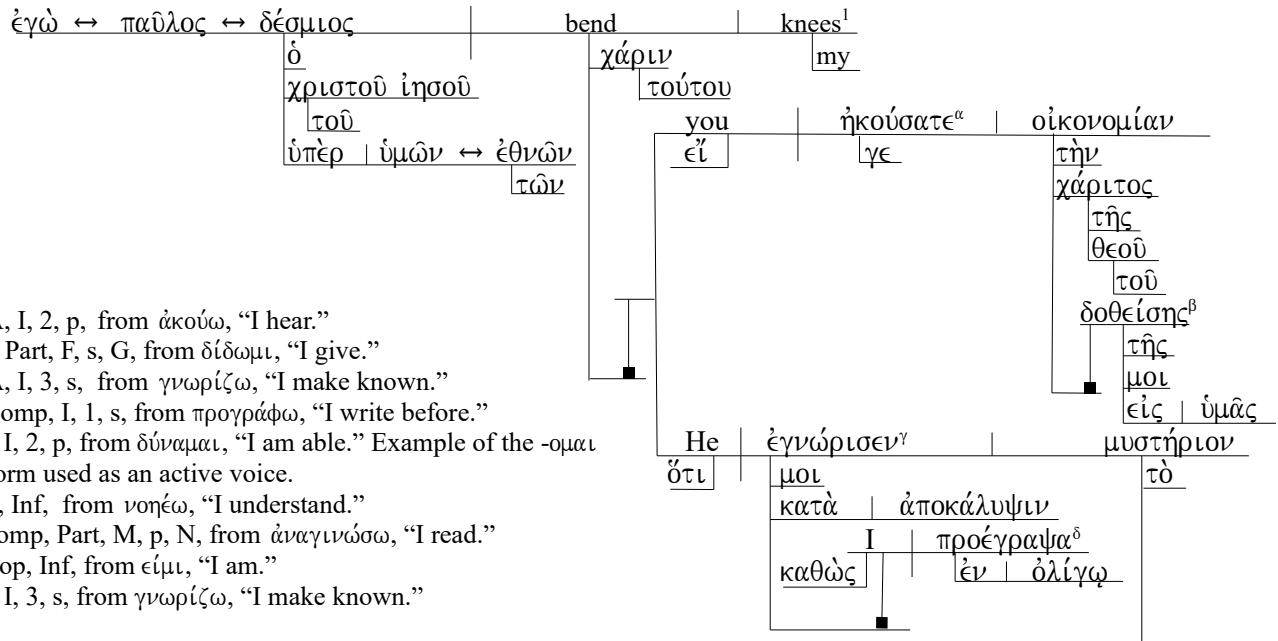
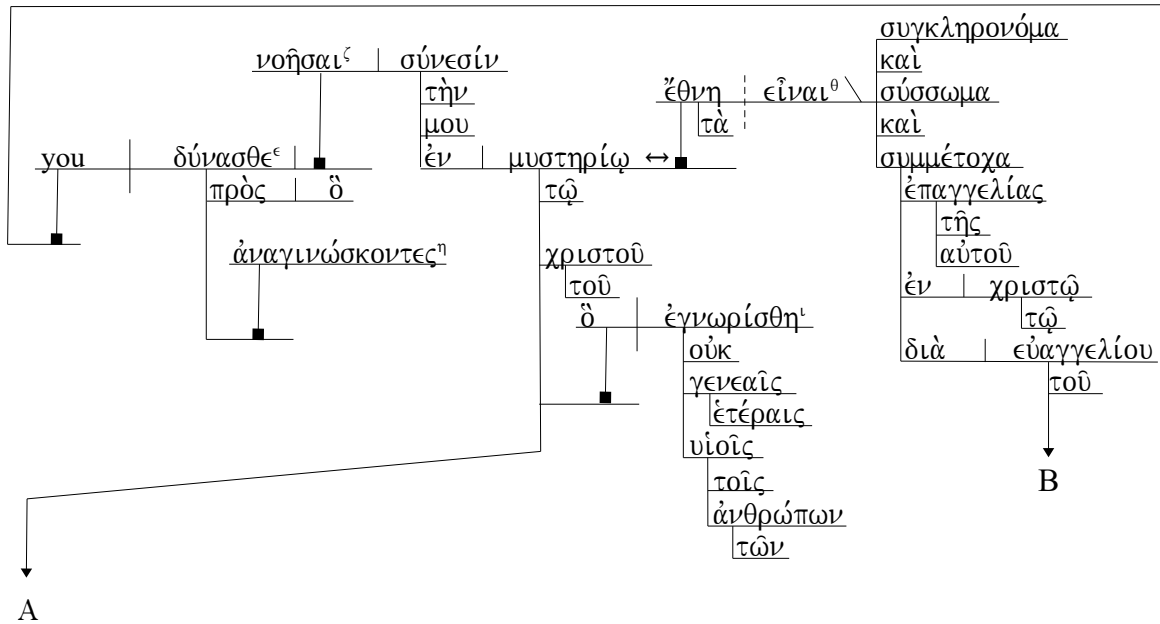


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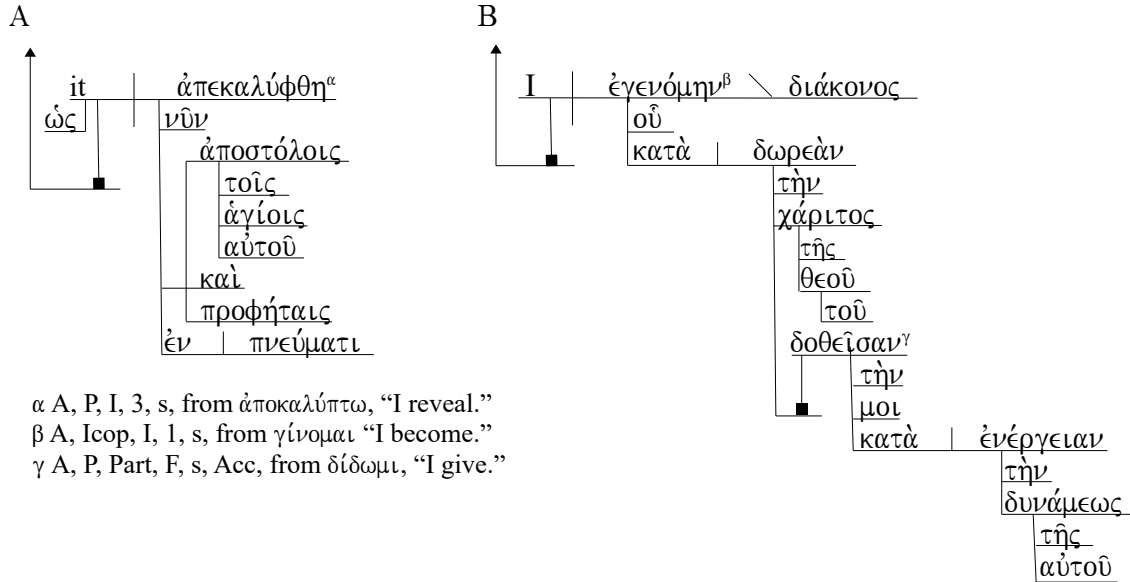
3:1-7 τούτου χάριν ἐγὼ παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν ² εἶ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, ³ ὅτι κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνώρισεν μοι τὸ μυστήριον καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ ⁴ πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ χριστοῦ ⁵ ὃ ἑτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι ⁶ εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετόχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ χριστῷ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ⁷ οὗ ἐγενόμην διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσαν μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.



- α A, A, I, 2, p, from ἀκούω, "I hear."
- β A, P, Part, F, s, G, from δίδωμι, "I give."
- γ A, A, I, 3, s, from γνωρίζω, "I make known."
- δ A, Icomp, I, 1, s, from προγράφω, "I write before."
- ε P, A, I, 2, p, from δύναμαι, "I am able." Example of the -ομαι verb form used as an active voice.
- ζ A, A, Inf, from νοηέω, "I understand."
- η P, Icomp, Part, M, p, N, from ἀναγινώσω, "I read."
- θ P, Icop, Inf, from εἶμι, "I am."
- ι A, P, I, 3, s, from γνωρίζω, "I make known."



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Translation: Because of this, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, ² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, just as I wrote a small amount, ⁴ regarding which when reading you are able to understand my insight in the mystery of the Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, ⁶ that the Gentiles are to be fellow heirs and fellow sharers of the body and fellow participants of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the working of His power.

Paul continues his discussion of the unity of the believers in this age. Ephesians 3:1-12 deals with the topic of the mystery revealed through the apostle Paul.

Exegetical Considerations

1. τούτου χάριν (toutou charin – Because of this)

Paul refers back to the metaphor of the building in Chapter Two to emphasize the unity of the believers in Christ. He continues that topic here, though with a different set of metaphors concerning various cultural aspects which would have been very well understood by his readers.

ἐγὼ παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ (egō paulos ho desmios tou christou iēsou – the prisoner of Christ Jesus)

The first element of the culture to which Paul refers is found in the words “prisoner of Jesus Christ.” In fact, Paul was a prisoner of Rome, but viewed it through the lens of his relationship to the Lord. There is possibly a veiled reference here to his stewardship of the dispensation of grace, which will be introduced in vs. 2 of this sentence. Stewards were usually slaves, though sometimes freedmen became such.

ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν (huper humōn tōn ethnōn - on behalf of you Gentiles)

Paul introduces his specific relationship to the non-Hebrew nations, the Gentiles. In Romans 11:13 Paul says “I am an apostle of the Gentiles” (εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος), indicating that God had sent him to

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the Gentiles, rather than to the Israelites. Paul's working on behalf of the Gentiles, now stated boldly while in Roman confinement, defined his service to God as being specifically limited to the nations. This is not to say that he did not minister to Israel, for he made clear that his ministry was "to the Jew first," but that his primary effort was not to his fellow Jews, but to the Gentiles.

2. εἴ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς (*eige ēkousate tēn oikonomian tēs charitos tou theou tēs dotheisēs moi eis humas – if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you*)

The word dispensation (*oikonomian*) is a culturally rich word used metaphorically by Paul to express his ministry to the church.

The first words in the clause, *ei ge*, indicate that Paul was assuming that his readers had already heard about what he was here presenting. The word *ei* indicates a first class condition, and could be translated *since*. The particle *ge* is an intensifier, rarely used in the New Testament. It is like saying in English, certainly, or, indeed.

It is certain that Paul's readers had heard this truth, as he had spent so much time in and around Ephesus. It is included here as a reminder, and is basic to the rest of the statements in verses 3-7. Furthermore, the statement contains cultural and grammatical elements that must be examined carefully, so that Paul's message is not lost amid the controversy which surrounds it. He, himself, certainly did not consider it controversial at all, and expected his readers to understand his message explicitly.

As noted, this statement is filled with the cultural milieu of Paul's day. The word dispensation has other words which would have come to the Ephesians mind automatically when they read this simple statement. They are, besides the word dispensation itself, the words translated householder or master, steward, goods and household. We must examine each before we attempt an interpretation of this clause.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself used the same cultural situation to teach spiritual truth in the parables. The parable in Luke 16, often called the parable of the unjust steward, expresses this same cultural setting and uses each of the cultural words with the exception of household. Without teaching the meaning of the parable, we will examine the cultural elements that are used by the Lord in His teaching.

The Householder (ἄνθρωπός πλούσιος)

"A certain rich man who had a steward..." (Luke 16:1). The first cultural element required was an owner of a business, usually a "rich man." Sometimes his was a formal business, but often the business included the owner's household, including his wife, children, and servants. Normally, only the rich could afford stewards. Unlike today, the master's business was directly associated with his household. He did not "go to the office" but operated out of his own home. The revenue received from the business was handled by his steward, who acted as the intermediary between the master and his household.

The Steward (οἰκονόμον)

"A certain rich man who had a steward..." (Luke 16:1). The steward was a slave who was responsible to the owner to manage part or all of his estate. If a steward were inept the householder lost money. But if the steward were wise, he would enrich his owner, who would in turn reward him for his efforts. While a steward was technically a slave, he was treated very well, and was generally salaried.

An owner would pay generously for a good steward. Paul Veyne presents a clear picture of the importance of the steward during the Roman Empire:

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Many stewards were born free but sold themselves into slavery in order to further their careers. Masters trusted them. Accounting was not yet what it has become in our day. Stewards did not open books for inspection regularly; masters let their accounts run for years. The steward was expected to keep an accurate record of income and expenditures and to be ready to give an accounting whenever necessary....”²

One can readily see that the responsibility of the steward was great. He was a slave, but a trusted one in a culture where sometimes the master of the house was absent. It was a position of peril as well, as the parable of Luke 16 indicates.

The Goods (ὕπαρχοντα)

“...this man was wasting his goods.” In the parable, the steward is accused of not carrying out his responsibility. The Greek word translated “goods” (NKJV) refers to the belongings of the owner, including money, as well as other material possessions.

As an illustration, suppose that the owner had given the steward a certain amount of money to run the household. The steward was responsible *to dispense* this money as needs arose. If the cook required a certain food item, it was the steward’s responsibility to dole out the money to purchase that item. If the steward decided that the cook needed to use what was on hand, he would provide the cook with no more food. It was the steward’s responsibility to see that nothing was wasted. For this reason, it is clear that the steward was actually a *dispenser* of the master’s goods. Granted that this illustration is somewhat over simplified, but it does point out the basic responsibility of the dispenser (steward) to his master (the householder) with reference to the dispensation (the goods to be dispensed).

While the concept of the terms dispensation, steward, etc. carried more elements, it is in this simplified sense that Paul used the dispensational metaphor.

Paul, Moses, Abraham, and others, received a revelation from God. In the metaphor of the dispensational household, they dispensed (distributed) that revelation to their contemporaries. The information necessary for the change of relationship revealed was written down, so that the household (see next section) could continue to operate after the dispenser (steward) was no longer available.

Not everything revealed to the household, however, is part of the dispensational metaphor. For instance, later prophets in Israel also received revelation and distributed it. But the revelation was not the relationship revelation given to the steward which he dispensed. None of the later prophets added to or changed the Mosaic code. The metaphorical goods as Paul uses the word dispensation only consist of the specific “rule of life” necessary for the household to relate itself through its behavior to the owner, God Himself. In Paul’s statement, the goods consisted of grace revelation.

The Household (οἶκος,³ οἰκέτις)

The final element in the cultural situation of the dispensation is the household. The word is only used three times in the Greek New Testament. Paul used it Ephesians 2:19, where I translated it “family.” He also used it in Galatians 6:10 in the phrase “the household of faith,” and 1 Timothy 5:8, where it indicates an actual, non-metaphorical household.

In the simplest terms, this may simply have been the owner’s family and servants. It was they to whom the steward dispensed the goods. In the broader sense, the household may have included some or all of the owner’s business interests. In the parable of Luke 16, the household is not strictly mentioned, but it is implied.

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The household included whatever business the steward was managing for the owner. Each household was and is distinct. A steward was a steward over only one household, and the goods that he dispensed were only for the benefit that household and its master. It is this cultural truth that makes the distinct nature of biblical dispensationalism understandable. If one confuses households, or tries to adopt the goods from another household, then the meaning of this process of dispensation is lost. Members of a household are limited in their use of the goods given to that household. Thus, today believers are not allowed to attempt to place themselves under law. Those legal requirements are for a different household, and may not be appropriated for the current household. "You are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Paul's Metaphor of a Dispensation

"the dispensation of the grace of God"

The word dispensation has been misused by both friends and foes of the doctrine of grace living. A professor of the author's, Dr. H. Laverne Schafer, once made the comment in a seminary class that biblical dispensationalism has suffered as much at the hands of its friends as its enemies. Many people who attack dispensationalism do not really understand what they are attacking. But this should not be surprising. Many people who call themselves dispensationalists do not understand what they are claiming.

Paul uses the term dispensation as a metaphor here taken from the culture of his day. One key to the metaphorical comparison is the use of the word "of," actually a genitive construction in Greek, which has several uses. In this case, the word indicates an "objective genitive," a genitive receiving the action of the action noun, dispensation. Grace, then, is the *goods* which Paul dispensed.

The above partial quote also indicates the *master*, or householder by the prepositional phrase "of God." Here the genitive "of" is also important, as it indicates a genitive of possession. The grace belongs to God.

Herein lies one aspect of confusion. Those who attack the doctrine of dispensations often do not understand the various contents of the word grace. Many confuse the use of the word grace here with Paul's use in Ephesians 2:5 and 8, where the word is applied to salvation, but here it is applied to something else altogether. Those who make this mistake, think that grace in Ephesians 3:2 is saving grace, but it is not. It is grace for daily living, not grace for initial salvation.

Grace is an attitude of God by which He provides for the objects of His grace all that He requires of those objects. For salvation, God demands death and resurrection, which He provided through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But for daily living, God requires abilities to overcome one's enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, as well as to continue service to God. The grace dispensed by Paul is of this second type, grace for daily living.

It is this confusion that causes enemies of dispensational truth to accuse those who teach the fact that grace for daily living was not available in the Old Testament legal system. They do not recognize that grace has two distinct uses, and hence they accuse dispensational proponents of teaching two ways of salvation, law in the Old Testament, and grace today. But no *biblical* dispensationalist has ever taught justification by works under the law, since the law was not designed for justification, but for daily living. Such accusations come from an unwillingness to interpret words distinctly, and refusing to believe that the word grace has two different applications.⁴

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Today, living according grace has been provided as opposed to living according to law under the Mo-
saic system. It is in this sense that Paul says in Romans 6:14, “you are not under law, but under grace.”

“which was given to me for you”

Two more of the cultural elements associated with the word dispensation become clear in the above
phrase.

The word “which” refers to the word “dispensation.”⁵ This dispensation of grace “was given to me,”
that is, given to Paul, but he is not referring to his reception of the benefits of grace, but to the doctrinal
use of the word grace that had previously not been used. Paul, then, is the *steward*, the dispenser, of the
new doctrine of grace. *This stewardship belonged to him alone.* This will become clear in vs. 3.

The final cultural aspect one finds in the phrase “for you.” By interpretation, the “you” refers to the
Ephesian readers of this epistle. They are, then, the *household*. By application, “you” refers to all those
who are in the same relative position to Paul and God today. In other words, we today who are
Christians may apply the “you” to ourselves, since we receive the same benefits as the Ephesians. That
household, along with the grace provision, continues today, and Christians today are part of that
household program.

One final note. It is clear when viewing *this passage historically* that the word “dispensation” refers to
an act of an individual, namely Paul. This act is no longer occurring. It ended with Paul’s stewardship.
There are no stewards today in the exact sense in which Paul was in the first century.

It is incorrect to refer to the dispensation as continuing today in the sense that Paul uses the word in this
sentence. This confusion is the direct result of the confounding of the terms age and dispensation.⁶ They
are two different words with two different meanings. An age is a period of time, a dispensation is not.
Believers today do not live during the dispensation of grace, but are simply *under grace* that was dis-
pensed by an individual some 2,000 years ago during the Roman Empire.

3. ὅτι κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνώρισεν μοι τὸ μυστήριον⁷ (*hoti kata apokalupsin egnōrisen moi to
mustērion – that by revelation He made known to me the mystery,*)

Paul clarifies his reference to the “dispensation of grace given to me for you” by explaining that this in-
formation about the dispensation of grace was a mystery made known to him from a revelation that he
personally received.

A mystery in Greek parlance referred to something previously unknown and unknowable, but which
had been made known, and therefore was now known.⁸ Such is true of the of the grace doctrine made
known by revelation to Paul. One cannot find it in Scripture prior to Paul’s receiving the revelation
from God.

It is not that grace was unknown previously, but the unique character of grace in association with the
current metaphorical household was unknown. This truth was revealed to Paul and dispensed by him
alone. This is new, and cannot be found in the revelation from God before Paul received it.

The uniqueness of the current household relationship to God’s grace cannot be successfully denied.
Paul makes it clear that this is a new use of the word grace. No previous generation of believers had the
provision for daily living that is available to Christians in the current household. Hence it is a major
mistake to attempt to apply material from other households to the new household.⁹

καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ (*kathōs proegrapsa en oligō – just as I wrote a small amount*)

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Some controversy attends to this short statement. To what act of writing is Paul referring? Some believe that he is simply referring to the previous brief statement in this context, which is not possible given the scope of his statement concerning the revelation of which Paul speaks. Others hold that he had written a previous epistle, either to the Ephesians directly, or an encyclical that was to circulate through the various assemblies which Paul had founded.

Clearly there was a previous epistle because the revelation to Paul has more than one mystery aspect, one which Paul presents in vs. 2 of which he was the steward, and different mystery which he discusses in vss. 4-6, of which Paul has not yet spoken in this epistle, but is nonetheless equally a newly revealed mystery.

4. πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ χριστοῦ (*pros ho dunasthe anaginōskontes noēsai tēn sunesin mou en tō musteriō tou christou – regarding which when reading you are able to understand my insight in the mystery of the Christ*)

Because of this statement, it is highly unlikely that Paul's statement in the previous verse about writing a brief amount refers only to the statement in vs. 2, "the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you."

The phrase, "regarding which when reading you are able to understand" indicates that the Ephesians had already read his brief writing, but it contained further information, identified as "the mystery of the Christ," which adds information to the previous statement about mystery revelation of grace.

So here we have a second mystery, a somewhat different mystery that, while related to the mystery of vs. 2-3, is distinct from it. The mystery in vss. 4-6 consists of newly revealed truth concerning "the Christ."

The reason that this mystery is distinct from the mystery of vs. 2 is actually found in the next verse, but one must begin with a careful definition of the phrase, "the Christ" here in vs. 4.¹⁰

To many, the phrase "the Christ" refers only to the Lord Jesus as Messiah. They recognize that it is not a personal name, such as "Jesus Christ" as Paul used it. But few realize the unique way in which Paul uses this phrase in doctrinal passages. For here, it cannot be used as "Messiah," nor of the person of Christ, neither of which could rightly be called a mystery.

In the statement before us, it does refer to something previously unrevealed, but now known. Furthermore, this knowledge of "the Christ" was not limited to Paul, but was revealed to many others, as well (vs. 5 below).

Paul uses the term Christ in his writings over 400 times, usually in reference to the person of Christ. However, it is well known that Paul uses the phrase "body of Christ" as a metaphor for the church (see notes on 4:11, for example. See also 1 Corinthians 10:16 & 12:27). He has already alluded to this truth in 1:22-23.

What, then, are we to make of the phrase "the Christ" used as a mystery? The articular phrase "the Christ" used in the context of the term "mystery" is further discussed in vs. 6. It is a short way of saying "the body of Christ" which consists of the new household containing not only Israelites by Gentiles as well.

Not only was grace for daily living not revealed in the Old Testament, but the new household, the church, was not revealed there. However, unlike the grace revelation which was given to Paul personally so that he could dispense it to the new household, the household itself was actually revealed, in

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stages, before Paul received it as well. One discovers to whom the new revelation concerning the church in vs. 5.

5. ὁ ἑτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι (*ho heterais geneais ouk egnoristhē tois huios tōn anthrōpōn hōs nun apekaluphthē tois hagiois apostolois autou kai prophetais en pneumati – which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*)

Paul states that the mystery of the church “*in other generations*”¹¹ was not made known to the sons of men.” It is very unfortunate that the word *generations* was incorrectly translated in the KJV as *ages*. The doctrine here deals with people, not with time periods, which has confused many interpreters who rely solely on the English text. Paul says that all previous generations of people heard nothing of the mystery of the church. It was reserved for the generation, the people, to whom the apostles and prophets presented it after it was revealed by the agency of the Spirit.

Unlike the mystery of grace in vs. 2, the mystery of the church in vs. 3 was not made to Paul alone. The new household, the household that came into existence on the day of Pentecost, was revealed to the New Testament apostles and prophets. In fact, this revelation began before the day of Pentecost as discussed in Acts 1:4-5 and continued at least through the events of Acts 10-11, when the bringing of Gentiles into the body is first made explicit. See specifically Peter’s defense of his going to Gentiles found in Acts 11:1-18.

It evidently took some years before the exact nature of the new household became clear. And even by the time of the events of Acts 10-11, a full appreciation of the nature of that household does depend on Paul’s salvation and reception of the new revelation which was to be dispensed to the new household.

The transition was not a smooth one, as is sometimes overlooked. There was at that time great resistance to the idea that Israel as God’s household was being replaced by a different kind of household, a household of the faith (Galatians 6:10). For in the household of Israel, it was not through faith that a person entered, but through ritual that consisted of circumcision and ritual cleansing.

The book of Acts is primarily a history of that difficult transition, a transition that is not greatly taught to believers today. But it is basic to many of the New Testament epistles, for virtually all of them contain some transitional information.

One important doctrinal note: the gap of time between the beginning of the household of the church and the beginning of the act of dispensing grace by Paul is a vital one. The idea that Paul’s dispensing of grace and the beginning of the church were simultaneous is a false assumption that has produced much confusion.

Some sincere believers, not understanding gap nor the basics of dispensational truth, believe that the church did not begin in Acts 2, because, they say, Paul, who dispensed grace, was not even a believer at that time. How, they ask, does Acts 2 indicate the household that received his dispensation? Hence, there must have been a later body of Christ, one that started with the dispensation of grace by Paul. These sincere but confused individuals teach at least two bodies of Christ in the book of Acts.

The very assumptions made by asking the above question and the answer given shows their confusion. As noted, their basic assumption is that the household and the dispensing of grace were simultaneous, so that one cannot exist, the dispensation of grace, without the other, the church.

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However, lest we be too harsh, those of us who hold that the church began in Acts 2 sometimes make a similar assumption. Some who hold the correct view of the beginning of the church in Acts 2 often teach that the dispensation of grace must have begun in Acts 2 as well.

The view that the dispensation and the household began simultaneously is based on an even earlier assumption, that the word dispensation has to do with a period of time. This assumption has confused believers for many years, and some go to great lengths to justify this idea. E. W. Bullinger, for instance, explicitly makes the dispensation of grace a period of time.¹² This mistake has led people to ask, "When did the period of time known as the dispensation of grace begin?" Their answer depends on whether they consider themselves Acts 2 dispensationalists (Schofield, Ryrie, Walvoord, etc.), mid-Acts dispensationalists (Stamm and Baker, etc.), or post-Acts 28 dispensationalists (Bullinger and Welch, etc).

The solution is simple and straightforward. Logically, a household must exist before anything can be dispensed to it. This is exactly what the Book of Acts teaches.¹³

The household began in Acts 2 and the act of dispensation began after Paul became a believer some time later. This also means that the act of dispensation ended when Paul's act of administering (Bullinger's word) ended. But the results carry on to today. It is technically incorrect to say that believers today are living "during the dispensation of grace." Rather Christians are living "under grace" that was dispensed by Paul in the first century.

6. εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα (*einai ta ethnē sugklēronoma kai sussōma – that the Gentiles are to be fellow heirs and fellow sharers of the body*)

Verse 6 identifies the content of the second mystery which was revealed to the New Testament apostles and prophets, the mystery of "the Christ."¹⁴ It is the collecting together of believing Gentiles into the new household who then become 1) fellow heirs, and 2) fellow sharers of the body, and 3) fellow participants in His promise (see below). Paul uses the prefix *sun* (which we have translated fellow) to indicate that the Gentiles have become fellows with Israelites in these various associations.

The inheritance cannot be strictly the land inheritance, but the inheritance that consists of future benefits that both believing Israelites and Gentiles will share. Neither Jews nor Gentiles in the body of Christ will now inherit land, but will inherit the kingdom of God as co-rulers.

The body of Christ was already available beginning in Acts 2. It was originally only Israelites that participated in the body, and was not until the events of Acts 10-11 that Gentiles, as Gentiles, began to participate body. But because of the events of Acts 10-11 it did become known time, though there were indications of it early, especially with reference to the ministry of Philip (see Acts 8:5-13 and 8:26-40).

καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ (*kai summetocha tēs epaggelias autou – and fellow participants of His promise*)

The co-sharing of the promise refers to the messianic blessings coming out of the promise to Abraham that was later codified into covenants found in the Genesis 15, 17, and 22. It is mentioned briefly by Paul in Galatians 3:29.

It is a mistake to think that these shared elements were revealed to Paul alone, as they gradually became known apart from Paul's participation.

ἐν τῷ χριστῷ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (*en tō christō dia tou euaggeliou – in Christ through the gospel*)

It is clear, then, that these blessings are for the current household of the church. Paul specifically states that the fellow-sharing is "in Christ through¹⁵ the gospel," by which he means the gospel of salvation.

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It is the nature of the new household which began in Acts 2 that one enters it through faith, not through ritual. Through faith in the gospel of Christ results in the “in Christ” position of the believer.

7. οὗ ἐγενόμην διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ (*hou egenomēn diakonos kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou – of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God*)

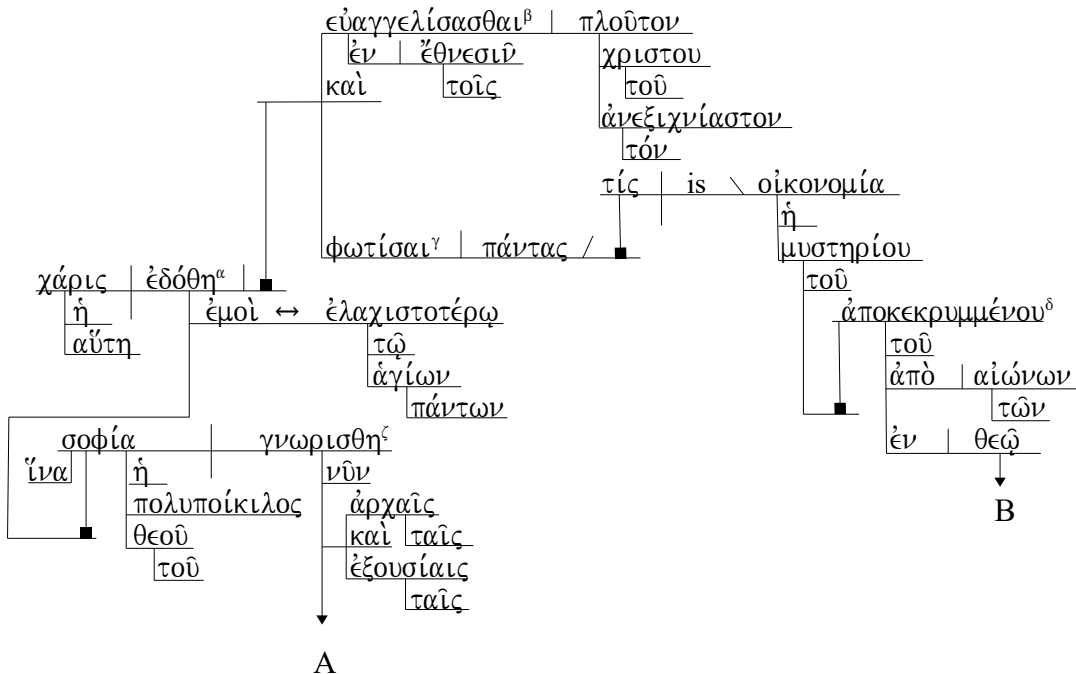
Verse 7 is a relative clause which relates Paul to the gospel. It is, as it were, a personal note, indicating that Paul is but a tool, a servant, a *diakonos*. The Greek word emphasizes not the position of the servant, not his servitude, but the act of service. And that was not by his own ability, but it was “according to the gift of the grace of God.” God provided that which Paul needed to function as a servant. Only grace based service can glorify God. Any other kind of service is but self-promotion. The reason for this is provide for us in the next participle structure.

τὴν δοθεῖσαν μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ (*tēn dotheisan moi kata tēn energeian tēs dunameōs autou – which was given to me according to the working of His power*)

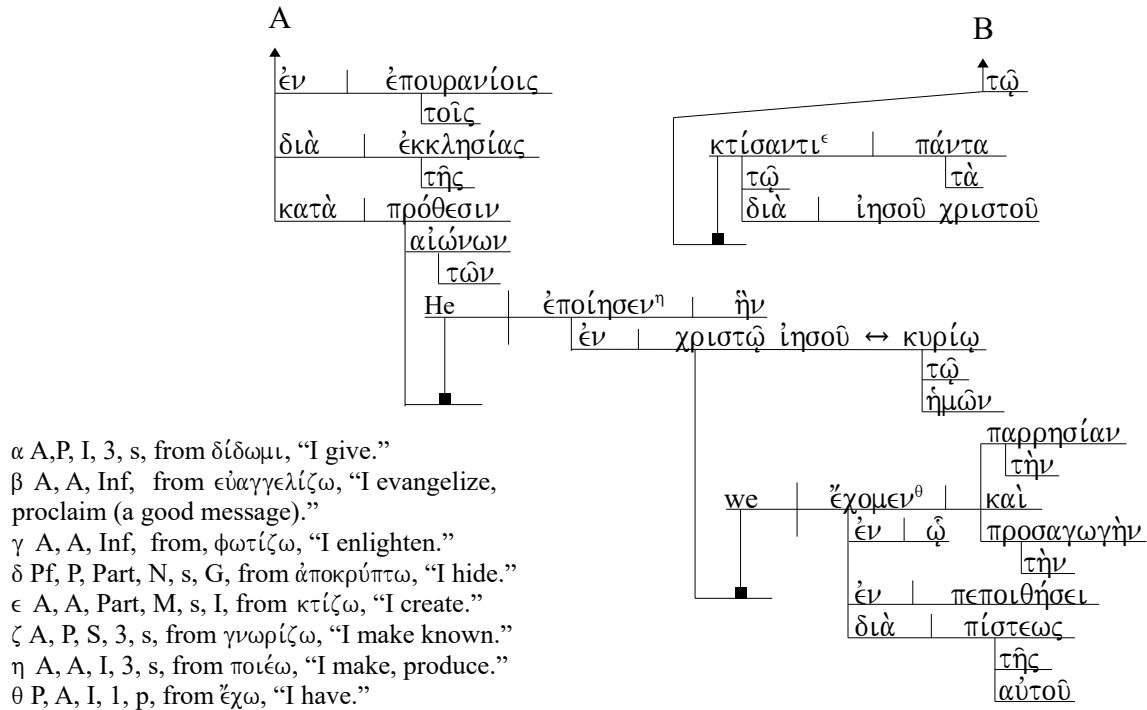
Concerning grace given to him, Paul indicates that it is supernatural in its origin. His service was beyond human ability, so God provided what he needed “according to the working of His power.”

Power (*dunamis*) comes ultimately out of God’s almighty nature. In order to perform supernatural work, one must be supplied with the ability (power) to do the work, and that ability must be of the correctly measured amount, which is the correct definition of power. It is the measured amount of ability needed to get a job of work done, and God provides neither too little nor too much ability. Hence, it is God who is to be glorified, not His servant, Paul.

3:8-12 ἔμοι τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸν ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτον τοῦ χριστοῦ ⁹ καὶ φωτίσαι πάντας τὴν ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι διὰ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, ¹⁰ ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ¹¹ κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἣν ἐποίησεν ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν ¹² ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐν πεποιθήσει διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ.



**Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three**



Translation: To me, the least of all the saints, was given this grace among the Gentiles, to proclaim the unfathomable riches of Christ ⁹ and to enlighten all about what the dispensation of the mystery is, which has been hidden through the ages by God, Who created all things through Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ in order that the multi-faceted wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the purpose of the ages which He produced by Christ Jesus, our Lord, ¹² by whom we have confidence and the way of approach with trust through faith in Him.

Exegetical Considerations

8. ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (emoi tō elachistoterō pantōn hagiōn edothē hē charis hautē en tois ethnesin – To me, the least of all the saints, was given this grace among the Gentiles)

The adjective *elachistoterō*, translated "least," is a comparative¹⁶ built on a superlative stem. It stands in apposition to *emoi*, me. Paul is identifying himself as "less than least," a statement of non-feigned humility, probably based on his persecution of believers before his experience on the Damascus Road. The plural "all¹⁷ the saints" emphasizes Paul's view of himself in this regard.

Paul again emphasizes God's grace which "was given"¹⁸ to Paul, by which God provided Paul's ability to evangelize among the Gentiles, to whom he was sent by God.

εὐαγγελισασθαι τὸν ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτον τοῦ χριστοῦ (euaggelisasthai ton anexichniaston plouton tou christou – to proclaim the unfathomable riches of Christ)

This unusual construction consists of compound infinitive clauses acting as the retained direct object of the passive voice verb ἐδόθη. The infinitives *euaggelisasthai* in vs. 8 and *phōtīsai* in vs. 9 indicate the functions which were given to Paul.¹⁹

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

“*To proclaim*” is “to evangelize,” to proclaim a good message. The emphasis is not on Paul’s authority, in which he would have used a different verb,²⁰ which is consistent with his statement of humility.

Paul indicates the content of his proclamation to the Gentiles with the words “the unfathomable riches of Christ.” The word *unfathomable* means not able to be searched for. It came to mean metaphorically, not understandable. Paul’s intent seems to be that the human mind can delve only so far into the understanding of wealth of benefits that Christ has provided.

Is Paul referring to the gospel of salvation by his terminology, or is this a different good message? The first is often thought to be at least included, but it is not like Paul to be non-distinct in his presentation. It is better to consider this gospelizing among the Gentiles to refer to Paul’s presentation of the mystery, which is confirmed by the continuation of this statement in vs. 9.

9. καὶ φωτίσαι πάντας τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου (*kai phōtīsai pantas tis hē oikonomia tou mustēriou – and to enlighten all about what the dispensation of the mystery is*)

Paul uses compound infinitives here to indicate God’s two-fold purpose for giving Paul his grace ability, “to evangelize” and “to enlighten” (see diagram). The *kai* (and) seems to be conjunctive, though it may be ascensive (adverbial), meaning *even*, in which case Paul would be identifying his proclamation with enlightenment more strongly. But even as a conjunction the connection between the two infinitives indicated by *kai* cannot be denied.

The word “all” refers to all the Gentiles to whom Paul proclaimed the dispensation of the mystery. The word “enlighten” means to bring about understanding, which could not have happened without God’s revelation of the previously hidden mystery.

τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ (*tou apokekrummenou apo tōn aiōnōn en tō theō – which has been hidden through the ages by God*)

Paul identifies the mystery as previously “having been hidden.” That is, it was previously unknowable.

“Through the ages” refers to the previous ages which God ordained. The word age refers to a specific time period, and in the plural emphasizes the length of time that the mystery was hidden. Paul, then, is emphasizing that impossibility of finding any of the mystery information in previous revelation, before its being revealed in the current age.

The one who did the “hiding” of the mystery content was God Himself, a reference to God the Father. This is an oblique reference to the decree program discussed at length in chapter one of this epistle. God the Father, the one who is identified in His Trinitarian relationships throughout Paul’s Ephesian epistle, is the divine planner and executor of the decree program, one part of which is the withholding of mystery content.

τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι διὰ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (*tō ta panta ktisanti dia iesou christou – who created all things through Jesus Christ*)

God the Father is identified as the creator God. This often neglected doctrine is essential to the study of the person of the Father. Paul does not mean that the Father actually performed the act of creation, but that He was and is responsible for the act. It was determined in the decree that the Father would act through the other persons of the Trinity.

In this case, He acted through Jesus Christ. It was Christ who created “all things” directly, and the Father who created all things indirectly. This could not have occurred without the activity of the Trinitarian persons in the counsel which produced God’s creative plan (the *boule*).

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

10. ἵνα γνωρισθῆ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ (*hina gnōrithē nun tais archais kai tais exousiais en tois epouraniois dia tēs ekklesias hē polupoikilos sophia tou theou* – in order that the multi-faceted wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places)

The *hina* clause indicates the purpose for the two infinitives, “to proclaim,” and “to enlighten.” The purpose for these infinitives is found in the phrase, “that the multi-faceted wisdom of God might now be made known.” Here God’s wisdom is that useful truth which has been revealed, a regular use of the word *wisdom* by Paul. The “multi-faceted” wisdom is a metaphor for indicate that God’s wisdom is complicated rather than simple. There is much to it, and much of it has been revealed in Scripture. It is Scripture that must be studied to discern the various complications of God’s wisdom.

Observe then the various modifications that Paul places on this act of making God’s wisdom known:

1. It is made known “now.”

The adverb “now” reinforces the fact that Paul’s proclamations for enlightenment is new information not found in previous Scripture. Today, while much of value is found in Old Testament Scripture, the emphasis of the study of the believer must be on the New Testament revelation, the doctrinal content of which is primarily found in Paul’s writings, along with his contemporaries, rather than the Old Testament prophets, or even the writers of the Gospels, as valuable as they are. One finds Christian living primarily in the newly revealed truth of the New Testament epistles.

2. It is made through the church.

It is the existence and practice of the church, the body of Christ, that is the organ by which this new revelation is made known. Here is a totally new entity, completely distinct from the ἐκκλησία of the Old Testament or the Gospels.

3. It is made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

The intention of God’s revelation of the current age is to make know to beings other than human beings some truths concerning God and His earthly program. It is humbling to realize that spirit beings in heavenly places are the ultimate objects of this aspect of God’s revelation program.

Two ranks of spirit beings are mentioned here: rulers and authorities. See our comments on Ephesians 1:21; 3:10, and 6:12.

11. κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἦν ἐποίησεν ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν (*kata prothesin tōn aiōnōn hēn epoiēsen en christō iesou tō kuriō hēmōn* – according to the purpose of the ages which He produced by Christ Jesus, our Lord)

This extraordinary statement by Paul expands our knowledge of God’s decree program. The word purpose (*prothesin*)²¹ means “the purpose of the one who works all things according to the counsel of His desirous will” as stated in Ephesians 1:11.

Here we have “the purpose of the ages” which is to make things known, to reveal that which could not otherwise be understood. An age, then, is primarily a period of time of God’s revelation, whether done through direct or indirect means.

The ages were produced directly by the Lord Jesus Christ. This same truth is stated in Hebrew 1:1-2, “God, who in many parts and in many ways, having spoken in *the* past to the fathers by the prophets, ² in these last days has spoken to us by a Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages.”

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

Scripture consistently indicates that in the decree, it was the person of the Lord Jesus who did the work of creation, calling into being both the physical existence, and the program of time periods. These ages are not simply historical periods of time, but are theological periods, planned by God the Son as a result of the purpose of God the Father to make Himself known through different kinds of revelation.

12. ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐν πεποιθήσει διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ (*en hō echomen tēn parrēsian kai tēn prosagōgēn en pepoithēsei dia tēs pisteōs autou – by whom we have confidence and the way of approach with trust through faith in Him*)

It is by means of Christ, the one by whom the Father established the purpose of the ages, that the believers today (we) have two things denied to believers in other ages. Paul states that we have 1) confidence, and 2) and the way of approach. These two elements of Christian living are unique to believers of this age, and they are directly related salvation program for the current age.

If one takes vs. 12 out of the context of the age program, the great importance of the doctrine of ages is muted. To neglect this doctrine is to loose sight of one aspect of God's sovereign plan for the believer.

The Christian should have confidence (*parrēsia*) in all that Christ has provided through His age development. Specifically, the believer should have confidence in his way of approach to the Father. This approach is based on the fact that the Lord is now sitting in the heavenly places at the right hand of God the Father (Colossians 3:1). Because of this truth, and the fact of the believer's position as a resurrected saint, the Christian's thoughts should be centered in the heavens, and not on the earth.

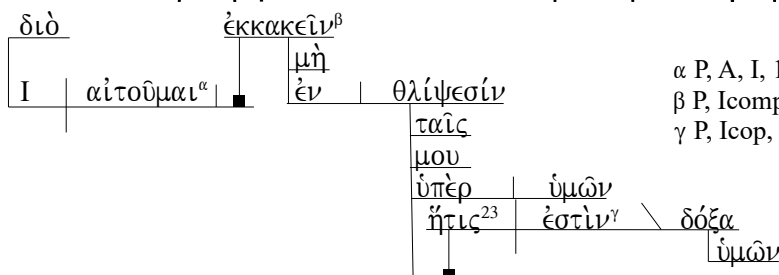
The confidence we have in the ascended Christ is also the basis for our entrance into the presence of God the Father. Because of His priestly intervention (Hebrews 4:14-16), the throne of God in heaven is approachable with confidence (Hebrews 4:16, where the KJV translates *parrēsia* as *boldness*) today because of the priestly ministry of Christ.²²

Paul makes an important doctrinal distinction in the combination prepositional phrases, “*with trust through faith in Him.*” Trust consists of reliance on a person or thing because of having been persuaded of its trustworthiness. This is something that comes with the study of Scripture over time, not something that is automatic in the life of the believer. Trust must be learned.

Faith is distinct from trust. These two words are often confused. One does not trust Christ for salvation, as is often erroneously stated. Salvation is by faith, not by trust. It is the ignorance of Scripture that causes this confusion. Here Paul makes a clear and specific distinction between the two words. Trust is the result of persuasion. Faith is not. Faith is simple belief in what is stated.

The act of persuasion is not involved with one's salvation, as the gift of faith is instantaneously given by God to the unbeliever. If there is persuasion involved, it does not come from the teaching of men, but by the supernatural intervention of God alone. It is God who saves, and the gift of saving faith is the means by which He does so.

3:13 διὸ αἰτοῦμαι μὴ ἐκκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἧτις ἐστὶν δόξα ὑμῶν.



α P, A, I, 1, p, from αἰτέω, “I ask.”

β P, Icomp, Inf, from ἐγκακέω, “I become discouraged.”

γ P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμι, “I am.”

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

Translation: Therefore, I ask you not to become discouraged by my troubles on your behalf, which is your glory.

Exegetical Considerations

13. διὸ αἰτοῦμαι μὴ ἐκκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἧτις ἐστὶν δόξα ὑμῶν (*dio aitoumai mē ekkakein en tais thlipsesin mou huper humōn hētis estin doxa humōn – Therefore, I ask you not to become discouraged by my troubles on your behalf, which is your glory*)

The word *therefore* (*dio*) takes us back to the entirety of the previous sentence which began in 3:2, not simply to Paul's final statements in the previous verse.

At the time of his writing, Paul was in Roman custody, awaiting his hearing before Caesar. He encourages the Ephesians to not be discouraged (*eklakein*), a word that emphasizes tiredness because of his troubles. It is Paul's way of saying "keep going, Ephesians."

Paul's troubles were "on your behalf," which was literally true. If Paul had not presented the new program of grace for daily living, and especially if he had not presented the new household revelation concerning the church, the body of Christ, he probably would not have been set upon by the dispersion Jews, who had made false accusations against him (Acts 21:27-33).

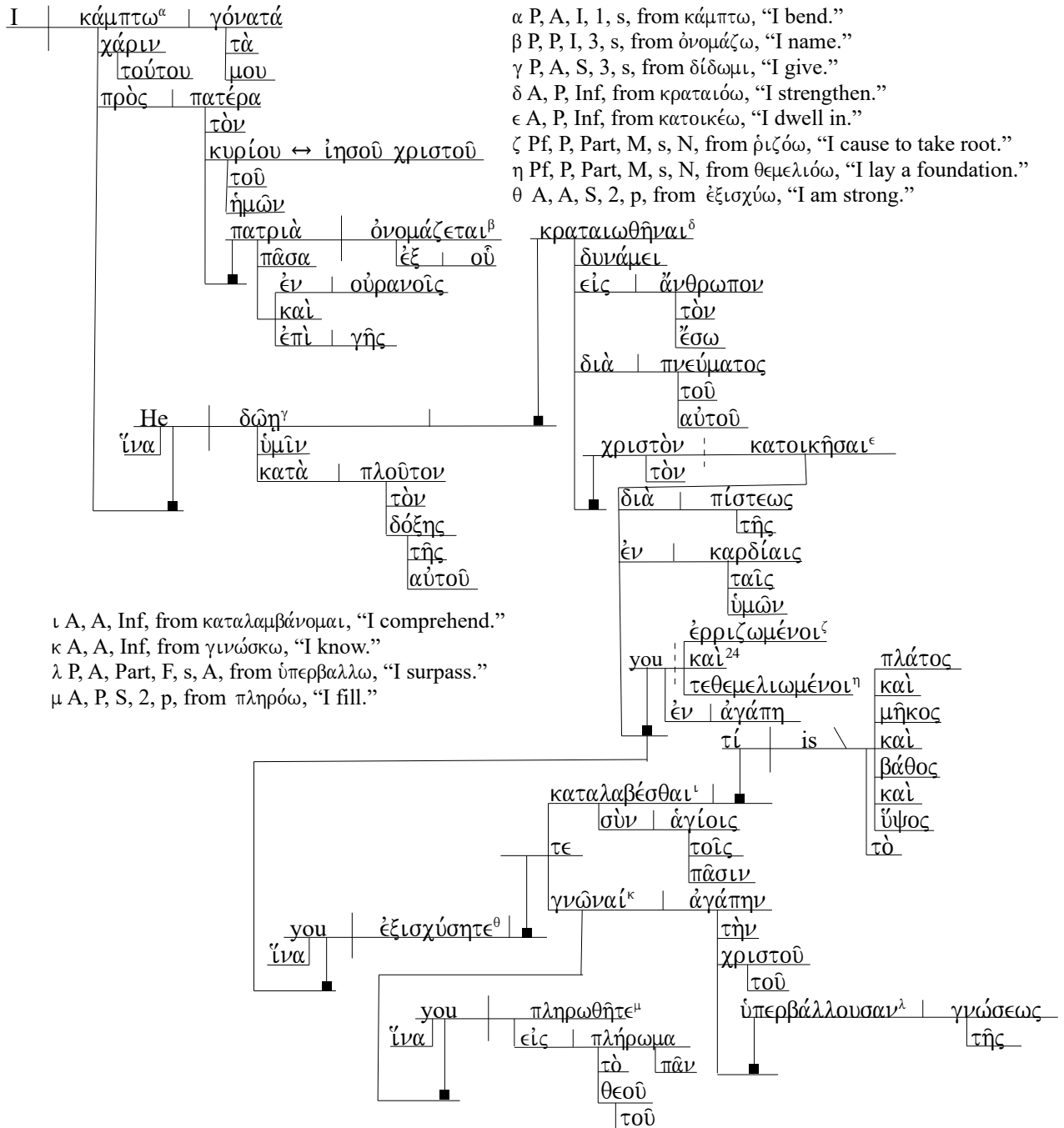
For it was the new program which included Gentiles on an equal basis with Israelites in the new household to which the unbelieving Jews were violently opposed. They understood perfectly well that if Paul's doctrine took hold, the household that consisted exclusively of Israelites was no longer viable. That a Jew, such as Paul, would preach a Jewish Messiah, such as Jesus of Nazareth, who was also the instigator of a new household program, was an affront, not only to their religious views, but to their social state as a unique people. This they could not abide.

Remember that their response was not simply to attack Paul, but to add to his teaching the need for Gentile converts to Christ also become converts to Judaism. It was for this reason that they indicated that Gentile converts must get circumcised, and therefore enter the household program for Israel. But Paul withstood this, and showed that if a Gentile were to convert to Judaism through circumcision, he would be placed under the bondage of the law (See Galatians 5:1-4).

Therefore, the unbelieving Jews hated Paul, and attempted to kill him (Acts 9:23-24, for instance). But Paul survived even the Roman ordeal of imprisonment, and wrote further epistles.

3:14-19 τούτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, ¹⁵ ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται ¹⁶ ἵνα δῶῃ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον ¹⁷ κατοικῆσαι τὸν χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι ¹⁸ ἵνα ἐξιχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ βάθος καὶ ὕψος ¹⁹ γινώσκαι τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ χριστοῦ ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ.

**Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three**



Translation: For this reason I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ by whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, ¹⁶ in order that He might give to you according to the riches of His glory with power to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ might dwell through the faith in your hearts, having been rooted and stabilized in love ¹⁸ in order that you might be able to comprehend together with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

Exegetical Considerations

14. τούτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (*toutou charin kamptō ta gonata mou pros ton patera tou kuriou hēmon iēsou christou – For this reason I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*)

The act of bowing the knees refers directly to worship, the prostration of oneself before God. This may be accompanied by prayer as an act of worship. In this context, the idea of prayer is taken from vs. 16 and following, where Paul indicates his purpose in bowing his knees. But the emphasis of vs. 14 is not on prayer, but on the act of worship itself. This distinction is vitally important, for it categorizes the statement in vs. 16-19 as a prayer of worship.²⁵

The object of worship is God the Father. That the Son can also be the object of worship is clear in other passages. But Paul's emphasis throughout Ephesians is the God the Father-focused attitude that must be maintained by all maturing believers.

Here the word *Father* emphasizes the Trinitarian relationship, rather than the anthropological one. While it is true that God is the Father of believers, here He is designated as Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. These kinds of constructions emphasize the sovereign relationship between the two persons of the Trinity as determined in the decree.

From this act of worshipping the Father, Paul continues in the next verse to provide a description of the Father's relationship to the sentient creation.

15. ἔξ οὗ πᾶσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται (*ex hou pasa patria en ouranois kai epi gēs onomazetai – by whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named*)

Vs. 15 has caused much comment and diversity of opinion throughout the centuries, of which we will limit our discussion two.

First, "family" here is by no means limited to humanity. It is not a reference to generational families in the human sense. It is actually closer to the meaning of family as it is used in scientific circles. It includes all sentient beings not only on earth, but "in *the* heavens." Since "every family" includes spirit beings, it has produced unhealthy speculation concerning spirit beings, who are generally referred to as angels.²⁶ So this refers to categories of beings as God sees them.

Second, the problem has been extended to the issue of the "fatherhood of God," which some from this passage have applied to humanity as a whole.²⁷ However, God is the Trinitarian Father, which is a non-personal idea. He is "our Father" as the result of justifying faith. Thus, this passage does not apply the Fatherhood of God to unbelievers. An unbeliever, whether human being or spirit being, would never consider God the Father as "our Father" in the biblical sense of the phrase. Such usage by unbelievers is a perversion of biblical doctrine. Only true believers who are in the state of salvation can actually enjoy a personal relationship that results in the cry "Abba, Father."

One final observation concerning the phrase "is named" is appropriate here. It does not mean a literal act of naming, as some have attempted to force the meaning. The word "is named" means "is categorized according to a determined relationship." It is used, then, in the same way that an individual might be named as one of the corporate officers of the company, or the way a scientist may name a certain animal or some vegetation to a certain family of such.

16. ἵνα δώῃ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἕσσω ἄνθρωπον (*hina dōē humin kata ton plouton tēs doxēs autou dunamei krataiōthēnai dia*

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Chapter Three

tou pneumatos autou eis ton esō anthrōpon – in order that He might give to you according to the riches of His glory with power to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man)

Vs. 16 begins another purpose clause introduced by the word *hina*.²⁸ The purpose relates back to the original statement of worship indicated by the bowing of the knees. It is from this purpose clause that comes the idea that prayer is primarily an act of worship. Such cannot be claimed for the other words used of communication with God, such as supplication, thanksgiving, intercession or asking.

For the apostle desires that God should give the Ephesian believer, and by application all believers of the current age, something which is identified in the last part of this verse through verse 19. But first, Paul says that this act of God's potential giving is to be "*according to the riches of His glory.*"

This prepositional phrase relates to the very nature of God from which come the benefits for which Paul prays. The word *glory* is used in sense of the magnificence and splendor of God's being. God is unique, incomparable in His glorious being. It is because of the magnificence of God's being that believers are "*to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man,*" strength which can only come from God.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Father causes the believer's "inner man" to be strengthened. This is a spiritual strengthening, a giving of ability in the abstract nature of man that flows from his unique existence as one created in God's own image. This kind of strengthening is evidently reserved for believers in this age, though similar acts of God's giving ability occurred in the Old Testament. But, as we shall see, the strengthening here relates directly to the potential indwelling of Christ, a relationship not available to Old Testament believers.

17. κατοικῆσαι τὸν χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν (*katoikēsai ton christon dia tēs pisteōs en tais kardias humōn – that Christ might dwell through the faith in your hearts*)

Scripture speaks of two aspects of Christ's relationship to the believer today. First is His indwelling as one of the divine persons of the Trinity. This indwelling He shares with both the Father and the Spirit. It is an essential indwelling rather than a residential one, that is the result of the unique relationship of the believer today to the persons of the Trinity (See the note on Ephesians 4:6).

But here, the word *katoikēsai* (might dwell) carries neither the idea of either residential nor essential indwelling, but of subjective indwelling. The believer is to be comfortable, at home in his mind. This indwelling is "through faith," and the word "faith" refers to living faith rather than saving faith. It is a faith that can grow; it can encompass more when one's understanding increases. Do I as an individual believer maintain Christ in my mind²⁹ and thoughts, so that He is at home there? Do I reflect His nature in my thinking so that I am truly "Christ-like?"

In this sense, Christ may or may not indwell the believer, for it is this subjective indwelling that is the subject of Paul's desire for the believer. This indwelling is from the perspective of the believer, and relates to the way the individual Christian thinks about the Lord Jesus Christ. For the basic meaning is for Christ to be "at home" through faith in the mind (heart) of the believer.

ἐν ἀγάπῃ ῥριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι (*en agapē errizōmenoi kai tethemeliōmenoi – having been rooted and stabilized in love*)

The two participles rooted and stabilized indicate the result of Christ's being at home in the inner man of the believer. The prepositional phrase "in love" indicates the area in which the believer is rooted and stabilized. The idea seems to be that love is not capricious, but is strong like a rooted tree, and firm like the foundation of a house.

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
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The word “love” then refers not to a changing emotional love, but to an unchanging mental attitude of desiring for the object one’s love what is best for that object. It is the fruit of the Spirit love, which should be directed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul uses two participles to describe how this love is to be viewed. Both are metaphorical, that is, they compare the believer’s love for Christ in two ways.

The first participle (*errizōmenoi*) is an agricultural word, which is generally translated *rooted*. It refers to the stability and unchangeable situation of a large plant that has deep roots. Such is to be the believer’s love for Christ.

The second participle (*tethemeliōmenoi*) is generally translated grounded, but which we have translated “stabilized.” It is architectural word, referring to the laying of a strong foundation so that a building will be stable.

So with this mixed metaphor, Paul is expressing the need for the believer’s love for Christ to be not a capricious feeling, not subject to the emotional ups and downs that is the result the lack of spiritual self-control. It is love which is decided by the believer because of the desire to the best for Christ. Am I the kind of believer that lives a life that is consistent in its love of Christ? Am I expressing love for Christ that is not unstable and changeable?

18. ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ βάθος καὶ ὕψος (*hina exischusēte katalambanesthai sun pasin tois hagiois ti to platos kai mēkos kai bathos kai hupsos – in order that you might be able to comprehend together with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height*)

This *hina* clause indicates the purpose of having been rooted and stabilized in love. Their purpose is two-fold, first, that the believer might be able to comprehend, and second, that the believer might know.

The truth to be comprehended is expressed by the phrasing “*the breadth and length and depth and height*,” which seems difficult to many, but is rather simple in one sense. The words collectively³⁰ are a superlative structure referring to the multifaceted nature of the mental attitude of love. Unlike emotional love, which is limited by its very nature, the fruit of the Spirit love has an immensity of application that can be understood by the believer. Paul discusses the nature of love in some detail in 1 Corinthians 13, q. v.

The fifteen descriptive aspects of love Paul presents in 1 Corinthians 13 are as follows:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- 1 Love has the ability to experience various circumstances without losing one’s temper, or without getting angry.
- 2 Love has a positive mental attitude by which it does not exact judgment nor attempt to cause injury of any kind against another person.
- 3 Love is not jealous with the result that it attempts to maintain a personal position by political means.
- 4 Love does not use excessively vainglorious language to extol itself.

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- 5 Love does not have a mental attitude of pride because of one's high position.
- 6 Love does not behave in an unacceptable or indecent manner so as to produce shame or embarrassment.
- 7 Love does not search after things that benefit itself.
- 8 Love is never stirred up to emotion that produces loss of self control.
- 9 Love does not mentally dwell on wrongs done to it.
- 10 Love does not find satisfaction in circumstances that are unrighteous in thought or deed.
- 11 Love is finds joy with the accurate expression of things as they actually are.
- 12 Love puts up with all kinds of things.
- 13 Love believes all kinds of things, and therefore does not automatically assume someone lies.
- 14 Love looks beyond present negative circumstances to expect all kinds of positive things.
- 15 Love experiences all kinds of circumstances without attempting to get out from under them.

19. γινῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ χριστοῦ (*gnōnai te tēn hyperballousan tēs gnōseōs agapēn tou christou – and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge*)

The second part of the purpose for being rooted and stabilized in love is expressed in a figure of speech called a paradox. Simply stated, the believer is to know the unknowable, that which is beyond knowledge. Such a paradox is an emphatic way of saying that the supernatural element of this knowledge must be understood.

Dr. McGee's words on this passage are well-taken:

Paul wants them to “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” The vast expanse of the love of Christ is the love of God Himself. From this launching pad we can begin to measure that which is immeasurable and to know that which passes knowledge. This is one of the many paradoxes of the believer's life.

Note that Paul switches perspective from the believer's expression of love to the reception of the love that comes from Christ. The previous statement (vs. 18) refers to the mental stability of the believer. This statement indicates the need to have an experiential knowledge of the love of Christ (subjective

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genitive). Here we come to the supernatural enablement to actually experience Christ's love in one's life.

Both the word "to know" and "knowledge" refer to experience rather than simply a mental ability. The idea seems to be that the more an individual Christian understands what the Word of God teaches about Christ and His character, the more the person can understand how Christ's love works out in one's daily lifestyle. In other words, experiencing the love of Christ reflects Christ's character the believer's lifestyle. This is consistent with Paul's teaching of love as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians.

ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ (*hina plērōthēte eis pan to plērōma tou theou – in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God*)

This *hina* clause evidently indicates the purpose for the believer to experience the love of Christ. It is difficult to define the "fullness of God," which in turn makes it difficult to define the verb "that you might be filled." Many, understandably, do not even try. The norm seems to make general statements about the idea here, and leave the words undefined, or simply associated with Paul's statement in Colossians 2:9-10.

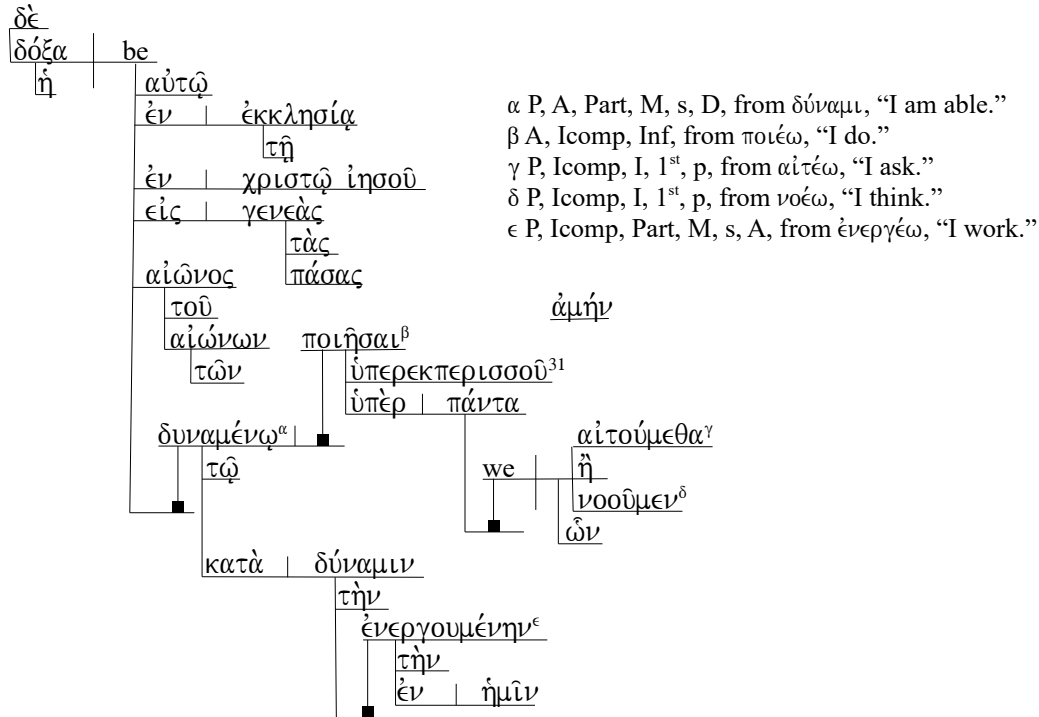
However, since the passage before us indicates the purpose for which the Christian is to know the love of Christ, "you might be filled" and "fullness of God" may be defined in terms of that knowledge. We must assume that the love of Christ indicates the character of Christ which the believer is to be like. If that is so, then the meaning of "filled" here carries the same idea as the filling of the Spirit later in this book. That it, it refers to control, in this case by the application of the divine love which 1 Corinthians 13 describes. It defines the supernatural experience of knowing in terms of being controlled by the fruit of the Spirit love.

That being said, the "fullness of God" cannot refer to the fullness of "the Godhead bodily" as in Colossians 2, but of Christ's characteristic love, the love that has its outworking in the life of the believer. To be filled with this characteristic of Christ means that the believer has a desire to see the aspects of the love of Christ expressed in his own life. Such, it seems to us, is a better approach to the fullness of God in this passage than the more traditional approach of associating it with the fullness of the Godhead.

In summary, then, one sees the fullness of Christ's love for Christian producing the experience of the fruit of the Spirit love being expressed through the activity of the individual. The spiritual believer experiences Christ's love through his own actions, since he is enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit. This is not the natural love of the human being for his fellow man, but the kind of love that is produced by God through the Spirit.

3:20-21 τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν ²¹ αὐτῷ ἢ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων ἀμήν.

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Translation: Now to the one who is able to do exceedingly above and beyond all things about which we ask or think according to the power which works in us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, amen.

Exegetical Considerations

20. τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν (tō de dunamenō hyper panta poiēsai hyper ekperissou hōn aitoumetha ē nooumen – Now to the one who is able to do exceedingly above and beyond all things about which we ask or think)

Verses 20-21 are a formulaic statement, usually called a doxology. This is not to say, however, that it is void of doctrine, for it is not. Because of its formulaic style, it begins strangely, with a dative participle, and contains no stated verb. The main clause consists of a singular articular noun, ἡ δόξα, which occurs in verse 21. The verb be must be understood, as in that verse several adverbial elements occur which can only be understood as being related to it. The common understanding, a correct one, is that in such structures the verb is some form of “to be.” Here we understand it to be the hortatory form, “be,” that could be translated “let be.”

Hence, verse 20 is placed first, because a doxology is in poetic form, where the elements of the glorification occur in the prominent position in the sentence. This was the normal style for such structures.

The initial participle (tō dunamenō) glorifies God by ascribing to Him ability. It is followed by an intensive superlative statement “to do above all things exceedingly beyond.” The statement builds superlative on superlative to impress the reader with God’s power.

The relative clause “what we ask or think,” completes the glorification of God by applying it to a specific human condition. God’s superlative ability goes so far beyond the human imagination as to be

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virtually incomprehensible; mankind simply has no ability to understand the power of God. This is identified eloquently in a following prepositional phrase.

κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν (*kata tēn dunamin tēn energoumenēn en hēmin – according to the power which works in us*)

The preposition *kata*, “according to” indicates that God’s ability expressed in the verbal aspect of the participle (*tō dunamenō*) is dependent on His power (*dunamin*).³² God’s power is unlimited, because it produces whatever God’s almighty nature requires. It is this power that Paul states “works in us.” He includes himself with his readers, as it is associated with the doctrines of his previous statements. The need for God’s work is because of the lack of ability of man, any man, including Paul.

In the book context of Ephesians, that which is impossible for humans to do, God does. Paul is referring to the bringing Jew and Gentile together in a new bodily relationship (vs. 21). The animosity between the two groups would seem to eliminate that possibility considering the purely human aspect. Again we see God’s sovereignty at work, that which Paul identified in chapter one.

21. αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων ἀμήν (*autō hē doxa en tē ekklēsia en christō iēsou eis pasas tas geneas tou aiōnos tōn aiōnōn, amēn – to Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, amen.*)

The redundant “to him” (*autō*) takes the reader back to “*the one who is able*” in the previous verse. In this benediction,³³ the word glory is used to express the recognition³⁴ of God’s power to produce that unity in the body of Christ that cannot be accomplished by flawed humanity. So the statement “glory in the church.”

It is the church universal, the body of Christ, which reflects the glorious nature of God’s power in action. The noun *ekklēsia* here refers to the body consisting of all believers, not the local assembly, though the local assembly should itself be of the same quality as the church universal, and therefore it should be a showplace of Christian unity regardless of any external distinction or ethnicity. All of those potentially divisive elements fall away “in Christ.”

It is for this reason that Paul includes the prepositional phrase, “in Christ Jesus.” The application of the position results in the acceptance of all in the body of Christ. Paul’s clear teaching is that is a work of God Himself, not of the frail human recipients of His power. God’s power is glorified by the existence of the church throughout all time.

Two time phrases express this truth. The first, “*to all generations*” told the Ephesians that the power of God was not limited to them in their time, but also applied to other generations of Christians in the body who would also reflect the glory of God’s power.

The second time phrase, “*forever and ever*,” indicates the unending nature of this glorification. From this statement one must conclude that the relationship of the church to the power of God does not end with the resurrection of the believers of this age, but continues throughout “the age of the ages,” which refers to “a period of time that consists of periods of time.” This was the convenient way in the Greek language to express time unending.

Paul ends the glorification with the Hebrew transliteration of אָמֵן into the Greek letters ἀμήν. It is regularly brought into English as a transliteration from Greek, “amen.” The word does not mean, as it is often assumed, “The End.” It is, in fact, an affirmation not of completion, but of verity. It is a way of saying, “I have spoken truth.”

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In some instances, it seems to be similar to the English, "So be it!" When expressed as an acclamation, it is very close to the emphatic use of the "Yes!" in modern speech. That is, it expresses strong agreement.

In this case, however, it is simply Paul's way of saying that the facts that he has expressed about God's glorification are truth.³⁵

Endnotes

- 1 The verb and direct object come from vs. 14 because the apodosis is a truncated sentence. The protasis begins at vs. 2 and ends at vs. 7. However, evidently Paul interrupted the apodosis at the end of vs. 1, and continued his thought in vs. 14 below by repeating τούτου χάριν. So the parenthetical interruption continues to vs. 13.
- 2 Aries, Philippe, and Georges Duby, Eds. *A History of Private Life, From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*. trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 145.
- 3 For an example of οἶκος being used in the sense of household see Hebrews 3:2.
- 4 The accusation that dispensationalists teach different ways of salvation under different dispensations is a recurrent theme among anti-dispensationalists. No biblical dispensationalist ever taught that people were justified differently under the various dispensations, not even C. I. Scofield, who is often quoted to prove that this is what dispensationalists believe. In his note on John 1:17 he says concerning the dispensation of grace “The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ....” This has led many to believe that Scofield taught that dispensational law was a means of salvation. However, in his note on page 1245 Scofield clearly states, “Law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer.” And earlier, on page 93, the same author says, “...the law is not proposed as a means of life, but as a means by which Israel might become ‘a peculiar treasure’ and a ‘kingdom of priests’”. Clearly, Scofield did not teach that the law was a means of salvation, no matter how unguarded his statement in the note on John 1:17!
- However, even if a person who calls himself a dispensationalist should teach such error, it does not invalidate what the Bible teaches about God’s dispensational program. We would not hold every covenantalist up to contempt because someone who calls himself covenantal might hold to works salvation. The Word of God as preserved in Scripture is the final court of appeal in these matters, not what any person, or any group of people might teach.
- 5 The word “which” is not the Greek pronoun, but a translation convention of the articular feminine passive participle τῆς δοθείσης, “the one which was given.” Two previous nouns are feminine, the word “grace” and the word “dispensation.” The normal approach would be to relate the participle δοθείση to “grace,” but this ignores the cultural imperative. Paul is identifying himself as the dispenser, the steward of the act of dispensing. Hence, the feminine participle must relate to the feminine noun οἰκονομίαν, “dispensation.”
- 6 This confusion of age with dispensation has resulted in various charts and schemes of dispensation periods. The muddle is well illustrated by Charles Welch’s comments on pages 208-209 of Volume 1 of his *Alphabetical Analysis*. He defines a dispensations by saying that “we refer to those sub-divisions of the ages, in which the revealed will of God, carrying differing obligations has been made known, and put into force, and in practically every case, the administration or stewardship of those separate and differing administrations, are found to have been entrusted to some chosen servant of the Lord.”
- To compound the muddle, he then goes on to list 18 different periods from Adam to “the end” as a “subdivision of the Purpose of the Ages,” which he says, “does not claim to be perfect or complete.” The mind boggles.
- 7 **For the advanced Greek language student:** The use of the ὅτι (*hoti*) clause here is difficult. It appears to me that it is an independent clause, used paratactically (parallel, but without a conjunction in this case). See the diagram. It seems to have something of an exegetical force (added to expand the meaning), even approaching an explanatory use, such as with γάρ (*gar*). I do not believe that it is a consecutive clause, as some exegetical clauses are, though it is clear that ὅτι can introduce such clauses.
- 8 The construction is extended in order to prove a point. Paul could have said, “He revealed,” rather than “by revelation He made known,” and meant nearly the same thing. But by constructing the way he did, Paul emphasized the resultant fact that Paul then had the knowledge. The aorist verb “he revealed” (ἐγνώρισεν) is a culminative aorist, with which “a slight emphasis is placed on the conclusion or results of the completed action.” (Brooks & Winbery, pg. 100). One might question the inclusion of the word “slight,” as Paul clearly uses the circumlocution to emphasize the on-going results of his having been caused to know the mystery by revelation. Until he dispensed it, the information was his, and his alone.
- 9 Theologically, the “dispensation of grace” relates to the bibliological category of revelation. However, the word grace itself is a Christian life use. These statements by Paul were to teach the basis for Christian living, not as a means of dividing the Scriptures into “dispensations.” The primary distinction Paul makes is between only two acts of dispensation, law dispensed through Moses, and grace dispensed through himself. Both law and grace in

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these terms relate to how people in different household programs were to relate themselves to God in their daily life. Law as a requirement for daily living no longer functions, though grace requirement for daily living does. The difference between law and grace requirements is not the moral imperative itself, but the means by which that requirement is to be engaged by the individual believer. Law contains no provision for keeping it, only penalty for failure. Grace does contain provision for keeping its requirements, and there is no penalty for failure (Romans 8:1).

- 10 Unfortunately, some commentators simply skip over the phrase “the Christ,” choosing to not define it. This gives rise to the idea that there is only one mystery here, and that, according to vs. 5, all the apostles and prophets had also received it. But that denies the truth that Paul alone was the recipient of the new revelation concerning the dispensation of grace, as he claims. It was, he says, “given to me.”
- 11 “In other generations” (ἐτέραις γενεαῖς) might be called a “locative of time,” though that designation seems to stretch the meaning of “locative” to the point of meaninglessness. Perhaps such constructions should simply be called temporals.
- 12 Charles Welch quotes Bullinger with the words, “The Greek word rendered dispensation is *oikonomia* and refers to the act of *administering*. By the figure *Metonymy*, the *act of administering* is transferred to *the time during which that administering* is carried out.” The italics are in Welch’s original quote from Bullinger, which he identifies as coming Bullinger’s work *How to Enjoy the Bible*. (See Charles Welch, *An Alphabetical Analysis, Part 1 A to E*. London: The Berean Publishing Trust, 1955. pg. 208.)
- Besides misusing the term metonymy, Bullinger’s statement is a blatant attempt to transfer the meaning of “dispensation” to a period of time. This is the approach that most of the older dispensationalists took when laying out the “ages” of Scripture, though they did so more based on assumption that through an attempt of applying a figure of speech to it.
- 13 Other assumptions exist as well. 1) the assumptions that households cannot overlap (which they do), 2) the assumption that once grace is being dispensed, no information can be presented from a kingdom perspective. This last assumption has, in turn, resulted in various views of the kingdom of God as it relates to Paul’s ministry. Since Paul clearly presents doctrinal truth concerning the kingdom of God as late as Acts 28, some dispensational teachers affirm strongly that the body of Christ, the church to which we belong today, did not begin until after Acts 28. Such teachers have fallen into the fallacy of the previously mentioned assumptions.
- Some Acts 2 dispensationalists state that one does not know what Paul was teaching about the kingdom of God in Acts 28 (Stanley Toussaint, for instance, who does recognize the transition in Acts, but does not carry it out to its logical conclusions).
- However, we do know that Paul continued to explain to Israelites, his audience in Acts 28, that the kingdom of God was offered by the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was rejected by the test audience of the Judean and Galilean Jews, that Christ was crucified and rose from the dead, and that the Davidic kingdom will be established at His return, at the post-tribulational time discussed by the Lord in the Olivet Discourse. Paul had that information, as it was already written by the time he penned Ephesians.
- There is little difficulty here, if one recognizes the transition as taught in the book of Acts.
- 14 Grammatically, εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ is an infinitive clause in apposition to μυστηρίῳ.
- 15 The phrase *dia tou euaggeliou* indicates intermediate agency. One enters the “in Christ” position through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit who identifies (baptizes) the new believer. See 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- 16 The actual adjective is ἐλαχύς, meaning small or little. The superlative ending *-teros* is comparative which is attached to a superlative ending, *-isto*. So the word *elachistos* means least. The word before us word means “leaster” in the sense of more than least.
- 17 The plural πάντων without the article is rare, but seems to emphasize totality here. Often the word πᾶς is articular when it occurs in its regular limited sense.
- 18 Grammatical note: “Was given” (*edothē*) is an aorist passive. Aorist verbs are sometimes taken to mean “once,” as though the act was given all at one time. Some have taught that Paul received his revelation in a one time act

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- that was never repeated. But that is not the function of the aorist which indicates the totality of the act, not that it was done all at one time. Perhaps it was, but one cannot make that assertion from the aorist tense alone.
- 19 Note that both infinitives are aorist. The first, εὐαγγελίσασθαι, has an -ομαι ending, while the second, φωτίσαι, has the regular ending associated with -ω verbs. There is no significant difference in the force or function of the two infinitives, showing that the arbitrary parsing of εὐαγγελίσασθαι as a “middle” or “deponent,” and of φωτίσαι as active is irrelevant to the grammar of the statement. Note that both are functionally active voice, since both infinitives have their own direct objects. See the my parsing associated with the diagram of this sentence.
- 20 The verb κηρύσσω means “to proclaim with authority,” that is, the authority of the one on behalf of whom the proclamation was made. The verb was regularly used to indicate the proclamation made by a herald sent by a government authority.
- 21 See the discussion of the decree in the notes on Ephesians chapter one, especially the comments on purpose and the chart in 1:11.
- 22 Theologically, we must not confuse the Trinitarian relationship of the Christ as priest with the dispensational relationship of Christ as head of the body, the church. Hebrews 4:14-16 is not a dispensational passage. It provides the factual historical basis for the dispensation of grace, but it is not itself a dispensational revelation. When Christ presented Himself in heaven bearing His own blood, He finished His function of high priest, and sat at the right hand of God. It is important to understand that a High Priest in the Mosaic system was also a priest. The High Priest had primarily one function as far as the program of intercession is concerned, but he continued his daily activity as a priest, which other priests also performed. Christ, our High Priest, is currently making intercession for the believer in heaven as a priest of the order of Melchizedek. But His *activity* as High Priest of that order ended when He sat at the right hand of the Father. It was the presenting of His blood to the Father that provided the basis for the believer to enter with confidence into the presence of God in heaven.
- 23 As expected with an intransitive copulative verb, the feminine relative pronoun agrees with δόξα, its feminine complement, although in this case, its antecedent is also feminine.
- 24 C. F. D. Moule calls these participles “hanging nominatives” (*Idiom Book*, pg. 105), because no second person pronoun exists in the sentence to which they can relate. A better description might be “independent nominatives,” or even “nominative absolutes.” In any case, Paul uses the inflectional nature of Greek to refer to his readers in the second person without an actual “you” pronoun. In the diagram, I inserted the English word “you” to indicate this, q.v. A similar situation exists with the participle ἀνεχόμενοι in 4:2, though a second person verb exists in a relative clause just prior to that participle. However, there is no second person pronoun in its own clause to which the nominative relates.
- 25 Burton’s assertion that κάμπω τὰ γόνατά is a paraphrase for προσεύχομαι is an over-simplification which cannot stand. See Burton, *Moods*, pg. 88.
- 26 Some see anarthrous πᾶσα πατριὰ as meaning “the whole family,” (ἡ πᾶσα πατριὰ) rather than as we have translated it, “every family.” Since the translation “whole family” implies a single, collective family, whereas “every family” indicates categorization into different groups, the first translation, some say, lessens the speculation factor. “Every family” has produced the unfortunate result in the minds of some, who attempt to identify those categories apart from limiting themselves to Scripture. Nevertheless, it is the more accurate translation. For a discussion of the various “families” of spirit beings, see my work on the doctrine of spirit beings, where I deal with cherubim, seraphim, and malachim.
- 27 The “fatherhood of God” is not actually mentioned in this passage, but is placed there by the fertile imagination of fallen man. As noted above, the word family, πατριὰ, does not refer to generational families, with fathers, mothers, children, etc., but to categories as God considers such things.
- 28 *Hina* can also introduce clauses of content, especially if there is a statement or implication of statement in the context. It seems to some exegetes that something has been left out of the expressions of verses 15 and 16, for this *hina* clause seems to indicate both purpose and content at the same time. See my comments on 1:16. It is for this reason that the statement “I bow my knees,” clearly a reference to worship, carries the concept of worshipful prayer, though Paul does not explicitly state so. How else can one understand this clause, however? There is an implication of communication to God, concerning which this *hina* clause supplies at least part of the content, even though neither the noun prayer nor the verb pray occur in this context.

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- 29 The word *kardia*, heart, regularly refers to the seat of the mentality of the individual. In the culture of the New Testament, the heart was not the seat of the emotions, as it is in modern American culture, but the seat of the ability to think and understand. The Greeks reserved the word *splagchnon*, used 9 times in the New Testament, for emotional feeling. *Splagchnon* refers to the internal organs consisting of the stomach and intestines.
- 30 Note the governing article. This is a good example of the so-called Granville Sharp rule. This rule, which is actually a subset of the rule of the governing article, states that a single article followed by a series of nouns separated by *καί* are all related, and therefore all refer to the same thing or person in some way. In this case, they are a collection of nouns referring to love.
- 31 A difference of opinion among scholars exists concerning the word *ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ*. Some hold that it's a pure adverb, as I have diagrammed it. But others believe it to be a prepositional phrase made up of two words, *ὑπὲρ* and *ἐκπερισσοῦ*, which is how it is written in the both the Farstad and Hodges majority text, as well as in the Robinson-Pierpont majority text. The Nestle-Aland critical text treats it as one word. In either case, the meaning is clear. It means "exceedingly beyond" or "extremely beyond."
- The prepositional phrase to which it is related, *ὑπὲρ πάντα*, has also caused much comment. C. F. D. Moule, for instance, writes the following when discussing the "genitive of separation," by which he actually means the ablative: "So also with an adverb of comparison: Eph. iii.20 *ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν...*, exceedingly much more than.... (although here the preceding *ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι* confuses the construction: is *πάντα* direct object of *ποιῆσαι*, and *ὑπὲρ* an adverb, reiterated by *ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ*? Or is *ὑπὲρ* a preposition governing *πάντα*, and *ὧν* a grammatical laxity for *ἃ*, perhaps partly suggested by the idea of comparison with its genitive associations?" Moule, *Idiom Book*, pg. 42.
- 32 The student who is without Greek may notice that the word for "the one who is able" looks much like the word for "power." In fact, "power" is directly related to the verb from which "able" is derived, *dunamai*. The Greek language associated power strongly with ability, both words being from the same Greek root. Power, then, is the basis for activity, for work getting done; hence Paul's relative clause referring back to the "power," "*which works in us.*"
- 33 The word benediction is the Latin derived form of the Greek based word eulogy. Both mean to speak well of someone or something. Technically, verses 20-21 are a eulogy or benediction in the broad sense of the words, as this kind of glorification is in words rather than deeds.
- 34 Referring to the Greek word *δόξα*, Zodhiates says, "Basically, in the Bible it refers to the recognition, honor, or renown belonging to a person." This is an accurate statement concerning the expression of glory, that is, an act of glorification, as we find in a doxology. It is important to realize that a doxology is not a prayer, nor specifically praise. It is a technical recognition of a specific aspect of God's being which is expressed in words. Here that "technical aspect" is power.
- 35 In the LXX the Hebrew *אֱלֹהִים* is sometimes translated in the Greek as *ἀληθινός* or *ἀληθῶς*.