

In Christ a survey of the relationship between Christ and us humans

The phrase “in Christ” (and cognates) is a favorite with Paul to signal the personal, local, and dynamic relation of the believer to Christ.

To say that it is a favorite of Paul’s is not, however, to rule out its use by the early church as well, which seems to be the case, if Gal 3: 26 is taken as an early Christian “sayings” statement and vv Gal 3:27—28 as a portion of an early Christian confession which still sung in the Eastern Churches

The “in Christ” phraseology in its various forms appears a total of 164 times in the Pauline writings apart from the Pastorals.

It was A. Deissmann in 1892, who published the first modern study on the use of this favorite term of Paul, “Die neutestamentliche Formel “in Christo Jesu”. This re-opened the whole old file:

Is there a Mystical element in the teaching of Paul? According to Deissmann, “In Christ” and its various forms appears 164 times in the letters of Paul.

Paul’s epistles contain a set exposition of our union with Christ. To reach a definition — or rather a description — of what we may think as mystical union with Christ, we must therefore investigate his numerous statements and allusions concerning the interior faith relationship which exists between himself — and Christians generally — on the one hand, and Christ, the Crucified and the Triumphant Lord, on the other. This task is hard because Paul like all the NT Writers does not provide us with a systematic treatment on all the major elements or topics of the Christian teaching and in the absence of systematization, definitions are difficult.

The ancients world had no noun for mysticism. There was an adjective in Greek “mestikos” which means “occult” , and particularly the “initiated” in the old occult where union with the gods were on offer.

The adjective occurs neither in Paul nor in any other New Testament writer. The verb is used once by Paul, in Phil. 4:12; (“everywhere and in all things I am instructed”), it simply means in a general way that he is “familiar” with all.

The noun “mysterium” occurs twenty-one times in the letters of Paul. Paul uses it to refer to the mysterious divine decree, decided from eternity and hidden in God, concerning the plan of human salvation which was manifested, carried out, and completed in Christ.

This meaning of the word is clearly expressed in 1 Cor. 2:6, “we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, neither of the princes of this world that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God

in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained (planned) before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew. For if they had known it, they would never have crucified, the Lord of glory.”

It is only at the end of time that the divine plan shall be fully revealed and brought to completion, the word “mystery” in Paul, as for example in 1 Cor. 15:51: “Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed”; and Rom. 11:25: “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery” (i.e., of the final conversion of Israel).

The question whether Paul had a teaching of a mystical union with Christ must therefore be approached from another angle. The problem should be posed in this form: What expressions does St. Paul use concerning the mysterious union between himself— and indeed all Christians — and the person of the Crucified and Triumphant Jesus Christ? How exactly does he describe this union? What does he say about its nature and character?

Two points are at the heart of the teaching in Paul

1. The entry of humanity into the Divine life
2. And the entry of the Divine life into man.

Because of the Incarnation God descends to human life and truly became man.

These two points cannot be separated from each other in the NT. . The indwelling of the fullness of the Divinity in the Son of God Incarnate in Col 2:9-10 says emphatically that “we have come to fullness of life in Him

For Paul the fellowship with Christ is marked by the fact that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Paul uses both expressions: “in Christ” and “Christ in us”. But “in Christ” is much the more common of the two.

There are some texts where both ideas are closely linked. A particularly clear example is Rom. 8:8: “And they who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” The following words show that this “Spirit of God” is also the Spirit of Christ: “Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead, because of sin: but the spirit lives, because of justification.” To be in Christ is to possess Christ — or have the Spirit of Christ means to be in Christ; anyone who is “in Christ” — i.e., who belongs to his Body — also possesses the Spirit of Christ. The phrase “Christ in us” is not so frequent, because it is through the Spirit that Christ dwells and works in us.

The same teaching is probably expressed in 1 Cor. 12:12, where Paul compares the members of the human body with Christ. As all the members share one life so also Christ who is part of the life of the limbs of his body.

The relation between Christ and those who are his in 1 Cor 12:12 is like the relation between the limbs and the body; although there are many limbs, yet they form the unity of one body: “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body. . . and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink.” The Apostle’s meaning is that by Baptism the Christians have been incorporated into Christ and have all received the Spirit of Christ. They are all surrounded and permeated by the one Christ, and so are joined into a union with him and with each other.

The same truth is expressed more briefly and more simply in Col. 2:6: “As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him.” Phil. 3:8-9 differs from this only by referring to the future: “I count them” (i.e., all things) “but as dung, that I may gain Christ and may be found in him.” “Being found in Christ” is something which takes place in this life, not merely in the life to come. The goal of Paul’s endeavor is to appear even outwardly as one who truly “is in Christ” (see the expression in 1 Cor. 2:4).

Abba Philemon

George: What did Paul have in mind when he said that we are in Christ?”

Philemon: Paul had not an idea in his mind but Paul has received life in Christ and saw his being in Christ.

George: Let me re-phrase my question. How do you understand this expression in Paul, “In Christ”?

Philemon: I came here in order to learn this deep truth which is expressed in such few words that we are left with a kind of a mystery. At the very beginning of my journey, I subjected the words of Paul to my analyses but there was nothing. I asked the Lord to send Paul to teach me but the Lord did not send Paul. But one day, I was praying and a hidden voice asked me: Philemon, if I am standing in front of you and you can see me, does this bring any change into your life? I said, “Lord if you are the one who is speaking to me and not just my deep longing to be with you, your standing in front of me will show me your face which I love to see but that will certainly make our fellowship exterior. Please guide me. I knew that this is the voice of the Lord because he said, “love me and your love will be your teacher.”

George: Good, and what does your love say?

Philemon: I would love to answer your question but that will be what my love taught me, while you have to learn from your love how Christ is in you.

George: So do you consider this to be very personal that it cannot be shared?

Philemon: Yes. But two points can be shared:

- a) Love as you know is not and was never a quantity. Therefore it is not about the quantity, the more you love the Lord the more you understand him. It is not also a quality because it is the work of the Holy Spirit and this does not come by any other means. The Holy Spirit is the one who sheds the love of God in our hearts according to Rom 5:5.
- b) It is by freeing your self that the Lord will reward you, not at all. To free ourselves from everything gives us a free heart but that is not a qualification for receiving the Spirit of God. Not at all. Freedom gives us more time. God give us this gift in Christ and it is given to all of us but all of us use this gift.

George: Why?

Philemon: Read the parable of the Sewer or the parable of the prodigal son. In both parables the lack of true repentance is the reason of being far from the kingdom of God in spite of its presence in us.”

Some aspects of “Being in Christ”

1. The Christian abides in Christ. This is one aspect of union with Christ. is expressed it in various ways, but the favorite phrase is “in Christ (Jesus)” or “in the Lord”.

(A) To boast “in Christ” in 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; Phil. 3:3. In these three cases the preposition (in) goes with the verb, for Paul elsewhere uses the preposition (in) after the verb “to boast” where English uses “of” — thus, “boast of God” Rom. 2:17; “we glory in God” Rom. 5:11; “glory in men” 1 Cor. 3:21; 2Thess. 1:4; “boast of the law” Rom. 2:23; “in tribulations” Rom. 5:3; “in other men’s labors” 2 Cor. 10:15; “in my infirmities” 2 Cor. 12:9; “in the cross” Gal. 6:14.

On the other hand, there are three passages — Rom. 15:17; Cor. 15:31; and Phil. 1:26 — where “in Christ” denotes the domain or the sphere in which the activity takes place.

(B) To hope: 1 Cor. 15:19, “If in this life (i.e., for this life) only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”. In this text Christ is the goal of our hope

(C) “In Christ” because Christ is the vehicle of God’s work, or of the presence in Christ of heavenly things.’ Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” to denote the union of being and life between the Christian and his exalted Lord. Paul himself did not draw a hard and fast line between the historical act of Redemption and the continuing work of the Mediator.

There is a revelation of the will of God in the following texts: 1 Thess. 5:18: “In all things give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all.” And also the same revelation in 2 Cor. 5:19: “For God

indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.” The same idea is expressed with the preposition through in Rom. 5:11: “Jesus Christ by whom we have now received reconciliation”, and in 2 Cor. 5:18: “who has reconciled us to himself by Christ”.

Rom. 3:24: “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The Redemption is not repeated each time a newly converted Christian is incorporated: it was completed once and for all by an act of Christ, namely by his sacrificial death.

Col. 1:16: “In him were all things created.” Here the preposition is either instrumental (by) or else locative (in and with) here Jesus is not only a Creator but also is the goal of the whole creation.

Col. 1:13: “Who. . . has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins.” Here “in whom” means by whom

Col. 2:15: God has triumphed over the principalities and powers “in himself”, i.e., by his Resurrection and Exaltation.

Eph. 2:13: “But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Here “by the blood of Christ” refers back to “in Christ Jesus”, and so the reference is probably to a single act either the death of Christ or baptism in Christ’s death.

This is not an exhaustive treatment of all texts

In (Gal. 3: 13; Rom. 8:39; Phil.3:14; Col.2:3, 9, 15; and Eph. 1:20; 2:13 and 4:32), the stress is on act of redemptive which is provided by God and is in Christ.

2. Nevertheless, Paul so often wrote “in Christ” in places where we would have expected to read “by Christ”. Evidently he wished to bring out the point that to some extent Christ is the abode of God’s gracious presence, the place where God willed and worked the salvation of men.

But in the overwhelming majority of cases the phrase “in Christ” denotes a unique relationship between the Christian and Christ Triumphant. The phrase occurs in the most diverse contexts, but in every case it refers to being in Christ, to a mysterious vital union with him, to things and powers which derive from this union or which presuppose it. These passages appear in very different contexts, and so they may be divided into the following:

(A) “To be in Christ” denotes the possession of a new life of an utterly different kind: “If then any be in Christ a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). That is why Paul can say of himself: “The things that were gain to me. . . I. . . count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ and may be found in him” (Phil. 3:7—9). Because of their union with Christ, Christians are sons of God (Gal. 3:26), alive unto God (Rom. 6:11), saints (Phil. 1:1; 4:21), sanctified (1 Cor.

1:2), light (Eph. 5:8); they have access to the Father (Eph. 3:12), and need not fear condemnation (Rom. 8:1) “There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”; they have liberty from the Law which previously enslaved men (Gal. 2:4); each Christian should be perfect in Christ (Col. 1:28); being in Christ assures them of the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:22).

(B) “In Christ” justification takes place: “If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ then the minister of sine God forbid” (Gal. 2:17). “Him, who knew no sin, he (God) has made sin for us: that we might be made the justice of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

(C) Being in Christ the Christian has special power, strength, joy, gladness, and confidence. Paul declares: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). In Eph. 6:10 he can say “Be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power.”

(D) Christians are men of joy; their vital union with Christ continually makes them joyful. Paul declares his own joy (Phil. 4:10: “I rejoice in the Lord exceedingly”), and he encourages gladness among his communities “Rejoice in the Lord”, Phil. 3:1; 4:4).

(E) From his union with Christ he draws courage and confidence in all situations “I have much confidence in Christ Jesus to command you that which is to the purpose”, Philemon 8), particularly during his imprisonment Phil. 2:19: “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy unto you shortly”, and even: “I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come to you shortly” Phil. 2:24).

(F) His union with Christ is also at the root of his confidence in the communities: “I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will not be of another mind” (Gal. 5:10), and “We have confidence concerning you in the Lord that the things which we command, you both do and will do” (2 Thess. 3:4). Full of joy he can tell the Philippians that many of the brethren, having confidence in the Lord because of his imprisonment, are speaking the word of God more fearlessly (Phil. 1:14).

(G) Paul is convinced that union with Christ is beyond all prices. That is why he can say “Stand fast in the Lord” (Phil. 4:1), and “Walk in him” (Col. 2:6), and he can make the glad declaration: “We live, if you stand in the Lord” (1 Thess. 3:8).

(H) Service or work “in Christ” is often mentioned by Paul here the phrase “in the Lord” is particularly common in this context.

Aquila and Priscilla are called his “helpers in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 16:3), a description which he also applies to Urbanus in (Rom. 16:9). He declares that Tryphaena and Tryphosa “labor in the Lord”, and that Persis “has much labored in the Lord” (Rom. 16:12). He describes Apelles as “approved in Christ” (Rom. 16:10), which must refer to his services to the church. It is not clear what exactly he means when he calls Rufus “elect in the Lord” (Rom. 16:13). The labor of which he speaks in (1 Cor. 15:58) is not the work of the Gospel, but the work of individual perfection: “knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord”; he means that success is guaranteed by their union with Christ. The work of the Gospel is mentioned in (1 Cor. 9:1): “Are not you my work in the Lord? You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”, and again in (2 Cor. 2:12): “When I was come to Troas for the Gospel of Christ and a door was opened unto me in the Lord.” The message which he preaches to his communities springs from his inmost soul which is united with Christ: “Before God, in Christ we speak” (2 Cor. 2:17; 12:19).

Paul calls his helper Tychicus “our dearest brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord” in (Col. 4:7; see Eph. 6:21). In 1 Thess. 5:12 he speaks of those who “are over you in the Lord”. There is a kindred use of the phrase in (1 Cor. 4:15): “if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers.” He is referring to some special office or task in (Col. 4:17): “Take heed to the ministry which you has received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.”

(I) Paul has the same idea in mind when he describes himself in (Eph. 4:1) as “a prisoner in the Lord”, and when he speaks of his “bands in Christ” in Phil. 1:13, or calls Epaphras his “fellow prisoner in Jesus Christ” (Philemon 23). He is imprisoned as Christ’s herald whom God leads as a captive in his triumphal procession in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14).

So the texts which speak of service in Christ are those of this very unique relationship. The fact is that the phrase “in Christ” means that the work or the imprisonment is due to that unique fellowship. These persons are united to Christ Triumphant and work for him even their imprisonment takes place entirely in the sphere of Christ, or as modern theology would say “on the supernatural plane”. Paul and his fellow workers are not ordinary workers, servants or prisoners; they are ministers of Christ (Col. 1:7) and ministers of the Gospel (see 1 Thess. 3:2: “Timothy . . . the minister of God in the Gospel of Christ”).

(J) Belonging to the body of Christ which is the membership of the Christian Church. The debate in NT studies vary but the fact remains that these passages can be understood only in the light of Paul’s doctrine that every Christian on conversion enters into a mysterious permanent union of life and being with Christ. It has been pointed out by more than one scholar

that the adjective “Christian” will usually be an adequate rendering in these passages, and that we are dealing with a conventional phrase. Perhaps the phrase, “in Christ” soon crystallized as a set form; nevertheless it is much more pregnant with meaning than our word “Christian”

In the following texts the expression “in Christ” is simply a crystallized phrase: “The churches of Judea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:22) means the Christian churches; “The churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 2:14) means the Christian churches; “Them that are of Narcissus’ household, who are in the Lord” (Rom. 16:11) means the Christian members of the household of Narcissus. Other similar cases are: “them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1), “brethren in Christ Jesus” (Col 1 :2), “brethren in the Lord”, (Phil. 1:14), little ones in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1), wise in Christ (1 Cor. 4:10), “the dead who are in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:16), and “they that are fallen asleep in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:18). In all these cases the word “Christian” renders the meaning. Similarly Paul calls himself “a man in Christ”, meaning a Christian (2 Cor: 12:2).

Yet even these texts have some reference to union with Christ Triumphant, as we see from Rom. 16:7: “Andronicus and Junias . . . who also were in Christ before me”. It would be correct, but not adequate, to translate the clause “who were Christians before me”: Paul’s meaning is that they were in a mystical vital union with Christ before him. Again in Gal. 3:28: “You are all one in Christ”, there is a reference to the Body of Christ; yet it is significant that the preceding verse says: “As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ.” Baptism in Paul is taking away the old nature which brings division but the new life brings this unity and makes all one body

(K) There are texts which say that the mutual relations between Christians should be genuinely the Christian new life, that is, they should be the relations which are fitting among persons who are in an intimate vital union with Christ and belong to his Body. Examples of such texts are: Rom. 16:1: “I commend to you Phoebe. . . that you receive her in the Lord as saints do”; (Phil. 2:29): “Receive him therefore with all joy in the Lord”; (Phil. 4:21): “Salute ye every saint in Christ Jesus” (as a brother in Christ, as a Christian brother); (1 Cor. 16:19): “Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” Even greetings must reflect the sacred sphere in which Christians live; they should breathe the Spirit of Christ. In Rom. 16:8 Paul describes Ampliatus as “most beloved to me in the Lord”. He means that his love for Ampliatus is not simply human affection; it is rooted in the vital union with Christ.

Conclusion

This survey is by no means exhaustive. But it is sufficient to demonstrate the variety with which Paul uses the phrase “in Christ”. In spite of their diversity these texts all agree that Christ is the vital principle of Christians. Their new life depends on union with him. We would be justified in using the analogy of a fish whose vital element is water, and which can live only in water. In the same way the Christian lives in Christ, draws all vital power from him, and indeed is a Christian only as long as he lives in this union with Christ.

Putting on Christ

“In Christ” which express the idea of being in Christ. Twice Paul speaks of “putting on Christ”. The underlying idea is expressed most clearly in (Gal. 3:26- 9): “For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ’s (in this manner), then are you (like him) the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.” It is evident that Paul has in mind “in Christ” as equated to “put on Christ”, which in turn means the same as “being Christ’s”. The means for reaching this state is Baptism.

The expression “to put on Christ” is a metaphor in which Christ is compared to a heavenly robe which is given to all men; by putting on this robe men enter into a new world and are the new creation. The new relationship to Christ is not merely ethical about social and other human behavior but it is ontological. It is not simply a fresh rule of conduct. The man who “puts on Christ” gains a share in Christ’s being, and this participation produces “Christ in us”, the “new man”. And since Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), it follows that Christians also are the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise which was given to him.

This interpretation of (Gal. 3:27) is not incompatible with the injunction of (Rom. 13:14): “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” By their conduct Christians must manifest the effect of Baptism has wrought objectively (see Rom. 6:11, 13). This injunction of (Rom. 13:14) is closely related to the command of (Col. 3:9 and Eph. 4:22) where the readers are told to put off the old man and his works, and to put on the new man, who is according to the image of his Creator.

Of Christ

Does Paul also use the genitive case of Christ to express his doctrine of mystical union with Christ? In the writings of Paul the phrase “of Christ” is parallel to “in Christ”. The genitive in general denotes; dependence, and is

used by Paul to denote possession (as in “the slave of Christ”); Was Paul as a pupil of the Rabbis made him thought is cast in a legal mould?

It is beyond doubt that of itself the genitive need not necessarily express the mystical union between the faithful and their Lord. Yet in some of the texts where Paul speaks of Christ in the genitive it is possible to discern in the relationship with Christ a mystical element as well as the purely legal concept. As the frequency of the phrase “in Christ” shows, mystical ideas play quite as large a part in Paul’s teaching as do legal concepts; indeed when he is speaking of belonging to Christ, mystical ideas are the more prominent. There are a number of texts where phrases with the genitive “of Christ” obviously have a mystical element, for example: (Gal. 3:29; Gal 5:24): “They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh”, where the echo of (Rom. 6:6) shows that Paul is here thinking of “being in Christ”; (1 Cor. 1:12) The cry “I indeed am of Paul or belong to Paul etc.”, is dismissed by asking “Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” In (1 Cor. 15:23) “they that are of Christ” are “those that are in Christ” and “they that are fallen asleep in Christ” (verse 18; see 1 Thess. 4:15: “the dead who are in Christ”); Rom. 8:9 any one do not have the Spirit of Christ “. . . he is none of his (i.e., of Christ). And if Christ be in you. . .” Perhaps (2 Cor. 10:7) also can be cited here: “If any man trusts himself, that he is Christ’s, let him think this again with himself, that as he is Christ’s, so are we also”

But this does not settle the matter. The Pauline epistles have no less than sixty-one nouns followed by the genitive of “Christ”, “Jesus Christ” or “The Lord”, and these texts all deal with basic theological ideas. Deissmann suggested the name “mystical genitive” for these cases, for he claimed that they express in the same way as the phrase “in Christ” the mystical union between Christians and Christ. There are two important points that must be considered:

1. The grammarians distinguish a number of uses of the genitive:

Objective genitive
Subjective genitive
Genitive of the agent
And
Possessive genitive.

Some of the uses of the phrase “of Christ” cannot be brought under any of these categories and that the conventional categories do not cover all the uses of the genitive which are found in the LXX

2. It is clear that the Pauline doctrine of union with Christ is expressed in a number of these cases. The following examples — only a small selection — proves this point:

(A)The love of Christ: In (2 Cor. 5:14) Paul says: “The love of Christ presses us: judging this, that if one died for all, then all are dead.” This is not an objective genitive, for when the object of love is a person Paul uses the Greek preposition, “eis” which means towards); this is illustrated in (Col. 1:4): “Hearing your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have towards all the saints.”

It seems more plausible and more apt, to take this as a subjective genitive, and to construe it as “The love which Christ has for us”. But the context is against such an interpretation. Paul is thinking primarily of a present power, not of the past act of love which Christ accomplished for us upon the Cross.

Paul is here defending himself. He says: “I am not commending myself, for I do not do anything for myself; if I am in ecstasy that is for God; if I speak when not in ecstasy, I do so for you; for I am moved by the love of Christ and the love of Christ wish Christians to live for him, not for themselves.” So the meaning of verse 14 is that Paul’s actions do not spring from selfish motives; he is moved by the mysterious power of the love of Christ, which alone shapes his conduct. This power derives from an actual situation at the present moment — namely that “the many” participate in the death of the one Christ. Of course he is thinking of Christ’s death on the Cross, but this event is here and now producing its effect on his life as a present power. Paul is moved and governed by a present power which is described as the “love of Christ”. This power derives from his mystical union with Christ.

The same applies to (Eph. 3:14-19): “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father. . . that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts that, being rooted and founded in love you may be able

(a) To comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth (of the heavenly structure of salvation, that is, of the heavenly inheritance in the sense of 1:18) — the four dimensions were originally a description of the entirety of the world.

(b) To know also the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge?”

This cannot be an objective genitive, for Paul would never have said that our love for Christ surpasses all knowledge. Undoubtedly it, may be a subjective genitive, meaning the love of Christ for us. However, there is a strong mystical strain throughout the passage, as we see from the clause “That Christ may dwell in your hearts”. It is more natural therefore to take the phrase “love of Christ” as a unit, and to understand by it the living stream of “Christ-love” which flows through those who are “in Christ”, a

stream whose depths can never be sounded, however often they are tested.

Here, it is beyond dispute that Paul is not here referring to the past deed in which the love of Christ was manifested before all men's eyes; he is thinking of a power which at the present operates in Christians.

(B) The patience of Christ (2 Thess. 3:5): "The Lord directs your hearts, in the love of God and the patience of Christ." Paul is not thinking of the patience which Christ practiced in his life. The context does not favor such an interpretation; and moreover, he never used this Greek expression when referring to the Passion in which Christ's patience was so wonderfully displayed. The meaning is rather that Paul desires for his readers the patience which must be in them because Christ abides and works in them "the indwelling of Christ = the patience".

(C) The work of Christ: Epaphroditus brought Paul a gift from the Philippians, and in (Phil. 2 :30) Paul praises him "because for the work of Christ he came to the point of death". Naturally this does not mean an action performed by Christ. Neither does it mean a work performed for Christ. Which is identical with the "Work of faith" in (1 Thess. 1:3) or "work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12) These are the terms by which Paul describes the preaching of the Gospel and kindred matters such as, in this case, the bringing of help. The genitive indicates the nature of the work — it belongs to the sphere of Christ.

There is a clearer example in (1 Cor. 15:58): "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast and immovable: always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord." The phrase "labor in the Lord" indicates that "the work of the Lord" also is something mystical. Paul is not speaking here of the preaching of the Gospel, but simply of the Christian life. His meaning is: Be perfect Christians and let no labor discourage you, for this work will bring a rich reward.

The same idea recurs in 1 Cor. 16:10, where he says that Timothy "works the work of the Lord, as I also do". The Lord is not engaged in the work which Timothy does. The expression "work of the Lord" is to be understood as a unit meaning "Lord's work". The work is done in the Lord (cf. "fellow servant in the Lord"), it is intimately connected with him. It is not profane and worldly, but belongs to the sphere of Christ. It is like Paul's longing for the Phiippians, which is not an ordinary human longing for other people, but is a longing "in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:8).

Prisoner of Christ: "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles" (Eph. 3:1; also Philemon 9; see 2 Tim. 1:8). This is not a subjective genitive, which would mean that Christ had made Paul a prisoner. Moreover, he does not mean that he is suffering imprisonment for Christ; he says explicitly that he is suffering it for the Gentiles. Paul calls himself the prisoner of Christ because he is aware of his mystical

fellowship with Christ, and therefore his imprisonment also lies in this supernatural sphere. That is why he can describe himself in Eph. 4:1 as “a prisoner in the Lord” (see Philemon 23: “Epaphras, my fellow Prisoner in Christ Jesus”).

Further examples could be cited. However, these texts seem sufficient to establish with certainty the following three points:

1. It is remarkable how often Paul uses the genitive of “Christ” in this way. In many cases the genitive may be ignored, for it sounds superfluous to us, just as is often the case with the phrase “in Christ”: the sentence would run more smoothly without it. This suggests that the same psychological process underlies his use of both phrases, “in Christ” and “of Christ”.

2. It is certain that the conventional grammatical categories are often inadequate. But we cannot simply group together the cases which do not fit into the usual categories, and make one new category — this is the great weakness of Schmitz’ thesis. Dibelius²⁹ has summed up the position by saying that we must distinguish two types of case: (a) special constructions which are due to rhetorical considerations, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:22 “the freeman of the Lord”, and 1 Cor. 9:21; and (b) conventional phrases with the genitive, which were not invented by Paul, but were taken over and adapted by him, such as “Faith of Christ” and “Gospel of Christ”.

3. When Paul uses the genitive of “Christ” he prefers to attach it to nouns which represent important concepts in his theology, such as Gospel, Faith, Charity, Blood, Truth, Might, Peace, Life, Coming, Spirit, Body. What psychological reason induced the Apostle to adopt these singular expressions? Anyone who admits that the phrase “in Christ” denotes a mystical relationship will have no doubt about the answer:

the phrases with the genitive of “Christ” reflect Paul’s doctrine of the interior mystical relation between the Christian and his Lord Triumphant. In other words, both phrases, “in Christ” and “of Christ”, have the same psychological explanation. We need not assume that Paul was always clearly conscious of this as he was speaking and writing; but we may say that these phrases came to his tongue as an expression of his subconscious thought.

We could not say a priori that this use of the genitive must necessarily convey a mystical meaning. But in the light which other texts shed on his doctrine of union with Christ, it is clear that this genitive is often used in a mystical sense.

“Christ in us”

Christ abides in us. This is the other aspect of the mystical relationship between Christ and man. References to this aspect are comparatively scanty in the Pauline letters, but there are texts which declare the

indwelling of Christ in us. Is that indwelling distinct from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Paul does not use a special word to express this, as he uses “in Christ” for the other aspect but the distinction is clear.

The mystical relationship is thus described in Rom. 8:9-10:

“But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead, because of sin: but the spirit lives because of justification.” It is clear from this text that the doctrine of the indwelling of Christ himself in Christians — indeed in each individual Christian through the Holy Spirit was accepted by the Romans as a well known teaching.

Another important passage is 2 Cor. 13: 2-5.. Paul asked “Do you seek a proof of Christ that speaks in me?” (13:3). He does not mean simply that Christ dwells in him as in other Christians. His point is that Christ speaks through him, and so Paul’s injunctions are to be received as the instructions of Christ.

Paul is compelled to defend his apostolic office, and to do so he undertakes to revisit Corinth (13:1), and threatens that if there is no improvement (13:7) he will give them the proof they asked for (13: 3) by mercilessly condemning the unrepentant sinners (13:2). Then they shall realize that Christ who dwells in Paul and works through him is not weak in regard to them, but that he is unmistakably strong (13: 3). If they have seen only weakness in him. He explains why this is so: because of his mystical union with Christ (“in him” 13:4) Paul must undergo the same experience as Christ, who was crucified in weakness but was afterwards raised up by God’s power. So, he continues, they should rather examine themselves: “Know you not your own selves (that is, you know very well) that Christ Jesus is in you, unless perhaps you fail to meet this test”(13:5). This is an injunction to the Corinthians not to query Paul’s standing as an Apostle, but rather to examine seriously whether their own standing as Christians still exists. He expresses “their standing as Christians” by the phrase “Christ in you”

It has been pointed out that it is the community and not only the individual members, who are being addressed here. It is clear, Christ dwells in the community by dwelling in its individual members; that is why Paul can describe as a “temple of God” both the community (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16) and individual Christians (1 Cor. 6:19: “your body”).

Another text which refers to all Christians is (Eph. 3:16), which has already been cited before. In this passage, Christ can abide in us more or less perfectly; that there are degrees of Christ’s indwelling. Paul is here repeating what he often says: when men become Christians an objective and sacramental effect is wrought on their being: this effect must be

manifested and expressed in their conduct. The indwelling of Christ and the strengthening of the interior life go together. It follows that the indwelling of Christ should affect their conduct. In this case the effect of his indwelling is a deeper knowledge of God and of the great inheritance which is prepared for us (see Eph. 1:18), as well as of the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge. In Paul's eyes the soul's ultimate goal is to "be filled unto all the fullness of God" (3:19), that is, to attain the stage of being a perfect Christian in piety and conduct.

The Epistle to the Galatians contains a fine expression of the fact that Christ dwells in the faithful, and that the purpose of this indwelling is to produce ever greater and more profound effects in their piety and conduct. The epistle is an appeal to the Galatians whom Paul's adversaries were trying to estrange from him: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you. And I would willingly be present with you now and change my voice because I am ashamed for you" (4:19). Paul had once already been in labor when the Galatians came to Christ. Now he is in labor again, and this labor will come to an end only when Christ is formed in them, that is, when Christ has become a new self for each one of them (Gal. 2:20) Christ is formed in them as their vital power, and when each of them shows a complete image of Christ both in their being and in their acts. Paul certainly does not mean that the Galatians are cut off from Christ and that Christ no longer abides in them. But there is a very serious risk that they may lose Christ, for they possess only a faint imprint of his image. Paul is most anxious that the form of Christ should again be imprinted upon them with increased clarity and effect, for this is the goal of the Christian life. Each one should become "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28) and attain "the measure of the age (mature manhood) of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

We have here a particularly clear statement of the impact of the moral aspect of union with Christ. Along with Christ a new vital power enters into men, and, unless it is impeded, this power gives Christians the form of Christ.

Another text which may be considered here is (Col. 1:27). In the preceding two verses Paul speaks of the divine office was entrusted to him, to announce to the Gentiles the word of God, the mystery which was hidden from ages and generations but is now revealed to the saints: "To whom (i.e., to you) God would make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ, in you the hope of glory." The fact of preaching to the Gentiles is not the mystery. The mystery is the message which is preached: the glory of the Incarnate Son of God, whose indwelling guarantees that we shall see the glory of the world to come. The words "in you" should not be construed to mean "(preached) among you".

Immediately before this point, in verse 24, Paul speaks of union with the Passion of Christ; and in verse 28 the phrase “perfect in Christ Jesus” is also mystical. This indicates that the phrase “in you” of verse 24 should be construed as an expression of the spiritual indwelling of Christ.

In (Col. 3:9), Paul calls upon his readers to put off the old man with his (bad) works and to put on the new man, the image of his Creator. There are two passages which are exact parallels to this text: (Rom. 13:14 and Gal. 3:27). The former passage: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, is mystical and refers to conduct, as the passage from Colossians also does. The passage from Galatians: “As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ” is also mystical, but it is sacramental as well as moral. So in (Col. 3:10), Paul says that his readers should become “Christ-men”, striving to reproduce the image of Christ in their interior man and to receive Christ himself into themselves. This is followed by verse 11: “Where (that is, if you live in the sphere of Christ) there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all and in all”. In other words, Christ makes them all a unity, he is this unity (this is the idea of the Body of Christ), and at the same time he is present in each individual man (as in a member). There is a fairly close parallel to this in Eph. 4:22- 4. A similar meaning attaches to the “inward man” mentioned in (2 Cor. 4:16): “For which cause we faint not (lose hope): but though our outward man is decaying yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” This “inward man” is identical with “Christ in us”, our new life (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:4). The expression recurs in (Eph. 3:16), where Paul prays that God may grant them “to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man”; this prayer is obviously paraphrased in the following verse: “that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts”. The “inward man” corresponds to the “new man” of (Col. 3:9) and (Eph. 4:23): “Put on the new man.”

These two expressions directly denote Christ, who renews the human nature and it is clear that Christ is the New Man (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). Then by metonymy (is using a word as a substitute for another word with which it is associated), he says, “have out on Christ” and (Rom 13:14), “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”

Finally there is one passage of supreme importance whose mystical character is denied by no one “For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I may live to God: with Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I: but Christ lives in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me.” (Gal. 2:19) Like Christ, and with Christ, Paul has died. When he says this, he is thinking of Baptism — as (Rom. 2:6) shows which symbolizes (according

to the old meaning of symbol, which is two things put together to form one reality or one complete fact) and also brings about death. Since Christ's death took place on the Cross, Paul can say in (Rom. 6:6) that he is crucified with Christ. This crucifixion with Christ annihilates his previous life, the life of the flesh, the old life which he describes in) Rom. 7:24) as "the body of this death"; his self, his old Adam (Rom. 7:14), which was under the domination of sin, has perished. In place of this vanished life there is a new life which springs from Christ; indeed it is identical with Christ's life, so that he can say: "Christ lives in me", that is, Christ lives in the shell of the old man which still survives according to its biological laws. Christ is drawn into him, his self is now the state of Christ-life, or, as he says in (Phil. 1:21): "For to me, to live is Christ."

Nevertheless, Paul was well aware that he had not yet discarded the body of the flesh and that his natural earthly life, the life "in the flesh" (Phil. 1:22; 2 Cor. 10:3) was not destroyed by this new Christ-life. It will be fully shed only at the Day of the Resurrection, when the new life shall appear full and untrammelled (Col. 3:4). That is the explanation of (Gal. 2:20): "And that I live in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me." Paul must continue his natural human life for the time being, but his life is now on a new level, "in faith" in the Lord who died for him, faith which preserves and develops the new life.

It is clear from this passage that Christ himself dwells in Paul, and in Paul's eyes this indwelling of Christ is identical with his new life. His life is "Christ-life". Yet he does not consider that his self is annihilated; the second part of verse makes this quite clear, and rules out any interpretation of the first part of the verse which would suggest otherwise. Paul is not among those mystics who seek self-annihilation but Paul is seeking self-renewal now and only when Christ lives and reigns in the self to make it new. In the second part of verse 20, instead of the mystical formula he gives a description which presents Christ in his full personality, and which assigns a different role to the human person concerned: he does not speak of the self entering into Christ and being absorbed by him in a passive manner; the mystical formula is replaced by the language of active piety, where he looks gratefully on Christ's act of love, grasps Christ's grace, and co-operates with his good and holy Will.