaders of the Danish Lutheran church. Germany had forced Jews in other occupied countries to wear stars in public as a means of identification.

In expressing his willingness to wear the yellow Jewish star as a "sign of the highest distinction," the King provides, in a measure, an illustration of what Paul intends when he speaks of the union of the believer with Christ as identification with Him.

If this passage speaks of deification of the believer, then Schweitzer and others are correct when they say that John casts the formula in Grecian forms, and paganizes it. ^[37] But in each instance we find that Jesus speaks of union in mystical and spiritual terms, but not including absorption into His being. He should be so understood here from His prayer for the sanctification of the believers that they all may be one in order that the "glory" which He had with His Father before the world was created may be restored, that is, the glory that was His when all the universe adored Him. That glory was the acknowledgment of His unchallenged lordship by every creature, which glory was diminished by rebellion. But in His redemptive work and subsequent ascension and exaltation to the right hand of the Father the glory is restored (John 17:1 ff.). Jesus' prayer is a plea for the identification of the believer with the universal design of Deity.

The Synoptics do not deal very much with the idea of union from a mystical sense. However they do speak of the "supper," and faith and baptism; but it seems they speak more from a historical point of view than from an interpretive one. But John is very much taken up with it. "This doctrine of a mystical union, in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to

the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel." [38] Christ has life in himself, as the Father does, and so can transmit it to the believer, as the vine to the branches.

For John the union is effected by faith, never by the sacraments; faith is always prior to the sacraments. "Whosoever believeth" (John 3:16, etc.) is his recurring phrase for the basis of union. And the sacraments are the external symbols of the union. John omitted many details of the Last Supper in order, perhaps, to stay clear of investing it with any superstitious value. [39] He sought to emphasize the spiritual meaning of it all because the Eucharist could be thought to give power to men to dispense salvation. [40]

Deissmann sums up our study of mysticism in John in these words, "The most imposing monument of a genuine and thorough understanding of the Pauline mysticism is furnished by the Gospel and Epistles of John." [41] And Scott argues conclusively for the inward, spiritual meaning of union with Christ in John. [42]

We find a common understanding of this idea in John, Jesus, and Paul. Any conflict has to be manufactured by some such device as denying God-mysticism in Paul, or a literal interpretation of such figures of speech as the "body of Christ," the "bride of Christ," "broken bread," "wine," "heirs," etc. These should be conceived as human thought-forms that lend insight into the ultimate meaning of union with Christ. No one figure conveys the whole truth, nor can one narrow the New Testament concept to just one phase of the total meaning embodied in one of these symbols. They are symbols of a real experience, but symbols nonetheless.

If we do not regard these as figures of speech to convey a spiritual meaning, we shall be led into all sorts of absurdities; that we eat the body of Christ and drink the blood of God, that water washes away sins, that the individual loses his identity and individuality when he is incorporated into the body of Christ, that the unsaved husband is sanctified (joined to Christ in spiritual union irrespective of his will) by virtue of the union that the believing wife holds to Christ, that the children of the believing wife are likewise joined to Christ for the same reason. [43]

But when these thought-forms are viewed as illustrations of the union with Christ, then they serve to show the varied relationships and experiences that are sustained through vital faith in Christ. The how of all these relationships is not explained by Paul, but he states them as facts, nonetheless, of his own experience.

Paul speaks not of deification nor of absorption into Deity, but union with Deity as the source and means of new life and immortality, as identification with the aims and purposes of Deity as they are revealed in Christ, as the means of bearing "fruit" unto God, as conceived under such figures as "marriage," "vine," and "the body of Christ." This is the type of union that the New Testament speaks of when explaining the union of the believer with Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament is Paul's idea contradicted, even if it be found less prominent.

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 4

OCCURRENCE OF THE PHRASE

It is our contention, then, that the concept of union with Christ is the heart of Paul's Christian experience and harks back to his encounter with the Christ on the road near Damascus.

Further, it has been shown that the rest of the New Testament is not in disagreement with Paul, and in much of its teaching corroborates his insight into union.

In order to understand Paul one could take his start from anthropology or psychology, or from Paul's thought in the pre-Christian period, from personal idiosyncrasy, from his attitude to the law, or from his eschatological teaching. It would seem we should start with the obvious, his experience at Damascus and his testimony to that experience. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Alfred Plummer quotes Lightfoot, who says:

"Ask different persons what is the leading doctrine of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and you will get different answers. Some will reply, justification by faith, others, the liberty of the Gospel. You will find that for once when either of these doctrines is referred to, union with Christ will be mentioned ten times. They are indeed prominent. But it underlies the whole. (Lightfoot, Sermons in St. Paul's, p. 227.)^[44]

In this chapter, therefore, we shall continue our quest for an understanding of the significance of "in Christ" with an analysis of its occurrence in Paul's Epistles.

Paul uses many variations of the basic phrase, "εν χριστω," en Christo (in Christ). They are "in the Christ," "in whom," "in him," "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord," "in the Lord Jesus," "in Jesus Christ," "in Jesus," and "in the Lord Jesus Christ."

The most important phrase, however, is in Christ. It occurs some thirty-three times. It is the most significant phrase in regard to union and is the most inclusive as to content. The Corinthians are babes in Christ (I Cor. 3:1), we are all one body in Christ (Romans 12:5), a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17), and God was in Christ reconciling (II Cor. 5:19) are examples. In five instances the definite article is used, as in Eph. 1:12, which reads, "We who first hoped in the Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory."^[45] It seems that the article is inserted for emphasis.

There are a score or more phrases which we might call strict equivalents of in Christ. They are phrases like in him and in whom, which have for their grammatical or logical antecedent the word Christ, as in Col. 2:8-10, which reads:

"Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth ail the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power."

In addition there are a number of similar phrases, similar in construction, but differing slightly in meaning. (These shades of meaning will be pointed out in a succeeding chapter.) Among them are: in Christ Jesus, which occurs forty-eight times; ^[46] in the Lord, in Jesus, in the Lord Jesus, in the Lord Jesus Christ in more scattered references; and in Jesus Christ, which occurs only once. ^[47]

In all there are, according to H. R. Mackintosh, nearly 240 times that the phrases are used. ^[48] In the stricter use of the phrase, that is, in its proper sense, there are a total of 164 passages containing these phrases. ^[49]

Haussleiter, in *Der Glaube Jesu Christi*, p. 116, makes the interesting observation that, whenever the phrase in Christ occurs, there is "no single instance of the variants" in Jesus or in Jesus Christ. "This is significant," says Sanday, "because in other combinations the variants are frequent." It is what should be expected because in Christ or in Christ Jesus "always relates to the glorified Christ, not to the historic Jesus." ^[50]

Schweitzer points out that some expressions, especially in the genitive, become in Christ in meaning. ^[51] One or two illustrations will suffice: "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5:24). In these verses it is the same as if belonging to Christ were to read in Christ.

Paul uses the phrase in Christ to describe all the experience, feeling, thought, and will of the believer as taking place in Christ. It is used in the most varied statements: "speaking the truth in Christ," "one body in Christ," "men in Christ," "fellow-worker in Christ," "approved in Christ," "babes in Christ," "wise in Christ," "tutors in Christ," "ways . . . in Christ," "dead," "hope," "alive," "triumphant," "veil," "removed," "new creation," "God," "speaking," "churches," "justified," "spiritual blessing," "resurrection power," "encouragement," "brethren," "maturity," "boldness," "refreshment," "chosen," "fulness of the Godhead," "freedom," "sonship," "faith and love in Christ Jesus," and many more. ^[52]

Paul lives in Christ as in an atmosphere, as a man lives in the air. It is evident that the phrase is not only strongly characteristic of St. Paul, but that it is his own. It is the "characteristic expression of his Christianity." ^[53] There are, as has been noticed before, only three instances where the phrase is used outside of Paul's writings. ^[54]

A very controversial verse in relation to this problem is that found in Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" — a portion of the recorded address of Paul in the middle of the Areopagus at Athens. Schweitzer says that this expression is not Pauline, but Stoic teaching put into the mouth of Paul by the writer of the Acts, ^[55] and that "there can never have been such an inscription" as that to an unknown God. ^[56] He says that Paul knows nothing of God-mysticism. ^[57] Therefore he argues that this cannot be a true instance of the Pauline concept. However Paul could have spoken these words because they do no violence to the meaning that he embodies in the phrase *en Christo*. And nothing is gained, it seems, by denying Paul's Mars' Hill statement, because Paul uses the same form of expression in II Cor. 6:16 as a quotation from Lev. 26:12. This matter will be treated more fully in a later chapter in the section dealing with the relation of *in Christ* to *in God* and *in the Spirit*. ^[58]

Returning to the Epistles, the phrase *in Christ* is distributed as follows: five times in Romans, seven times in I Corinthians, seven times in II Corinthians, twice in Galatians, five times in Ephesians, twice in Philippians, twice in Colossians, once in I Thessalonians, and two times in Philemon.

In Christ Jesus is distributed as follows: eight times in Romans, six times in I Corinthians, four in Galatians, seven in Ephesians, eight in Philippians, once in Colossians, twice in I Thessalonians, twice in I Timothy, seven times in II Timothy, and once in Philemon.

Titus is the only Epistle in which the phrase does not occur in any of its overt forms. ^[59]

In Appendix "A" is a table of that distribution. ^[60]

A brief perusal will show that the phrase is liberally spread throughout the Epistles.

Chronologically speaking, according to traditional dating, the phrases are heavily concentrated in the earlier and more theological and controversial Epistles. This ought to be convincing proof against the futile argument for any advance in fundamental conceptions on this theme in his writings. As Mackintosh says, "Chronological charts of St. Paul's advance in Christian knowledge, which have pleased no one but their authors, may be laid aside." ^[61]

From about the beginning of his public and recorded ministry, when Paul communicated to the apostles at Jerusalem the content of his message, ^[62] from about the year A.D. 47 to about A.D. 57, the record is strong in favor of the deepest realization of the new relation that he sustained to God in Christ. It was during this period that Paul gave us Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Romans. They speak for themselves. And this is all ten to twenty years before his martyrdom at about A.D. 67. ^[63]

But even if the traditional dating is not accepted, and the pastorals are considered the earlier writings, the same conclusions should be drawn, because the phrase is a constantly recurring thought in the pastorals, except, of course, Titus. This is not to say that the concept was not seen in fresh and new ramifications and relationships, but only that it was basic with Paul from the beginning of his recorded ministry.

There is nothing whatever to show that Paul developed this conception at a later stage. It belonged, on the contrary, to the very essence of his Christian belief. He believed that the spiritual life of each Christian is fed by his union with the living Lord. With these conclusions from a study of the occurrence of the phrase it is suggested that here is a phrase that is basic; it is not one among many. It is the essence of his Christian experience.

Intensely individual and personal as that experience must have been, he is conscious that his eyes have been opened to a fact of eternal and vital significance not for himself only but for all men. Jesus of Nazareth whom his own nation had crucified is the Christ of God. And even in His ascended glory He still identifies Himself with His persecuted disciples on earth, and, wonder of wonders, He is in living touch with the bitterest and most determined of their persecutors. That was the vision that made Saul of Tarsus the Apostle of the Gentiles. Need we look further? ^[64]

Paul crystallizes his experience into a formula that applies to his whole gospel. It is a simple phrase of relationship — the in Christ, and Christ in him. It is used in the most varied statements and relationships. It is with but three exceptions employed by Paul alone. It is freely distributed throughout his Epistles from the beginning of his ministry to the last.

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 5

MEANING OF THE PHRASE

It is our thesis that the phrase *en Christo* is at the very center of Paul's religion. It is the formula for his gospel which he preached authoritatively everywhere (Gal. 1:8, 12). This formula grew out of a new relation that he held with Christ, a two-way relationship that was a vital union—he in Christ, and Christ in him. Christ had become for him, not a Person of the historic past that he could contemplate, but a live Person with whom he held communion. He could now say, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

What does Paul mean when he says that he is in Christ?

The Greek word *χριστος* (Christos), "Christ," is a verbal adjective formed from the verb *χρίω* (Chrio), which means "to be rubbed on, used as ointment or salve." As a noun it means anointing oil. As a proper noun, *ὁ χριστός* (ho Christos) means "the Anointed One, the Christ, as a translation of the Hebrew Messiah." ^[65] That this word is important to Paul is readily seen by his recurring use of it. The terms "Christ," "Christ Jesus," "Jesus Christ," and the "Lord Jesus Christ" appear "something like two and one-half times per page in a correspondence that runs to one hundred and ten pages." ^[66]

When Paul couples this word with the preposition "in," we have Paul's most significant meaning of the term.

The relation of the human and divine indicated by *in* is local and realistic; the human is in the atmosphere of the divine. There is presupposed the indwelling of God, Christ or the Spirit as an energizing power both ethical and permanent. Hence when a man is in Christ . . . he is as such under the control of a divine power that makes for newness of life. The divine air which the human breathes is charged, so to speak, with ethical energy." ^[67]

Therefore Paul says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

The words in Christ tell us of a man with a changed consciousness of life. The chief element of change was a sense of freedom from the old life of law and sin and a sense of identification with God in His work of reconciling the world to God (II Cor. 6:1).

His knowledge and understanding of Christ grew out of his own experience with and of Him. He claims to have seen the risen Christ, as one born out of due time. And the risen Christ is the same Jesus whom he had been persecuting. He is conquered by the Nazarene and is caught up into fellowship with Him. That fellowship is a vital union with Him that entails a participation in Christ's life, in His sufferings, and in His death, with the glorious hope of resurrection in the great day of the appearing of Christ.

The use of the preposition "in" is to indicate union in most instances and in its fundamental meaning, so that when one is in Christ he enjoys "the most intimate conceivable communion between the Christian and the living Christ." [68]

Lange's conclusion is that "the phrase *en Christo* is a formula of such deep significance in Paul's epistles, that it is perhaps better always to find in it the idea of union, fellowship with Christ." [69]

When one examines Paul's uses of the simple phrase in Christ, he discovers that Paul has the idea of union in every single passage. Indeed it is difficult to understand these phrases without this meaning. [70]

It is true that the one verse, "God was in Christ reconciling the world" (II Cor. 5:19), can have the notion of agency or instrument, that is, that man is reconciled to God by means of the atonement of Christ, but it also has the notion of union. Paul says in this passage that God through Christ reconciled us to himself, but is quick to add that God was in Christ reconciling. It is as if Paul were making sure that the idea of union should be perceived.

In most instances of Paul's "equivalent phrases," such as in him and in whom, the idea of union is the fundamental meaning, as when Paul says, "in whom we have our redemption," that is, in union with Him; or again, when he says, "in [union with] [71] him all things consist" (Col. 1:14, 17), while Satan's kingdom, which is not in union with Him, is breaking up. However some of these phrases primarily indicate Christ as the Instrument of redemption, as when Paul says, "In him were all things created" (Col. 1:16), that is, through His agency. Here *en* (*in*) means instrument. But for the most part these phrases are equivalent to in Christ in the sense of union.

The same may be said of the phrase in Christ Jesus. In most instances "in" denotes union, but in a few cases it denotes instrument or agency, as when Paul says in II Tim. 1:9, God "saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in [through is what Paul intends] Christ Jesus before times eternal." But on the other hand, we are alive to God, have eternal life, and no condemnation when we are in union with Christ Jesus. [72] The difference in meaning that shows up between this phrase and *en Christo* is in the proper name itself. In Christ "always relates to the glorified Christ, not to the historic Jesus." [73] And Murray concludes with Deissmann that "Christ is for St. Paul. . . not Jesus as He was in the days of His flesh, but as He is in His present risen and ascended state." The "relation is always to a living person." [74]

When we compare in Christ with such phrases as "in Jesus," "in the Lord," and "in the Lord Jesus," we can feel a slight loss of meaning. "Persuaded in the Lord Jesus," "beloved in the Lord," "as the truth is in Jesus," and so on, seem to refer to ordinary fellowship as we find in like phrases, as "fellowship in the gospel" and "in Adam." But in Christ, in Paul's concept of Christ, is on a much higher level of union. It designates that mystical union of the believer with the living, risen Christ. In the Lord would be quite readily understood in the Hellenistic world, but for Paul it could not carry sufficient significance. But its understanding would be a step leading to his greater concept, in Christ.

It should be noted further that Paul uses the word "Christ" with nearly every preposition. "The number and range of these prepositional phrases are enough to suggest the richness and complexity of the meaning of the term." ^[75] They are various aspects of the thought about Christ of which the common denominator is "in Christ." They are spokes of the wheel of which en Christo is the hub.

They are: into Christ, without Christ, for Christ, from Christ, through Christ, according to Christ, with Christ, and of Christ. ^[76]

A consideration of these phrases in relation to en Christo will lead us toward a fuller understanding of en Christo. They will now be discussed.

While in Christ primarily denotes union, into Christ denotes initiation or entrance into the mystical union. "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3) Into Christ is in Christ by initiation or at the point of entrance. Sometimes into should be translated unto or for, but in all cases it signifies only one direction-towards Christ, not the abiding fellowship in Christ.

Without Christ is the opposite of in Christ. Paul says, "That ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Without Christ is not necessarily to be in opposition to Christ, but in apposition; it is the opposite side of the proposition, so to speak.

For Christ equals in the behalf of Christ. Paul talks about being ambassadors for Christ and suffering for Christ (II Cor. 5:20; 12:10). It is related to in Christ when en means instrument. For as God was reconciling the world through Christ, so God is "making His appeal through us." And Paul continues, "We beseech you on behalf of [for] Christ, be reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20) ^[77] For Christ is that aspect of in Christ that issues in service as a substitute.

From Christ is the union in Christ broken up. "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law;" says Paul, "ye are fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Paul also speaks of the union being broken up by harlotry and immorality (I Cor. 6:13-19) and by partaking in demon sacrifice (I Cor. 10:20-21).

Through Christ is also related to in Christ and has the same meaning as when in means agency or instrument. This expression points in only one direction, from God to man. To avoid this cold, objective type of experience Paul employs the two-directional phrase in Christ, which means union, Paul in Christ and Christ in Paul. Yet there are many instances of this phrase, to show what God has provided by means of Christ. We have: peace with God, eternal life, deliverance from death, confidence toward God, fruits of righteousness, regeneration, and the Holy Spirit poured out, and so on, through Christ, that is, by His agency. ^[78] But these are never personally realized without union with Christ, according to Paul.

According to Christ seems to be equivalent to in Christ. Build your philosophy "according to Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," says Paul (Col. 2:8-9). And again, he says, "Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another

according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6). According to Christ is in Christ in imitation.

Then again there is the prepositional phrase, with Christ. Such statements as: "we shall live with him," "to depart and be with Christ," "raised with Christ," and "hid with Christ in God" indicate union with Christ in eschatological fulfillment. In one or two instances with Christ is equal to in Christ in such verses as "God ... made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him" (Eph. 2:4-6). But even here Paul is looking forward to the coming ages (v.7), so that with Christ is in Christ in some future grander fulfillment.

Lastly, of Christ is also a phase of our central theme. Faith, hope, love, peace, tender mercies of Christ, etc., are the believer's because he is in Christ. The genitival uses, such as the faith of Christ (Gal. 2:16), are the same as faith in Christ. The verse above is translated literally, "We who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith of [in] Jesus Christ, even we have believed into Christ." While of Christ could read in Christ, many times it is used in reference to the character traits and possessions belonging to Christ.

Paul uses the phrase in Christ to describe the continuous, abiding, conditioning cause of man's union with Christ. And he uses the other prepositional phrases to describe the various aspects of that experience; as the entrance into, the means by which the union comes about, and the final fulfillment when the believer is with Christ. While life in Christ is a present reality, it also has its anticipatory aspect. Paul says, "I live, yet not I . . . I live by faith." Paul's present experience is an earnest of a still greater future union with Christ.

Paul is in accord with Jesus on the anticipatory aspects of the union. Jesus prays that the believers may be united with Him in order that they may behold Him in His coming glory and be with Him there (John 17:20-26).

As we would describe a manufactured article to a native of New Guinea by comparing and contrasting it with what the native knows in his own culture, so, happily, Paul uses numerous contrasting phrases that add much to an understanding of the phrase. Before his conversion Paul was in sin (Rom. 6:1), in the flesh (Rom. 8:9), in Adam (I Cor. 15:22), in sins (I Cor. 15:17), in the low (Gal. 5:4), and in the world (Eph. 2:12), and in such he was outside of Christ. These are the antithesis of en Christo. Paul previously lived and moved and had his being in a sinful, fleshly, earthly atmosphere, but now he is raised out of all that and dwells in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

Schweitzer points up this antithesis in his concept of supernatural men. In Schweitzer's phraseology, Pauline mysticism centers around the thought that the powers of death and resurrection which were manifested in Jesus now are at work in the mystical body of Christ. The mystical body of Christ is composed of all those who are destined to the coming Messianic kingdom, and these powers render to them the resurrection life in the Spirit before the general resurrection takes place. ^[79] Since in Christ believers are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, are supernatural men, so they are no longer under the law, but dead to it, having died and risen with Christ to the law. ^[80] In this sense man is a part of two worlds at once. ^[81] Both worlds are really at work in man, the supernatural to take over completely in the Messianic age. The life in Christ is the solution to the question of

fellowship of natural men with Christ, because the believers are no longer natural men, but supernatural, new creations in Christ.^[82] This is the way Schweitzer sees Paul's expression in Christ in contrast to: "in sin," "in the law," "in the flesh," and "in Adam." The elect and Christ partake in the same nature. Such a concept is most accurately represented by that term of expression in which it refers to an experience that is common to both.^[83] However, "with," "into," "to," "of," and "from" may be one-directional, while "in" indicates a mutual experience.

What Paul is trying to convey by this expression, in Christ, can more fully be seen by the relations it holds to two other phrases, in the Spirit and in God.

The phrase in the Spirit is used some nineteen times by Paul in the same fundamental concepts as in Christ. He speaks of persons being in the Spirit when the Spirit dwells in them (Rom. 8:9); he exhorts believers to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), live in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), speak in the Spirit (I Cor. 14:2), worship God in the Spirit (Phil. 3:3), and so on. He uses the two phrases synonymously and interchangeably, as we shall notice later.

Paul says further that "the Lord is the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:17). These two expressions are synonymous in experience, and the life in Christ and in the Spirit are alike and the same. To be "in the Spirit" means for Paul, not ecstasy and transports, but a life in Christ, an identification or incorporation of one's self with Him," as Moffatt points out.^[84]

The same idea is seen in Paul's use of the phrase in God. Schweitzer says that Paul knew nothing of God mysticism. He says, "Paul never speaks of being one with God or in God."^[85] And, Paul "thinks of his second Adam as a heavenly being [but] never anywhere speaks of Him as God."^[86]

If that is true, how can one account for such expressions as "Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" in both Epistles (I & II Thess. 1:1)? Paul also speaks of the believer as "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). And Paul rejoices in God (Rom. 5:11) as he does in Christ.

In fact Paul uses all three expressions, God, Christ, and Spirit, interchangeably for the same spiritual experiences and relationships. Consider Rom. 8:9-11,

"But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

It cannot be the purpose of this thesis to answer all the problems of Christology, but to report as best we can what Paul had in mind as to the meaning of in Christ. And here, as in other passages, it seems that Paul, though not setting up a systematic theology, is asserting the unity of these three expressions and states them as one. The three expressions are used interchangeably and yet there is a distinction.

We quote Mackintosh here in full as showing our understanding of this problem:

"The relation of Christ and the Spirit is not that of identity, but of vital unity. The opposite view has been taken strongly. . . . The wording of 2 Cor. 3:17 may seem to decide the question; "the Lord," the apostle avers plainly, "is the Spirit." Yet the following clause faintly re-affirms the distinction in the words, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." No one can imagine that "Christ" and "the Spirit of Christ" means the same thing precisely ... By the form of identification St. Paul indicates just the familiar experiential fact that Christ, by whom God saves men, and the Holy Spirit, in Whom He conveys to them Divine life, are so indissociably one in significance and operation and media that from the point of view of practical faith they are seen as true equivalents of each other. Yet within the unity there is distinction. As it has been put, "Christ in you, or the Spirit of Christ in you; these are not different realities; but the one is the method of the other" (Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 194)." ^[87]

Or take another well-known statement, Col. 1:15 ff., in which all the predicates about God are affirmed of Christ. And indeed, if the Epistle is taken in its entirety, we understand Paul to mean that when one is in Christ it is the same as being in God, for He "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created . . . and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. . . . For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell." And again Paul says, "For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Two or three more passages ^[88] will suffice to illustrate our point: "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

It seems, then, that "union with Christ, is in no sense a preliminary step to union with God, or a preparation for it which may be ignored subsequently to the attainment of the real goal; it is union which God per se." ^[89]

Paul does not assert how this union takes place explicitly, but he strongly asserts the fact again and again, and implies the experiential evidence of it as proof enough.

D. M. Baillie draws the following statement from a study of the New Testament, but we believe that it applies as well to Paul:

"Thus the paradoxical Christian knowledge of God inevitably came to be expressed in the Trinitarian form: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three in one. Not in the sense of three successive parts played by God, or three successive phases of His being. Nor again, in the sense of a symmetrical triad of Persons with quite separable functions. We do not exhaust the truth of the matter by saying that while God the Father reigns eternally on high, God the Son was incarnate in Jesus on earth, and God the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The New Testament can also speak

of God the Father dwelling in Christ, and of the Holy Spirit being given to Christ; and it can speak of God the Father dwelling in us and we in Him, and of Christ dwelling in us, and we in Him. All this seems impossible to systematize, and indeed it does not make sense until we remember the historical facts and experiences out of which it arose, and attempt to relate them to the eternal God."^[90]

If one sees the incarnation of Deity in Paul's theology, then *en Christo* is not just one of many prepositional phrases that have their common denominator in some eschatological fulfillment. If God was in Christ really, and if one is in Christ in vital union, then one is in fellowship and in union with God himself now, and he does not need to wait for the "day of the Lord" to make the relation to God, though limited, actually true.

En Christo becomes the heart of Paul's theology and the formula for his religion. Though the meaning of the phrase is difficult to express precisely, it is possible to glean what Paul seems to have had in mind by comparing the phrase with other like phrases as we have just done.

In conclusion we would agree with Lange that "the phrase *en Christo* is a formula of such deep significance in Paul's epistles, that it is perhaps better always to find in it the idea of union, fellowship with Christ."^[91] This union can be conceived from both the human and the divine side as the interpenetration of the human with the Divine Spirit of God.

IN CHRIST

By
John B. Nielson

Chapter 6 CHRISTOLOGY AND THE PHRASE

Let us proceed toward a fuller understanding of the significance of Paul's formula by reviewing his Christology.

The attempt to resolve the difficulties of an absolutely transcendent God was one of the live problems of this era. The Greeks sought to solve this problem in their conception of the logos, which "means not only the side of God which is reflected in creation, which touches the finite world, it is the ultimate reason which explains all existence, the eternal principle that underlies phenomena." [92] The logos has its source and reason in God, who, for Plato, is wholly transcendent, and is the impersonal ruler of God's creation. [93]

Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, added independent existence, if not personality, to the Greek logos or reason.

"The multiplicity of Philo's representations of the Logos make it impossible to define his conception in a single phrase. The Platonic Idea of Good, the Stoic World-Soul, and the Jewish conceptions of the Shechinab, of the Name of God, of the Heavenly Man, of the eternal High Priest, seem to have been combined in his thought and in his expressions." [94]

The Logos says, according to Philo,

I stand between the Lord and You, I am neither uncreated like God nor created like you, but a mean between the two extremes, a hostage to either side. [95]

But the logos idea in Philo falls short of the New Testament ideas of incarnation, atonement, and personality, in our sense of the term.

John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, picks up the Philonic term when he says,

"In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life (John 1:1-4)."

And again John says,

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) (John 1:14)."

John adds deity, personality, and manifestation in material substance to the Logos concept. The Logos is no intermediary, but God immanent in the world.

Gnosticism, on the other hand, viewed Jesus as a member of some sort of supernatural order of existence analogous to that of the demiurge, from whom the visible created universe had arisen. Docetism saw the divine element in Jesus as real and eternal, but emphasized that He only appeared as a man and was not actually flesh and blood. Gnosticism had no real answer to the problem.

But for Paul it was a different story. The Christ that he had met on the Damascus road was God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16), God's Son born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), born in the likeness of man (Phil. 2:7), found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2:8), subject and obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. For him the perplexities of a wholly transcendent God were resolved in the revelation of Christ. In this self-emptying described in Philippians 2 the transcendent God had become incarnate.

This knowledge of God arose out of Paul's experience. He said that God revealed His Son "in me." [96] Deissmann says that Paul's religion is deeper than a mere Christological Christianity. It is not a doctrine concerning Christ. His religion is a "fellowship with Christ." "St. Paul lives 'in' Christ, 'in' the living and present spiritual Christ, who is about him on all sides, dwells in him, speaks to him, speaks in and through him." [97]

Deissmann goes on to the following conclusions:

"Every merely intellectual Christology that does not arise out of a religious union with Christ is of no value. But every religious Christology will be, even today, in some form or another Pauline." [98]

As the transfigured Christ brought Moses and Elijah into focus for Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, so the revelation of Christ in Paul at Damascus, in the brilliance of his conversion, brought to Paul's consciousness a new Godward relation and experience that unfolded itself within the framework of a new formula, *en Christo*. Christ's indwelling makes life add up, makes the world cohere. Christ is the other half of a new communion and fellowship. This is not just a doctrine; Christ is not just a great historic figure, but a present, living reality of fellowship. Here again, let us point out that Paul is not here so much the great thinker as he is the revealer of Christ.

Paul's doctrine of Christ can be gathered up somewhat under two headings, the existence and the work of Christ.

His Christology is threefold as to the existence of Christ.

First, Christ is the living Lord whom Paul knows and serves. "The life of Christ is, not the remembered life that preceded his death, but the life which followed it — the present life of the Son of God." [99] Paul says, "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). "Saved by his life" refers to His present life, not that life before the Cross. Paul knew Christ personally, for he says, He "lives in me." Morgan says,

"The Savior of Paul's faith and proclamation is not so much the Jesus who taught the multitude and healed the sick by the shores of the Galilean lake, as the risen Christ exalted to God's right hand and invested with divine power and glory. It is with this living Lord, who intercedes for him and dwells in him, that he holds communion. Of the days of Christ's humiliation he remembers practically nothing but the great sacrifice. These days pass out of sight as a phase of His existence ..." [100]

The Christ that Paul knows is the Son of God whom God has highly exalted and to whom He has given "the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Second, Christ is the Jesus of history. Paul does not know Jesus primarily from the human point of view. He says, "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more" (II Cor. 5:16). He had advanced from a merely materialistic Messianism to a spiritual, one which included the physical.

But Paul leaves no doubt as to whom he means when he speaks of Christ. The Christ that Paul knows is the Jesus who was born of woman (Gal. 4:4), who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3), who was killed by the Jews (I Thess. 2:15), who died for our sins, was buried, raised, who appeared to Peter, then others, and finally to Paul himself (I Cor. 15:3-8). He speaks of the brothers of the Lord (I Cor. 9:5). He states that Christ is the One "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

On the other hand, Paul keeps his readers informed that Christ's earthly life is only a phase of His eternal existence, and that the Person with whom Paul communicates is the risen Jesus Christ. Paul is not wholly dependent upon tradition to tell him about Christ, for he knows Him personally and has seen Him, as he says, "Last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also" (I Cor. 15:8), after His resurrection.

Third, Christ is the pre-existent Son of God. He performs all the functions of God, acting for the Father: "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (I Cor. 8:6).

In the famous kenotic passage there is found Paul's threefold view of Christ as to existence. His earthly life is a self-emptying, a humiliation, a change from His previous existence. Being in the form of God, He emptied himself, He took on himself the form of a servant, a man, and became obedient to the death of the Cross. And now He is exalted to His pre-existent glory again (Phil. 2:5-11).

Again, Paul says, "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). And, He "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). And, God "sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). And, "God ... was manifested in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16).

This view of Paul is in agreement with the view of Jesus of himself (John 17); and John (John 1:14); and the writer to the Hebrews, who says,

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds, who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-4)."

And again, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Heb. 1:5).

Morgan is right when he states that there is no trace of an adoptionist Christology in Paul. ^[101] Christ is the preexistent, incarnate, and risen Son of God.

Having considered Paul's Christology as to existence, let us now turn to a brief consideration of his view of Christ as to His purpose in coming into the world, which is likewise threefold for our purposes.

First, Jesus for Paul is the Messiah. He is the long-awaited, prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament. He is the One through whom God has acted to save the world. He is the Anointed of the Lord, who has by His death accomplished the salvation and restoration of the world. Because the work is not yet fulfilled in actual fact, this consummation will come only when Christ returns." ^[102]

The Messiah is not just an ideal being; he is God manifested in the flesh, Jesus Christ. Paul says, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him" ^[103] (II Cor. 1:20). This realization of Jesus as Messiah was no doubt difficult for Paul to comprehend in the light of his Judaistic background, for Jesus seemed as a blasphemer, in this light, until Paul met Him personally. At that point, Christ became the fulfillment of the hopes of the Jews, and of the whole world, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.

Again, Christ will preserve every believer against his foes; nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35-39).

The Messiah will return to this earth again with great signs and power, will raise the believing dead and restore all things to God the Father (I Cor. 15:22-28, 50-53; see also II Cor. 5:1-4 and I Thess. 4:13-18).

And finally, Jesus is the exalted Lord of heaven, and He being Messiah, all things will be subjected to Him (Phil. 2:9-11). He is the rallying point for the new community, the Church; and as such, He is the Head of all things, especially the Church (Eph. 1:20-23).

Second, Christ is God's Redeemer of mankind. Jesus' essential Messiahship, in Paul's new understanding of it, is seen in His redemptive work on the Cross. Paul uses various words to describe this work. Among them are "justification," as when Paul says, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1); and, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that

we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). "Reconciliation" is another term that Paul uses to describe this work. Paul says, "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself" (II Cor. 5:18). In this passage God is already reconciled to man, and the work of Christ is designed to effect man's recognition of God and His lordship over man's life, by revealing to man that God has in Christ died for our sins. Paul freely uses the word "forgiveness" in this connection. Under the figure of a debtor Paul says that Christ, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). (Deissmann tells of the use of this metaphor in papyrus discoveries.)^[104] Still another expression to describe Christ's work is the word "redeemer." This term would be readily understood in the ancient environment, for slavery was a common practice. Paul uses this figure of redemption from slavery to describe man's deliverance from slavery to sin (Rom. 6:6), law (Gal. 4:1-7), idols (Gal. 4:8-9), men (I Cor. 7:23), and death (Rom. 8:21). Paul says repeatedly that man is bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20). Still another term is "adoption," which is the result of redemption. Paul says,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him (Rom. 8:14-18)."

Under such terms and in numerous passages Paul clearly teaches that the death of Christ is an expiation for the sins of the world. Paul is now primarily concerned with moral and spiritual values rather than with temporal and earthly issues, in this aspect of Christ's Messiahship. The death of Christ is a payment of debt for sin on behalf of the sinner, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). These expressions are not mere metaphors in Paul; they are essential ideas in Paul's own experience. Christ is the ground of Paul's (and every man's) justification and sanctification. Knox says, "Paul is led to interpret the death of Christ as being a vicarious act of expiation, a satisfaction, in some sense, of God's righteous demands."^[105] Baillie says that God's attitude toward sinners is not the result of the Cross, but the cause of the Cross-God first loved us.^[106] "Details in Paul's view of how the death of Christ functioned to make acquittal possible are disputed by students of his letters, but surely it is clear that he regarded the death of Christ as having this effect."^[107]

And the importance that Paul attaches to the death of Christ is evident from the fact that the sources of information concerning the life of Jesus which Paul uses concern Christ's death. He mentions very little of the rest of the details of the Lord's earthly life. This is precisely the reason, according to Baillie, that the "Jesus of History" movement failed to give an adequate account of the influence and power of Jesus, so little of His earthly life is actually known.^[108] En Christo challenges the "Jesus of History" movement, which largely invalidated the experience of Christ by insisting on the purely human Jesus.

On the other hand the cause is not served by insisting on a purely divine Christ. Paul steers a middle course between Arianism and Gnosticism and presents to us the God-Man, showing us that God is interested. He has not sent someone in His place; He has come himself. God was in Christ.

Therefore, Christ is not for Paul a mere man, nor angel, nor an ideal man from heaven, nor some sort of being with divine characteristics.

Christ is not a mere man, because He was preexistent. He is not an angel or some other created being, for He is the Creator of all things (I Cor. 8:6) and the First-born of God (Rom. 8:29). The Jews understood this latter expression to mean uncreated. ^[109] Nowhere does Paul say that Christ was created or made, but only that He was manifest in flesh by means of woman (I Tim. 3:16; Gal. 4:4).

In the Philippian passage Paul definitely classes Christ, not with humanity essentially, but with Deity. His self-emptying was an entrance into a mode of existence strange to His real nature. Many claim that to say this passage teaches Christ's equality with God is untenable, that it only teaches that Christ has divine characteristics. ^[110]

However, Paul treats of Christ as God, as we have seen in another connection. ^[111] He prays to Christ (II Cor. 12:8). Christ is an object of worship (Philippians 2). He is Lord of all to the glory of God and Father (Phil. 2:11). And the passage before us states that Christ was in the form of God. "Form" here can equal "essence." ^[112] Having God's essence, it was nothing to be sought. From the context it seems that Paul is trying to state that Christ is very God, not to deny it. To class Christ with Satan or Adam as each being faced with aspiring to deity, and holding that Christ rejected such an idea and ambition, is wholly foreign to the meaning of the passage. Christ emptied himself of something and took on a form inferior to the form that He bore essentially. And the conclusion of the passage shows the restoration of Christ to His premundane glory. This view of Paul agrees with Christ's own statements regarding himself (John 17:1-5).

However, having said this, Paul does say that Christ is in somewhat of a subordinate place to the Father, for all things are under the dominion of the Son only until they are restored to the Father (I Cor. 15:24 ff.). Yet in the Pauline letters Christ performs every function of Deity. How to explain these distinctions that Paul makes we are at a loss to say, as also Paul seems to be. He merely asserts them as facts of his experience.

When Paul unites this Word with the preposition "in," we have Paul's most significant insight and a formula of the deepest significance. In Christ God's relations to man are actualized, eschatologically when not temporally. En should be understood primarily, in Paul's use of it in this phrase, in the sense of place or location; not instrument or means, though en is sometimes used in this manner. ^[113] This is a new locale of existence for Paul. This is no new religion for Paul, as students of comparative religions aver, but a shift to a new relation, because of a new event. Paul is now at peace with God. He has new life; he is remade. And his new spiritual life is fed by his union to his living Lord, who is the pre-existent Christ, who was manifest in the flesh and received up again into glory-the eternal Christ. His Lord is the promised Hebrew Messiah conceived nobly and more gloriously in the spiritual terms of Redeemer and Saviour of men, verily our "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). And Paul is in living fellowship with Him.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; he was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory (I Tim. 3:16)."

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 7

PURPOSE OF THE PHRASE

Paul uses *en Christo* as a summary statement of his knowledge and experience of Christ. His fellowship with his living Lord had satisfied his searching soul and had answered his theoretical and practical problems concerning the Messiah. He corroborated his findings with the Old Testament scriptures. He was now ready to apply the formula to any situation. He had a message, he felt, that was not for himself only, but for the whole world. The love of Christ constrained him to tell everyone who would listen to him the secret that he had found, even the hidden mystery that had at last been revealed in Christ. So at the earliest opportunity Paul is found trudging the highways of the world, sometimes alone, and sometimes with a few of his companions.

Paul was a ceaseless and untiring worker. His vision took him to the ends of the known world. His messages were powerful. By them many were convinced to accept Christ. Churches were established in many of the major cities of the Roman world. In such a far-flung field Paul was constantly plagued with problems that pressed him for solution, problems of ethics, Judaizing, gentile salvation, the return of Christ, sin, law, etc. Paul was not always able to be at the place of need to give personal supervision. He therefore needed some such formula for the solution of these problems as he had found in the formula *en Christo*, something simple and concise, that he could leave with the people in order that they might solve their own problems, even as he had his own.

When he is faced with the Corinthian breakdown of the Christian ethic, he sends this formula. *En Christo* speaks to every moral situation and gives an answer. To those who sin against their bodies it says: Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; He dwells in you. He that defiles the temple of God, God will destroy. To those who seek for position, place, and power, it says: You are all in Christ. What you have, you receive from God. You are all saved through the mercy and grace of God, so all are equal. No man has any authority over another. Paul, Peter, Apollos are nothing, but God is everything. Christ is the Head of the body of which you are the members. Each member is bound to fulfill his own duty and not to despise any other member. In Christ all are one body.

To those who offend weaker Christians, *en Christo* says: Have regard for the weaker brother, for whom Christ died, who is with you a member of the body of Christ. If one member suffers, the whole body suffers also. He concludes that if any man is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away and the new way of life has come.

Paul is willing to trust even the Corinthians with this formula, and he has faith that it will bring them through. As Dodd says, "Ethical originality is the prerogative of the Christian whose conscience is the seat of Christ's indwelling."^[114] Paul can say, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). Paul sees the danger of antinomianism, but corrects it with his doctrine of the body of Christ. He has this danger in mind when he admonishes, "Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother

to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (I Cor. 8:13). The indwelling Christ becomes both the restraining and constraining ethical influence in the life of the believer.

As Schweitzer points out, ethics is the Spirit's working; it is not the fruit of repentance, but the fruit of the Spirit. Man is free in Christ, but being free in Christ, (as Paul states in Galatians) he regards the freedom of others. ^[115] It is precisely so because Paul secures his whole ethical teaching in this phrase, both individual and collective. Paul's ethical teaching does not spring from outward compulsion and conformity, but from inward loyalty to the Saviour for the propitiation that He provided. It is Christ in Paul that is the cause of his moral discernment and moral power. He can do all things in Christ, who strengthens him (Phil. 4:13).

When Paul comes face to face with the problem of gentile salvation, he draws his conclusions likewise from this phrase. He reasons something like this. There is only one God, the God of the Jews. If there is only one God, He must be the God of the gentiles also, for they too are men. God is the Saviour of Israel; therefore, He must be the Saviour of the gentiles, else they have no Saviour. God has reconciled, not only the Jew, but also the gentile, in Christ. Paul has the courage, therefore, at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) to challenge the whole Church, if necessary, not only because this truth was revealed to him at Damascus (Acts 26:17-20), but also because it is the only reasonable conclusion, and further, because he personally has seen the power of the gospel at work in the gentile. He says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). He says with conviction, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17).

Paul applies his formula also to the question of sin. Salvation by sacrifice without righteousness, according to the Scriptures, is hated by God. ^[116] But salvation by works is impossible, because law imposes an impossible standard when viewed in the light of God's holiness. The content of man's righteousness can never measure up to the content of God's holiness. Yet the demand is righteousness. How does Paul resolve this problem? En Christo. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (II Cor. 5:19). And again, Paul says:

"But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God (Rom. 3:21-26)."

So the problem of sin is solved, not by our sacrifice, nor by works, but by faith in the love and mercy and work of God in Christ.

What about the problem of the transcendence and immanence of God? As we noticed in Chapter VI, ^[117] a live problem in Paul's day was this: Can man know God immediately, that is, in mystical experience? For Paul, the question was answered in his experience at Damascus. God was manifested and known in his experience of Christ. God revealed His Son in him (Gal. 1:16).

The gulf to the transcendent God was bridged by Christ. Likewise,

The figure of the head and members (Col. 1:18) seems peculiarly fitted to represent the relation of Christ to His people in both lights — as characterized equally by transcendence and by mystic vital union. ^[118]

Again, many were troubled concerning the delay of the day of the Lord, that is, His return. Many were dying. What about these Christian dead? Paul's answer again is *en Christo*. These believers died in Christ. It is unthinkable that God has forsaken them; they died believing God. Paul says that they are asleep in Christ, dead in Christ. The union continues. Paul is willing to say,

"Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord (II Cor. 5:6-8)."

And besides, those who have died in the Lord are not only in living union and fellowship with the Lord in a continuing sense, but they will be the first to be resurrected from the graves. The living saints will be caught up immediately following. So Paul says, We need not worry about the dead in Christ. They are still, yet in a far better sense, in Christ. *En Christo* is a condition, not an activity; a relationship, not a performance.

The problem of gentile salvation was closely tied up with the question of the place and authority of Jewish law in the new economy of grace. If men are saved through faith in Christ to take away sin, what does that do to law? Do men have to keep the law in order to be saved? Paul's answer was unequivocal. To require the keeping of the law over and above faith in Christ is to renounce the cross of Christ as a means of dealing with sin. "What then was the function of law?" his opponents asked. Again Paul's answer was, *En Christo*. In Christ the law was fulfilled and superseded (II Cor. 3:14 and Rom. 10:4).

Romans 7 is Paul's explanation of that futile life before he experienced the new relation. "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (v. 5), is the opening statement of Paul's state under the law, and verses 7-24 are a description of that state. Verse 6, "But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter," is the heading for his exposition of the new life in Christ, which exposition begins at verse 25 and continues into Romans 8, where Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1).

The function of law was, for Paul, that of a matron, or steward, to lead us to Christ. The law served to point up man's utter sinfulness and helplessness and to drive him to despair, so that when the despairing man would see the atoning Christ he would immediately embrace his only hope of salvation; he would fly to the only place of refuge (Gal. 3:24).

This does not destroy the law; it establishes the law. In fact it is the only means of righteousness for Paul. Baillie states it well when he says,

"The main function of the impossible ethic is to drive us away from ourselves to God; and then there grows that peculiar kind of goodness which can never be achieved by mere moral endeavor, the Christian kind, which is all unconscious of itself and gives all the glory to God." ^[119]

And again he says,

Whatever good there is in our lives and actions (and it is but fragmentary) is "all of God," and it was His before it was ours, was divine grace before it was human achievement, is indeed a matter of God taking up our poor human nature into union with His own divine life, making us more truly personal, yet also more disposed to ascribe it all to Him. ^[120]

This is Paul. He would agree with Charles Wesley's putting of it in this line,

He wills that I should holy be;
What can withstand His will?
The counsel of His grace in me
He surely shall fulfill.

When God is mine, and I am His,
Of paradise possessed,
I taste unutterable bliss,
And everlasting rest.

En Christo is likewise Paul's solution to the problem of eschatology. Paul says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming ... For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:22-25).

En Christo does not mean a dream world with only eschatological aspirations. It means a new creation, a new man, an individual responsible and responsive to God in the present world. The new man is the guarantee of the subjection of all things to God through Christ and the restoration of all things that are in union with Christ. As Christ died and rose actually, so the believer dies and rises with Him mystically. For the believer to be in Christ is to have the resurrection power of new life, according to Paul, not only at the Parousia, but at work in him now. Paul views the resurrection power as the new life that is given to all those who are in union with Christ, which power begins to operate in the believer at the moment of his conversion. He says,

We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5).

The new life in Christ now is the guarantee of the fulfillment of eschatological hopes, when God is over all, that is, when God is "all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

Let us consider one more problem that Paul faced. It was related to two of his personal friends: one a slave, Onesimus; the other, the master or slaveowner, Philemon.

Philosophy attacked slavery openly, condemning it as an evil, but Paul sought to solve the problem by his formula. He wrote to his friend and Christian brother, Philemon, that the slave was a "son" of God. Therefore he besought Philemon to receive his runaway slave in peace because the slave as a Christian was in Christ even as Paul and Philemon were in Christ, that is, in union with Christ. He had repented and had been converted and now wished to return; therefore he too was a member of the body of Christ. In addition Paul pleaded with Philemon to receive his runaway slave as a brother and no longer as a slave.

Paul really solved the problem of slavery. Putting the believing slave into Christ with the slaveowner made them equally in Christ. And as leaven, en Christo continues to permeate society for its betterment.

The applications are endless. Someone has said that Paul's message is a ferment. And it is. It reaches into every segment of life. It is the essence of what Jesus termed the "kingdom of God," which He said is like leaven. It is an elevating and saving message.

Paul's insight into the gospel message spread like fire across the ancient world. It was said of him that he turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). He challenged the whole world. Up to his conversion at Damascus, Paul had been searching frantically, it appears, for a place in the sun. But at Damascus that all dropped away and Paul became a love slave of Jesus the Christ.

Out of great experience, not philosophizing, came an individual, continuing God-consciousness. And Paul said that it was for each and all who would believe in Christ, that this new relationship became the solution of life's problems. Wherever Paul put his formula to the test it was found sufficient.

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 8

EXPOSITION OF THE PHRASE

Here is one of those rare concepts, one that has seeming universal application. Paul is the first to use the phrase, though he did not originate the concept; that came from Christ himself. It seems that Paul should be known and understood by this phrase, since his theology, philosophy, and ethics are the outworking of it in practical and theoretical life. Besides being a formula for the solving of problems, *en Christo* is the basis for great thinking by Paul.

In the study of the use of this phrase by Paul, four great ideas loom up. They are: deity in Christ, headship in Christ, a new man in Christ, and the new relation in Christ. All that Paul has to say in connection with this phrase may be summed up under these heads.

Consider, first, deity in Christ.

Fundamental to and undergirding Paul's understanding of the person of Christ is His divine nature. Union can be contemplated in varying degrees of intensity and from various viewpoints. The most profound concept is the union or unity of God. Paul is a monotheist, for he says, "There is no God but one," and, "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him" (I Cor. 8:4, 6). Paul is also Trinitarian,^[121] adding to the statement just quoted, "and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (I Cor. 8:6). The Father is called Lord and Jesus is called Lord. Paul goes on:

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all" (I Cor. 12:4-7).

The creeds have sought to formulate Paul's view by speaking of the unity of the Godhead with distinctions therein, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Paul says again, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you..." (Rom. 8:9-10). We have seen that Paul continually uses these three expressions, interchangeably, as appellations of the Godhead.^[122]

But the fact of Christ's deity is most strongly brought out in Paul's phrase describing union, *en Christo*. Paul says in II Cor. 5:18-19:

"But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

In the eighteenth verse Paul states that reconciliation between God and man is through (dia) Christ. And in the nineteenth verse Paul adds another idea when he says that God was in (en) Christ reconciling. The order of the Greek and the sense of the text bear this out.

Again, he says,

"Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:8-9).

"In Him dwells all the fullness of Deity bodily" may be more readily understood from a parallel passage which reads as follows: "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him shall all the fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19). This statement follows a lengthy passage which lists some of these divine and essential elements of Christ's nature. Christ is merciful (v.14), the Image of God (v. 15), the eternal Word (v. 15), the Creator (v. 16), the reason for creation (v. 16); He is eternal (v.17), the Sustainer of all things (v.17), Head of the Church (v.18), resurrection power (v.18), and in all pre-eminent (v.18).

It is clear from the context that this passage is written by Paul to refute the opposition of Judaism and vain philosophies which could not receive the preaching of the apostles concerning the nature of Christ as Paul describes it here. Paul's view is that God is essentially in Christ, not typically, not as an emanation. In the Son are the predicates of Deity. The Godhead dwells really and forever in Christ bodily.

Paul reinforces his viewpoint when he says, "In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:3), or laid up, as in a storehouse. He means that in Christ these treasures are laid up or contained, that is, in His nature. True knowledge is found only in the understanding of Christ as the fullest revelation of God, even as very God himself. Anything less Paul calls a delusion. The true gnosis or "knowledge" is Christ; there is no higher nor more comprehensive revelation of God than that in Christ.

In another connection Paul says,

"Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus m~ Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:8-11).

Paul does not conceive of Christ as a member of an order of beings superior to men but inferior to God. His Christ is God manifested in the flesh^[123] (I Tim. 3:16). Paul's en Christo is a statement concerning God-God was in Christ, and the historical Jesus is the revelation of the fact.

How does Paul arrive at this conclusion? Indeed, some of Paul's theology is theoretical, that is, revealed; for instance, his statement on the pre-existence of Christ. Paul did not know this from experience, but Paul had met Christ in personal experience. He therefore, by virtue of experience, could place his complete confidence in Christ and His revelation that He gave. And besides, Christ had verified His message to Paul at Damascus and had given him His Spirit.

With these texts we rise to Paul's highest understanding of the nature of Christ, that He is truly Deity, not temporarily but eternally, for the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. "God is wholly found in Him," that, as Calvin points out, we may be contented with Him alone, as the revelation of the Godhead. ^[124]

Therefore Paul states that it is not for men to take anything from Christ through human wisdom. In all things Christ has the pre-eminence, for in Him we see God reconciling (II Cor. 5:19), in Him we see God forgiving (Eph. 4:32), in Him we see God justifying (II Cor. 5:21), and in Him we see God subjecting all things to His own will (I Cor. 15:27-28).

Paul also centers his thinking around another concept, the headship of Christ. By virtue of the fact that Christ is God manifest in the flesh, Paul understands Him to be Lord of all things: all creation, powers, and blessings-the Source and Head of all. And in a special sense, and in virtue of the believer's union with Him, He is the spiritual Head of a new race of redeemed men.

This latter idea is beautifully expressed under the figure of the "body of Christ."

"For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:4-5).

This is one of Paul's classic illustrations of the relation of the believer to Christ. Christ is conceived as the "head" and the believers as the members of the "body."

In I Cor. 12:14-31, Paul goes into more detail, showing the relation of the members to the whole body and to each other, then concludes, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (v.27).

This relationship is conceived mystically by Paul, that is, by faith in Christ as the controlling Head, with the believers as obedient members of the organism, "not as neighbors merely, but as complementary parts of the whole." ^[125]

Paul's concept of the "body of Christ" opposed the concept of the individual as held by the Roman Empire which eliminated the individual of the community. But the idea of the "body" allows the individual and the group the fullest opportunity for the development of both. ^[126] Room for individual expression and responsibility to others reaches its highest expression in this figure. Each member fulfills his own office to the glory of God while he maintains the rights of each of the other individuals. Paul says, in I Cor. 10:16 ff., that we all partake in the body of Christ and we who are many are one body in Christ. He says,

All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good ... Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:23-31).

And in Romans 12:1-8 he adds:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

"For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting; he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

The secret of this union is in the combination of diversities, not the suppression of them, in the function of Christ as the governing Head.^[127] The many are brought to a common level in relation to Christ; there is no respecting of persons with Christ. "For as many of you," he says, "as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

As Head of the race of redeemed men, Christ is the "radiating center of spiritual force for the universe."^[128] He is the Provider of all spiritual blessings that are in the heavenly places. He is the means of man's holiness, sonship, redemption, forgiveness; for God has made known the mystery of His will, "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:9-10).

In Col. 2:8-16, Paul says that Christ, as governing Head, is the source of fullness of life. In Him the believer is circumcised, "buried," "raised" from the death of sin, "made alive," "forgiven," and "freed" from "principalities and powers" of the evil order. Therefore he adds that the believer must hold "fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2:19).

The individual believer, the Church or ecclesia, the redeemed, ransomed, sanctified, etc., are all caught up mystically and incorporated into Christ, who is the Head. In this view Paul sees Christ as the special Lord of all who believe in Him.

On the other hand, Christ is the Head of all things, not by virtue of the faith of the believer, but by virtue of creation. Since Christ made all things, all things belong to Him. And Paul sees everything eventually united under His authority. He says that God will "sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:10), that "in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). And every tongue will confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

Eph. 1:10, quoted above, is a summary statement that God will subject everything to Christ, for that is the significance of the clause, "to sum up all things in Christ."^[129]

These verses do not teach universal salvation but universal subjection to Christ. Paul makes this point clear when he says,

"For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:27-28).

What Paul is saying is that Christ has potentially all things subjected to Him, but that the completion of this work is still future. Even all evil persons will be subject to Him because, as God, He has the right of authority over all that He has made. Satan, though not saved, will be subject to Christ.

To summarize, Paul sees two aspects to the headship of Christ: He is the spiritual Head of all redeemed men in Christ, and the sovereign Head of all creation in His own right. Paul points out clearly a distinction between these two aspects of Christ's authority: in the first all men may be subject to Christ as their Redeemer, that is, through voluntary union with Him, and enjoy immortality in His presence; in the latter all men, principalities, and powers must be subject to Him because of His utter supremacy over all things.

En Christo is a statement concerning God: God was in Christ; God became immanent. In addition, ex Christo is a statement concerning Christ: God was in Christ; He is the Head of all.

We turn now to Paul's third major insight into union with Christ, that of the new man in Christ. He states the matter as follows: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). And again, he says, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).

Union with Christ is vital union with the source of all righteousness and holiness. And a man so united with Christ is a new man, a changed man, a different person. Paul says that, like as Christ was raised from the dead, so the believer is raised to a new life of righteousness. The old life drops away and the new life ensues. The old things are the old covenant of works and circumcision, the old Mosaic law, with its types and shadows and bondage. These things give way to the new things which are found in the reconciling death of Christ—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the source of the believer's life and immortality (I Cor. 1:30). Union with Christ brings about

the Spirit's working which Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5:22-24). Again, he says,

"Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:11-14).

Paul says that union with Christ issues in a change of mind as regards sin, saying, "Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15), and concludes,

"For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:21-23).

Paul also speaks of this concept of the new man under the figure of circumcision, saying, "In whom [Christ] ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11).

Putting off the body of flesh for Paul means putting off sin, the old man, and putting on the new man. He says,

Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:9-11).

In this context Paul is showing the difference between the man in Christ, who seeks the things that are Godlike, and the man of the earth, who follows after "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5), who is characterized by "anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8).

To put off all these sinful practices by union with Christ is the true circumcision, says Paul. Circumcision, literally performed under the old covenant, was the sign of the Jews' identification as God's people. But under the new covenant this spiritual circumcision made without hands is the identifying sign of God's new race of redeemed men. This is the true identification; the old is of no avail.

But lest it be thought that Paul suggests that morality in itself is sufficient, he constantly insists that "saints are accepted only by virtue of their being in Christ ... out of Christ the best saints will appear sinners, and unable to stand before God."^[130] Paul repeats the "in Christ" in order that there may be no doubt as to how this new man is created. The answer to sin and its consequences is not

in seeking to overpower it (which according to Rom. 8:7 cannot be done), but, as we have noticed before, to put in the background the external duties and seek Christ, to win His mind and viewpoint. The indwelling Christ, the indwelling Spirit, is the source of the new creation, and the fruit of the Spirit's working is the sign and seal of the new life.

En Christo is a statement concerning man. In union with Christ he is a new creation, a member of a new race, a race of redeemed men. He is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), faith (Eph. 1:12), wisdom, strength, and honor (I Cor. 4:10), boldness (Philemon 8-9), truthfulness (Rom. 9:1), and so on.

The fourth and final major insight that we find in Paul's en Christo is the new relation in Christ.

Christians dwell in a new element or atmosphere. They operate in a different sphere, that is, in Christ—not in Adam, not in Abraham, not in sin, not in the law; they live in the realm where Christ is supreme. Christ himself is the new element, so to speak, the element of their living. In such, man is characterized by a new set of standards and relationships, indeed, not of compulsion, but of free choice, by virtue of his union with Christ.

Previously Paul's God was afar off, but now He is nearby in Christ. Paul learns that God is his Father, and that as a son of God he is an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ (Rom. 8:12-17). Being a new creation himself, he holds new relations with other believers; they are all members of the "body of Christ." To make a believer in Christ a slave is a grave sin, is impossible; all are brothers. In Christ defines the sphere of this new relation.

The realization of this new relation puts a whole new meaning into life. Paul now knows what Christ experienced when it is said of Him that He was moved with compassion. Paul knows this concern now too. He can say,

But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us (I Thess. 2:7-8).

And then he adds,

But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: because we would fain have come unto you (I Thess. 2:17-18).

To the Romans he writes, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). And the love of Christ constrains him to valiant service in the cause of Christ.

Who can miss the warmth and tenderness and Christian concern that Paul bears for all men! All through his writings this sense of oneness with his converts shines through. It no doubt springs from the fellowship that he enjoys with his Master.

En Christo is the best term that Paul could use to show the mutual regard of Paul and Christ, and Paul and his fellow believer. He seeks to glorify God in his body whether by life or by death. He seeks to be a brother, a father, an inspiration, and an encouragement to all. En Christo is a two-directional experience: man in Christ, and Christ in man. Paul is best understood in that term of expression that represents man's experience of God as mutual or common to both. ^[131] And en Christo best represents this type of experience.

En Christo sums up four great ideas in Paul's thinking: deity in Christ, headship in Christ, the new man in Christ, and the new relation in Christ.

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 9

ECLIPSE OF THE PHRASE

With the review of the Pauline phrase *en Christo* in the New Testament completed, it will serve toward a fuller understanding of the significance of this concept to note its use in the early post-apostolic Church writings.

Almost all of this literature is of gentile authorship. Outside of the New Testament little belongs to the first century and much of it was written in the second century. Clement's first letter to Rome belongs to the first century, written about A.D. 96. ^[132]

In this literature we shall notice some very definite patterns and trends in theological thinking in relation to the phrase in question. Though full of religious conviction, this literature is written not so much to emphasize the place of Jesus Christ in the faith ^[133] as to defend the Church from attacks on it from two sides, persecution from the Roman civil power and the threat of schism from the Hellenistic religious world. This threat to the unity of the Church came largely from such sources as Gnosticism, Docetism, and Ebionism, which denied some aspect of the person of Christ. These heretical tendencies viewed Jesus as a member of supernatural "forms" of existence, from which the history of the universe had arisen. The Ebionites denied seeing in Christ the actual presence of God, though they accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Docetism saw the divine element in Jesus as real and eternal, but that He only appeared as a man, and was not actually flesh and blood. A great controversy, therefore, emerged about the essential person of Christ. This struggle was to continue for several centuries until the great councils crystallized the argument. In these earliest documents one can see the trends of theological and ecclesiastical thinking that were developing.

Our task will be to search for the Pauline concept of union with the risen Lord and to see what bearing our findings have on the doctrinal and theological and ecclesiastical developments in these early centuries. We shall begin with Clement's first letter and continue the search through the most significant writings of this period. We shall omit entirely the apocryphal New Testament writings because of their legendary and fanciful character. Much of this literature "is heretical in nature." ^[134]

We begin with Clement's First Letter to Corinth. In 32:4 Clement speaks of being "called in Jesus Christ," being justified by faith, not of ourselves. In 36:2 he says,

"Through Him [Christ] we fix our gaze on the heights of heaven. In Him we see mirrored God's pure and transcendent face. Through Him the eyes of our hearts have been opened. Through Him, etc., etc."

It is difficult to find the idea of union in Clement, but the idea of Christ's agency for our salvation is everywhere to be found. Though we "are kept in the atmosphere of Apostolic language," ^[135] Clement's letter "reflects the movement away from the Pauline faith to a type of Christianity in which

ethical interests and concern for law and order predominate." ^[136] He speaks continually of ethical requirements and moral imitation of Christ, but very sparingly of union or an experience of Christ. (See 10:1 ff., cc. 17, 31, 32, 33.)

However, in the few passages where he speaks of in Christ we find the idea of union, but more predominantly, from the context, the idea of agency. All spiritual benefits are through Christ rather than by being in union with Him. ^[137]

Turning to the Letters of Ignatius, one finds numerous instances of the phrase as used by Paul.

Ignatius speaks of the indwelling Christ: "Let us, then, do everything as if He were dwelling in us" (Eph. 15:3). He speaks of the indwelling God as he continues, "Thus we shall be His temples and He will be within us as our God — as He actually is" (Eph. 15:3); and, "I realize you are full of God" (Mag. 14:1). He says further that God "has revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ" (Mag. 8:2). The blessings of Christ are realized in union with Christ, as when he says, "We shall rise in union with Him" (Trall. Intro.). And Ignatius speaks often of living his life, and exhorting his readers to live their lives, in union with Christ. The fundamental notion of the believer in Christ and Christ in the believer is clearly evident in Ignatius.

From the pages of these brief letters are numerous instances of union with Christ. Ignatius understood well "the sense of fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ." ^[138]

The redemption developed in the Letters of Ignatius is the same as that preached by the Logos-Christ, according to Schweitzer. And "it is based on the obtaining of immortality through being 'in' the Bringer of immortality." ^[139] He was intensely devoted to the person of Christ, and had a consciousness of fellowship with His sufferings. Rom. 6:3 is the theme of his writings, where he says,

"Let me imitate the passion of my God. If anyone has Him in him, let him appreciate what I am longing for, and sympathize with me, realizing what I am going through."

In the thought of Ignatius, union with Christ is union with God and is the divine pleroma or sphere of life and action.

These letters were probably written in the early second century.

Polycarp has very little on this theme. He says in 1:1, "Rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ"; in 1:3 and 12:2, "Believe in Him"; and in 14:1, "Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ." One could hardly say union is an underlying theme, but rather he has a passion for the preservation of the faith once delivered.

In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, mystic union with Christ is a reality, but it seems that it is the experience of the martyrs alone. Christians accepted martyrdom "not merely for the sake of loyalty and obedience," but because martyrdom was conceived as nothing less than a "mystic communion and conformation with One who died for our sins that He might raise us

eternally." ^[140] In 2:2 we read, "The most noble martyrs of Christ were no longer in the flesh, but rather that the Lord stood by them and conversed with them ... they despised the torture of this world." However, the underlying thought is not union with Christ, but rather that the believers may be imitators of Christ and the martyrs in their own passion, "just as the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom, in whose footsteps may be our lot to be found in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ" (22:1).

The "Didache" is more like a church manual emphasizing standards of conduct and church polity rather than an experience of an indwelling Divine Presence.

Clement's Second Letter likewise lays its stress on the moral life and obedience to the commandments. His idea on "sharing in the Spirit," which is Christ, is dependent on one's keeping his flesh pure and doing no violence to the visible Church of Christ (14:3-5).

The so-called Letter to Diognetus is described by Lightfoot as "the noblest of early Christian Writings." ^[141] This letter speaks of Christians being in the world as the soul is in the body. ^[142] The emphasis is placed on the person of Christ.

In the First Apology of Justin we read as follows,

But we have learned from our tradition that God has no need of material offerings from men, considering that He is the provider of all. We have been taught and firmly believe that He accepts only those who imitate the good things which are His ... So we hold that those who choose what is pleasing to Him (such as, temperance, righteousness and love of mankind) will because of that choice, be counted worthy of incorruption and fellowship (c. 10).

This passage will serve as an example of the teaching of this apology. Here as elsewhere is salvation by imitation rather than by union with Christ as illustrated by the figure of the vine and branches. The *en Christo* concept is quite foreign to these later writings.

One may answer that these letters and apologies were written out of necessity, as a defense against heresy and moral attacks. Such a reply may be true, but one can begin to see the seeds of external, rather than internal, authority beginning to sprout in the consciousness of the Early Church. Instead of the indwelling Christ being the source of life and conduct, and union with Christ as the ongoing life of the Christian, imitation of Christ's ways, imitation of the martyrs, the following of prescribed rules of the church are slowly moving to the foreground of thinking. The core of the message of Justin is that what we have learned, and what we have received, and what has been handed down should be accepted. ^[143]

Athenagoras in his Plea does not write theologically. He makes only a passing reference to the Incarnation (c. 21). It is an apology and defense of the faith to the emperors. Paul's concept is also foreign to this work. It is agreed that "it is a mistake to imagine that, because the fulness of the faith is not apparent in their works, the Apologists attenuated Christianity by accommodating it to Greek culture. Their first aim was to defend monotheism." ^[144]

On the other hand the absence of so significant a concept as that of Paul's in Christ in the writings of the leaders of the Early Church suggests a basis for the growing concept of ecclesiastical authority. And conversely, the increasing demand for external means to unify the Church against heresies and persecutions posed a very serious threat to the unity of the Church by spiritual means, that is, union with Christ.

The multiplied number of the lapsed during the persecution is common knowledge. The denial of the faith was due to at least two reasons, a lack of a vital experience of Christ and the widespread desire to be acceptable to the prevailing Christian culture that was springing up everywhere. That is not to say that vital Christianity was not known; that is unthinkable. But vital Christianity was reaching the point of Hellenization; that is, virtue was being placed in the external forms of religion rather than in Christ. As Schweitzer points out, "With the Hellenization of Christianity began its impoverishment." ^[145]

To preach an external creed rather than an indwelling Presence was the developing danger of the Early Church fathers. The helps to holiness became a snare and were taken hold of as devices for the exercise of control and authority over men. That which was original to the first-century Christians, namely, union with Christ, was, perhaps unwittingly, laid aside and neglected.

A notable exception to the trends of the times is found in Irenaeus, who, in his *Refutation and Overthrow of the Knowledge Falsely So Called*, restates Paul's concept and appeals to the New Testament as his authority. He is the first to use the New Testament as we do, as authoritative. ^[146] "His main purpose in writing is to establish in clear simplicity the belief in one God ... and the faith in the redemption of the human race through Jesus Christ His only Son." ^[147] He emphasizes over and over again that man is justified by faith in Christ alone, and follows the same sort of argumentation as the Apostle Paul. Life in Christ is ever new and directly received. Though the physical connection with Jesus by this time is only through links, the great succession which Irenaeus stresses is not of bishops, but "of faith and life from generation to generation of believers, bound together in the fellowship of the Body of Christ." ^[148]

Writing in the last few years of the second century Irenaeus says,

"Many barbarian people who believe in Christ follow this rule, having [the message of their] salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit without paper and ink. They believe in one God ... Those who believe in this faith without written documents are barbarians in our speech, but in their convictions, habits and behavior they are, because of their faith, most wise, and are pleasing to God ... (Book III, 4:2).

And again, he says,

"So, then, since the Lord redeemed us by his own blood, and gave his soul for our souls, and his flesh for our bodies, and poured out the Spirit of the Father to bring about the union and communion of God and man-bringing God down to men by [the working of] the Spirit, and again raising men to God by his incarnation-and by his coming firmly and truly giving us incorruption, by our communion with God, all the teachings of the heretics are destroyed (Book V, 1:1).

"Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not accept in their souls by faith the union of God and man, but remain in the old leaven of [merely] human birth-not wishing to understand that [God] . . . brought about his incarnation and displayed the new birth, so that as we by the former birth were heirs of death, by this birth we should be heirs of life" (Book V, 1:3).

Irenaeus then goes on to contrast the new life with the old life in Adam and appeals to the example of Abraham as an instance of justification by faith. And as the vine gives fruit through the branches, so Christ gives the fruits of immortality to the believer (Book V, 2:3).

But more specifically, he says,

"Therefore, he [God] renews these things in himself, uniting man to the Spirit; and placing the Spirit in man, he himself is made the head of the Spirit, and gives the Spirit to be the head of the man, for by him we see and hear and speak" (Book V, 20:2).

Irenaeus quotes whole sections of Romans and Galatians on the subject of faith. He uses the figure of the vine, the Eucharist, and Abraham to show that "the new creation in Christ 'recapitulates' the old." ^[149]

"The dominant interest of the second century church was the ordering of its life and teaching. To preserve the apostolic witness against Gnostic perversions, and Montanist extravagances, the episcopate, the canon, and the creed were developed. To interpret it to the Gentile mind, its affinities with the best in pagan religious thought were utilized. To maintain it against persecution, the martyr was willing to suffer. Finally, to ensure the perpetuity of the faith, the church built up a closely knit organization which was as uncompromising toward heresy and schism as it was towards the demands of the State." ^[150]

This is no less true of Irenaeus than of the other writers of this century. But instead of placing the basis of orthodoxy on external creeds and forms, Irenaeus seeks to establish the unity of the Church on Biblical grounds, that of faith in the incarnate Redeemer, Christ Jesus, as the source of life and immortality.

However, in this regard Irenaeus appears like a leaf in the wind. The movement toward ecclesiastical authority after him seems to gain momentum, so that by the time of Tertullian, and Cyprian, about fifty years later, the lines of hierarchical power are beginning to be quite definitely drawn. Cyprian, for instance, writes: "The bishop is in the church, and the church is in the bishop, and if anyone is not with the bishop he is not in the church." ^[151] However, in Cyprian's time all bishops were equal; no one bishop had authority over another. But thought and practice are moving in the direction of hierarchical authority. Cyprian continues, "Whoever he may be and whatever he may be, he who is not in the church of Christ is not a Christian.... He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother ... There is no salvation out of the church." ^[152] Out of Christ there is no salvation was altered by Cyprian to, Out of the church there is no salvation, and changed by later churchmen to, Out of the Roman church there is no salvation.

As the Church begins to substitute its creeds and moral standards for the individual spiritual experience of Christ, it seems to lose something vital in its life. Conformity, in outward life, be it observed, is not necessarily based on Paul's concept of union in Christ as a continuing state of divine fellowship.

This is the conclusion that is drawn from our study of the writings of the Early Church fathers, that out of necessity they had to formulate their faith to withstand attacks on the Church from without. But while they did this thing the heart of the gospel, which is Paul's unique phrase *en Christo*, was not proclaimed with the usual vigor. This was a great tragedy to Christendom, when *en Christo*, a personal experience of the reality of Christ, the risen Lord, was replaced by *en te ecclesia*, "in the Church," a conformation to Church authority, as represented in the bishops. This is the ever-present danger to the Church in any century.

IN CHRIST

By

John B. Nielson

Chapter 10

FORMULA FOR TODAY

It would seem at this point that it would be profitable to suggest *en Christo* as a formula for the solution of some of the problems of this mid-twentieth century.

If Paul were permitted to speak today for Jesus Christ, his *en Christo* message would penetrate to the heart of some of our problems and shout its answer. In speaking to our generation, Paul would be characterized by three attitudes:

First, by a strong and experiential faith. He would be dogmatic and positive in some of his assertions because of his personal experience of God. He would not fear the hierarchies and temporal powers. But as he did before the Sanhedrin, the Judaizers, before the leaders of the pagan religions, and before Caesar himself, Paul would stand confidently and unashamed of his testimony of Jesus as Christ (Rom. 1:16); he would stand alone, if necessary, against the prevailing evils of our day. The greatness of Paul is seen here, that alone (we must never lose sight of the value and power of one individual), with his confidence in Jesus Christ, he was able under God to redirect the course of human history into new channels. It is ever true that once the seed of righteousness is sown, such things as crucifixion and beheading do not destroy the seed. And God can overturn in a day, so to speak, what it takes man's wisdom centuries to build. Paul saw the implications of Christ's presence in the world and sent them like harpoons into the prevailing culture and subjected it to Christ. What he did for his day must be done in our day. Someone with daring faith and confidence based on an experience of Christ within must dismantle the bombs of our scientific self-confidence.

In the second place, Paul would be characterized by complete fidelity to the Scriptures as revelation of God. In no place does Paul contradict the message of the Scriptures. After Damascus the new element in Paul's interpretation of scripture was Christ, and he constantly appealed to the Old Testament for support.^[153] If Paul seems at times authoritarian and dogmatic, it is due to his firm conviction as to the trustworthiness of his report, but never due to an opinion that he has a superior place among men or possesses authority over them (Gal. 1:8-9). He describes himself as the least of the apostles (I Cor. 15:9), the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15), and as an ambassador in bonds (Eph. 6:20). He was but one minister among many from the court of Christ. Today he would also say, "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (I Cor. 11:23); and, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

And finally, Paul would be Christ-centered. He left no doubt as to whom he served. One must admit Paul's faith whether he accepts it or not. To him Christ is preeminent, there is no higher revelation of God given to men than the God-Man, Christ Jesus, the Lord (Col. 1:13-19). Paul had determined that he would preach only Christ. We have seen in another connection what Paul taught as to the sacrificial death of Christ, His resurrection and ascension.^[154] This much is abundantly

clear; it is Christ and no other, the incarnate Son of God, who is the means of our reconciliation to the Father. And it is through our faith in Christ that we are so reconciled.

If Paul could leave *en Christo* with the several churches for the solution of day-to-day problems, as well as the larger ones, would he not put it into our hands? Is that not precisely what he has done? And if we apply the great Pauline formula to the disturbing issues of our century what are the implications?

One of the pressing problems that the mid-century faces is the issue of racism. Paul's answer would be, it seems, the same one that he gave when the Judaizers were doubtful of gentile inclusion. Paul said that the gentiles were human beings, and that, since there is but one God, He must be the God of the gentiles as well as of the Jews. God is the God, therefore, of all races; there are no favorites with Him. The believing Negro is as much a son of God as the believing white man. In Christ both are brothers. The Negro, when he is in Christ, is as much in Christ as the white man who is in Christ. In Christ both are members of the body of Christ. This, it seems, would be Paul's solution.

Another distressing problem in our day is the growing power of men in civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies over the lives and consciences of men. One high church official declared recently that the free churches must come to the place where they are willing to submit to authority in church life, and that there is no "legality" taught in the New Testament as to church government. And then he went on to make an impassioned plea for ecumenicity. On the contrary, the New Testament, in the light of *en Christo*, shows us first of all that all who are in Christ are equally in Christ, are members of the body of Christ. Though each member may have a different function, there is no hint that one function has inherent authority over another. Consider Paul's important passage on this idea where he says:

"And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers; [but all are] for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13).

And further, Paul states that all are to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21).^[155]

It would seem, therefore, that for Paul in Christ and hierarchy would be incompatible, that is, that *en Christo* would be incompatible with an external authority that eliminates the validity of the authority of the Bible over individual Christian conscience. Each believer has immediate contact with Christ within. Further, each believer, being just man, may demand worship from no other man. Each man bows the knee to no one but God. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The various offices are therefore for function, not mastery. Paul himself did not command; he rather entreated (Philemon 9-10).

Communism is another pressing problem. Paul's one body in Christ, as Dodd so well says, opposes the Soviet idea. It allows the individual and the group the fullest opportunity for the development of both, which is so necessary to a full life. ^[156]

Communism is the revival of the system of the Greek city-state idea and the Roman Empire, which eliminated the individual from the community. ^[157] But individual consciousness cannot be so eliminated perpetually. Room for individual expression and responsibility must be made. This concept of the relation of the individual to community reaches its noblest expression and greatest hope of fulfillment in the relation of the believer to Christ as the Head. Each member fulfills, therefore, his own office to the glory of Christ. This is the chief end of man.

Consider Roman 12:1-8, as follows:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting; he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

En Christo can, therefore, never make peace with communism, because the formula for the relation of the individual to the community — en Christo — opposes the suppression of the individual to the state, and calls forth the highest expressions of service to God for the good of the community and the individual. Christianity can never capitulate to communism because of the reality of the en Christo concept and experience.

On the other hand the body of Christ seeks to incorporate all men into the body of Christ. Its members seek to reconcile all men to the One who has reconciled himself to the world by Christ. It is the love of Christ that constrains all believers to appeal to the world to be reconciled to God.

Then again, the ecumenical movement has been gaining momentum in our generation. En Christo and ecumenicity, in some of its forms, are incompatible. Paul would object strenuously to the interpretation of his words, "we, though many, are one body in Christ," to mean, "after all, all are one body in Christ," as though the whole humanity were the body of Christ because God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the earth (Acts 17:26), as though all who go by the name "Christian" were in the body of Christ without consideration of their faith.

Paul's universalism is not universal salvation but universal redemption. Paul means that all who are in union with Christ, that is, all those who have accepted the propitiation for sins which Jesus Christ has offered, all those are one in Christ. One world church in organic union is not the same thing as one world church in spiritual union. The latter already exists in fact, and the former can bring about only more confusion. Before organic union can appeal to the whole Christian conscience it must become spiritual union on scriptural terms. Some such questions as these must be resolved: Will organic union avoid the dangers of hierarchical powers? Will it include Romanism? Will it seek to coerce the dissident into disfavor and oblivion? Can the true Church of Christ include in its membership those who hold faith and order which is unscriptural? What is the nature of Christ and the Scriptures? Is the interpretation of the creed which is the basis of union, "faith in Christ as God and Saviour," to be left to the various communions? Or will the implications of that article of faith be spelled out? And if so, to the satisfaction of all? If not, are we not still divided? Then again, will it be universal salvation or universal redemption? Are there conditions to salvation or none? Is the death of Christ a propitiation or a human tragedy? Are the Scriptures in all points as to man's salvation trustworthy or not trustworthy? Will the union be founded only on words?

Paul would say that only union with Christ in individual experience scripturally arrived at that re-creates the individual in Christlikeness, and not the pronouncements of a super church, will convince the world of the claims of God in Christ. A super church can never speak for Christ to the individual; only Christ himself can do that within the individual himself. The creedal statement, "faith in Christ as God and Saviour," cannot stand alone without scriptural interpretation; and an ecumenical movement that side-steps the scriptural interpretation of the creed is not Pauline, and therefore not Christian. Paul would call faith in Christ that is not scripturally understood no gospel at all, but a doctrine of devils (I Tim. 3:16; 4:1-3).

The union of all mankind in a world of moral order and peace, according to Paul, can be known only in the Biblical revelation. For him the other religions are no revelations, but vain attempts of man to reach upward to God and, in some instances, to become gods. But the Christian faith is a revelation from God that He has successfully reached down to man and by His strong arm (Rom. 1:16), Christ himself, has accomplished man's redemption. This is Paul's claim and he cites his own experience, again and again, as proof. Christ has done all that is necessary, he claims. Nothing else need be done, nor indeed can be done, to bring about man's salvation.

The reality of this concept is in the deepest conception of man. A man lay dying. When urged by a minister to trust God, he replied, "I would, but I do not want God to do anything wrong." In man's best moral sense lies the requirement that, if God justifies the guilty, He must remain just. "In Christ God does both," was the minister's satisfying answer to his parishioner.

Certainly, an eclectic world religion is wholly foreign to Paul. For him there is no religion but the Christian religion and no salvation but in Christ.

En Christo to be rightly understood must be scripturally interpreted. The article of faith of the ecumenical movement and the dreams of the eclectics must be likewise. As George L. Murray says:

The only hope for Western civilization lies in a return to the faith which brought it into being—the Christian faith. This return would, to be of value, necessitate the rediscovery of certain phases of Christianity more or less obsolete today. We must rediscover an individual God-consciousness and place upon the individual some of the responsibilities which our institutional and ecumenical emphases have helped to obscure. ^[158]

He adds the following quotation from D. R. Davies in his book, *The Sin of Our Age*:

The social prophets of the half-way house are urging a return to values which grew out of a faith in a revelation, about which, however, they are either silent or more or less faintly hostile. They are in my honest judgment laboring under the delusion that the social values for whose recovery they are so sincerely and finely pleading can be detached from the beliefs in which they are so deeply rooted, theologically as well as historically. This seems to me a perverse attitude in face of the situation of civilization today in which the dissolution of Christian beliefs has been followed by a dissolution in Christian values also. This is like believing that roses have a life of their own, independent of the tree from which they have been cut; that the bloom they enjoy on the tree can be transferred in perpetuity to the rose-bowl on the dining-table ... The pursuit of Christian social values dissociated from the theology out of which they derive their existence and nourishment is a pursuit of phantoms, a fore-doomed attempt to isolate the shadow from the sun. ^[159]

All of these great issues of the twentieth century, such as communism, racism, ecumenism, etc., are attempts at the solution of the problem of divisiveness in our world. They are urgent attempts to enforce the concepts of one race, of one church, of one religion, of one economic system, and of one world government, as though this would save our civilization. (Men usually turn to coercion and force to achieve unity when they become too weak to persuade.) But all these efforts at uniting mankind by force fall short of the Pauline solution. For Paul the answer is *en Christo*, the voluntary union of believers with their common Head, which is Christ, a union that extends beyond this world into that which is to come, the world of eschatological fulfillment.

Even Paul, the great apostle and revealer of Jesus Christ, walks the same road of simple faith in Christ with the humblest of believers, expecting that the union begun here will be completed in the great day of Christ. Who can surpass his confidence, when, in the hour of his death, he wrote to Timothy:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

Paul gave his life to this concept, saying,

"What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him (Phil. 3:7-9).

He prayed that men everywhere might know the reality of the message of the indwelling God, saying,

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ... that ye may be filled unto [with] all the fulness of God.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:14-21).

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Chapter 11 CONCLUSION

There are two dangers to be avoided in any search for an understanding of Paul's theology. One is that of making Paul the founder of a new religion, that of trying to systematize his writings into a compact, tight theology. The other is that of conceiving Paul's concept of union in terms only of a mystical experience of Christ.

A careful reading of Paul's letters reveals that Paul is not the founder of a new religion and a rigid theology. He is not as cold and formal as that. He is not preaching dogma, nor ritual, nor ecclesiasticism, nor writing a theology. He writes out of a living, continuing experience. He said that he received of the Lord what he gave to his hearers. He writes with a warmth and feeling of vital fellowship with his converts.

He writes to the Corinthians:

"For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel. I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every" church (I Cor. 4:15-17).

And to the Romans he writes:

"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom. 1:11-12).

Who can fail to see the beauty and feeling in his letter to the Thessalonians? He writes,

"For this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (I Thess. 3:7-8).

All through Paul's writings this sense of oneness and vital concern for his converts shines through. It springs from his relationship to Christ that we have found expressed in the unique phrase *en Christo*. Paul has made the phrase not only the formula for his relation to Christ but the formula for his relationship to his converts.

Paulinism generally seems to miss this warmth and mutuality of experience, this sense of community. Paulinism runs the risk of coming away from Paul with a knowledge about Christ but not a knowledge of Christ in personal experience. Such concepts as "law," "reconciliation,"

"redemption," and "justification" may be conceived as having only one direction, that from God to man; that is, as happening only in God, and not happening in the life of man. For instance, God has reconciled the world to himself, says Paul. Here is God working for man. But man is not necessarily reconciled to God; and he is not so reconciled until he takes part in the act of reconciliation. "Reconciliation," "ransom," "redemption," "justification" have their complete and fullest meaning when they are conceived in a two-directional manner, from God to man and from man to God. And that idea is best expressed by Paul in his unique phrase *en Christo*.

James S. Stewart writes,

"Most of the nineteenth century reconstructions of Paul's teaching, from Baur down to Wrede, sinned in this respect; ^[160] and although today there is a new insistence on the fact that Paul's theology is first and last the theology of a converted man, and that everything runs back to the day when in response to Christ's arresting hand upon his soul he had made his personal surrender, yet the shadow of Paulinism still lingers with us, and not until that shadow has been cleared away will the man come fully into his own. ^[161]

Paul will not be fully understood in cold theological terms that do not include a response from man to the initiative that God has taken in man's salvation. Paul is best understood, therefore, in that term of expression which represents man's experience of God as mutual or common to both. ^[162] And *en Christo* best represents this type of experience.

Paul touched on so many theological ideas because he met the problems these ideas represent all over the Christian world that he was helping to establish. And he wrote to solve these problems as they arose. And Paul is found to fall back upon this brief concept of union with Christ as the answer again and again.

Paul's letters represent his task of calling men away from waywardness (Corinthians), from Judaism and legalism (Galatians), from doubt and misunderstanding concerning the delay of the Lord's return (Thessalonians). They represent his concern for a proper understanding of the person of Christ (Colossians), for the enemies of the Cross and of Christ (Philippians), and for the character and ordering of the churches (Timothy and Titus). Romans shows Paul's great struggle over sin and its solution in union with Christ. And Ephesians exalts the Christ with whom Paul is in living communion.

The problems are more numerous than these just mentioned, but they illustrate the scope of Paul's task, and the warm and Christlike concern he has for his converts. His writing is not just theology; it is experience, an experience of God in Christ, that he must share with the whole world.

"No words of Scripture, if we except those, "God manifest in the flesh," hold within themselves a deeper mystery than this simple formula of the Christian life in Christ." ^[163]

And to this concept the New Testament agrees. Paul's letters represent his attempt to show that his experience of Christ at Damascus is the gospel of Christ himself and that it is for all men and for all situations.

The second danger is that of conceiving Paul's concept of union in terms only of a mystical experience of Christ. Paul also uses the term *en Christo* to describe his concept of the Incarnation. He says that "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4), and also that "God was in Christ" (II Cor. 5:19). "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9; 1:19). *en Christo* describes not only the union of the believer with God in Christ, but the union of God and man that happened in the historical Christ Jesus two millenniums ago.

Paul does not conceive of Christ as a member of an order of beings superior to man but inferior to God. His Christ is God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16). And his mystical experience is God-mysticism.

For some, Paul's Christ-mysticism is something less than God-mysticism. But unless we see that something more that Paul puts into the phrase *en Christo*, that something more than the sinner's identity with Christ in God's attitude toward sin, we shall fall short of understanding Paul's full message to the world.

Paul's *en Christo* is a statement concerning God — God in Christ; and it is a statement concerning man-man in Christ. And the historical Christ is the perfect union of the two-Godhead in Christ and humanity in Christ, Christ the God-Man.

Paul does not mean less than this by his phrase *en Christo*. It is that term around which all his theology and knowledge and experience of God turns.

En Christo spoke to the problems of the first century, and the greatness of the phrase lies in just this fact, that it seems to have universal application to the conditions and problems of life. Whereas Hellenism and the mystery religions permitted life to go on as usual, Christianity affected the whole life. The applications of the phrase to life's situations seem to be endless as we follow Paul around the Roman world. As someone said, his gospel was a "ferment." It reached into every segment of life and permeated it as yeast.

Paul's unique phrase is offered as the heart of Paul's experience and theology and gospel. Around it, *en Christo*, all turns. It is Paul's obsession. When it goes into eclipse, vital religious experience does likewise; for religion, to be meaningful, must be personal. For Paul it was. And *en Christo* is the phrase that best describes his experience of God.

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31 *Ibid.*, p.23 (footnote).

32 Quotes mine.

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36 Eis (into) is used here signifying entrance into union.

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39 Ibid., pp. 122-23.

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43 The view expressed by Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 125-26.

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54 See pp. 32-33.

- 55 Paul uses this same expression in II Cor. 6:16 as a quotation from Lev. 26:11.
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- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 14ff.
- 58 See pp. 56ff.
- 59 Nestle, *op. cit.*
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- 69 John Peter Lange, *Galatians, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, trans. by Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 49.
- 70 See Appendix "A," pp. 119ff.
- 71 Brackets mine.
- 72 See table, Appendix "A," pp. 119ff.
- 73 Sanday, *Romans*, I.C.C., pp. 86-87.
- 74 Murray, *Ephesians*, C.G.T. pp. lxiii-lxiv.
- 75 Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

76 Some instances of these contrasting phrases are listed in Appendix "B," p. 123.

77 R.S.V.

78 See Appendix "B," p. 123.

79 Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 101ff.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

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85 Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 1-5.

86 Schweitzer, *Interpreters*, p. 221.

87 Mackintosh, *op. cit.* pp. 59-60.

88 In Acts 20:28, from a secondary source, we have the writer quoting Paul from his farewell message to the Ephesian elders in the following words: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord [literally, of God] which he purchased with his own blood." In this verse Paul is quoted as saying that the blood of Christ is the blood of God. In the words of Baillie, the redemption "all takes place within the very life of God Himself, for if we take the Christology of the New Testament at its highest we can say that 'God was in Christ' in that great atoning sacrifice, and even that the Priest and the Victim were none other than God" (*Baillie, op cit.*, p. 188).

89 Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p.338. The opposite is the view of Schweitzer, who in our opinion becomes the final spokesman for what is known as the critical school, and the pivot for the new look and approach to incarnational thought so strong and prevalent today. He does, however, show the inadequacy of the Jesus of History and thus creates the demand for an answer to the more important question, Was God in Christ?

90 D. M. Baillie, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-47.

91 Lange, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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92 Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

93 Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1949) pp. 122ff.

94 Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1937), I, 61.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

96 Gal. 1:16. The R.S.V. reads, "to reveal his Son to me." But the Greek and the American Standard Version read, "in me," which, I think, is the correct meaning. This was no cold, logical deduction, but the conviction of a new relation that he sustained to God.

97 Deissmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

99 Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

100 W. Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1917), p. 36.

101 Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

102 John Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

103 R.S.V.

104 Deissmann, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

105 John Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

106 Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

107 Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

108 Baillie, *op. cit.*, pp. 30ff.

109 Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

110 Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

111 See pp. 56ff.

112 W. J. Hickie, *Greek-English Lexicon* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), in loco.

113 Liddell & Scott, *op. cit.*, in loco.

CHAPTER 7

114 Harold Dodd, *The Meaning of Paul for Today*. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), p. 134.

115 Schweitzer, *Mysticura*, p. 294. He says that Paul's ethics are comparable to no other save Jesus.

116 Ps 51:16-17; Isa. 1:11; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:7-8; Matt. 9:13.

117 Page 61.

118 Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

119 Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

CHAPTER 8

121 (This word is unknown in Paul.) Gleaned from study are these illustrations of the Trinity-Father, Son, Holy Spirit: root, tree, fruit; sun, ray, light; source, stream, estuary; intelligence, sensibility, volition; length, breadth, height; past, present, future; and body, soul, spirit.

122 pp. 27, 57ff.

123 See page 70.

124 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, translated by John Pringle (Edinburgh: 1851), pp. 181-83.

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126 Dodd, *op. cit.*, pp. 153ff.

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131 Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, p. 121.

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132 Library of Christian Classics, edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen (see a) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 16.

133 *Ibid.*, Richardson, p. 17 (a) *Early Christian Fathers*, translated and edited by Cyril C. Richardson in collaboration with Eugene R. Fairweather, Edward Rochie Hardy, and Massey Hamilton Shepherd.

134 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

135 Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, E.R.E., p. 534.

136 L.C.C., p. 39.

137 This letter includes thirty large pages.

138 L.C.C. pp. 78-79.

139 Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, p. 350.

140 L.C.C., Shepherd, pp. 141-42.

141 *Ibid.*, Fairweather, p. 205.

142 *Ibid.*, chapter 6.

143 *Ibid.*, Hardy, p. 231.

144 *Ibid.*, Richardson, p. 296.

145 Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, p. 375.

146 L.C.C., Hardy, p. 352.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 353.

148 Ibid., p. 353.

149 Ibid., p. 389.

150 Ibid., Richardson, p. 26.

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CHAPTER 10

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154 Pages 67ff.

155 R.S.V.

156 Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

157 Baillie, *Ibid.*

158 George L. Murray, *Our Hope of Survival* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1951), p. 48.

159 *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

160 The error of nineteenth-century reconstructions of Paul was to try to put his teachings into elaborate speculative systems.

161 James S. Stewart, *A Mom in Christ* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p.2.

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