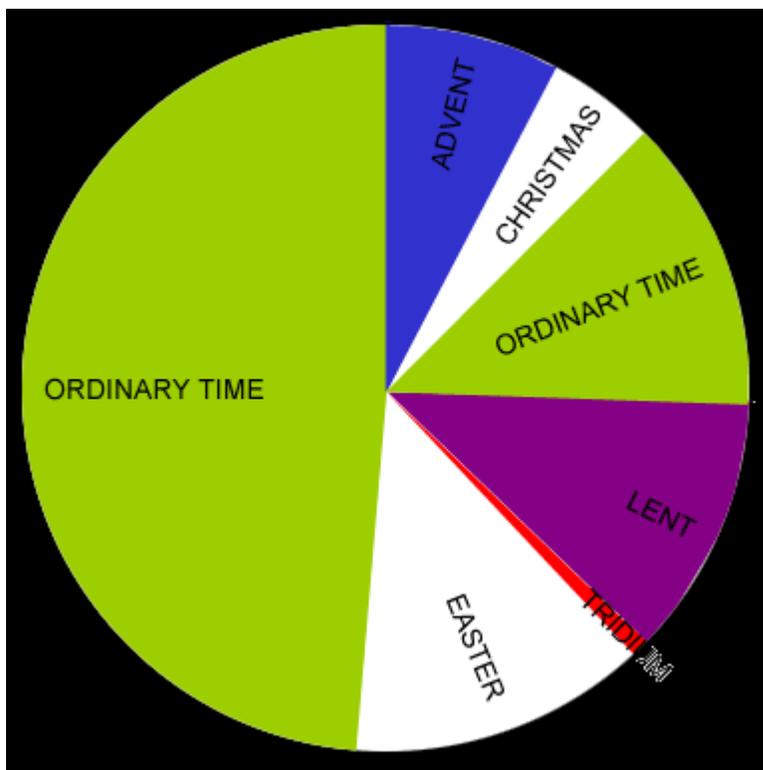


Liturgical Reflections 2016

The follow diagram represents a given liturgical year and differs considerably from our conventional calendars. The same one is inserted in last year's Reflections. In short, liturgical time, the "clock" by which the Church keeps time, is of an order wholly other than our familiar one of linear space and time, of moving from one point to another. The readings commented upon are the second ones from the Mass on Sundays as well as major feast days.

As noted elsewhere in these series of notes, the liturgical year begins towards the end of November in the calendar year, so the two modes of marking time...secular and liturgical...are of two different characters.



29 November, First Sunday of Advent

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you; and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men as we do to you so that he may establish your hearts un-blamable in holiness before our God

and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God just as you are doing, you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. First Thessalonians 3.12-4.2 (Vs. 11 is included because it flows into vs. 12)

Paul wishes that both God the Father and Jesus Christ take responsibility for having our “way” or *hodos* be directed or *kateuthuno*, a verb consisting of the root *euthuno* with the adverbial preface of *eu-* meaning “well” to which is prefaced the preposition *kata-* or according to. In other words, Paul wishes that the Father and Son apply the prospering of his *hodos* experienced thus far to his current audience. From this flows two wishes: “increase and abound,” *pleonazo* and *perisseuo* or to be more than enough, superfluous and to be more than enough in the sense of having an advantage. Both are to apply to *agape* for each other and those to whom Paul is speaking (i.e., ‘you’), the preposition *eis* being used which reads literally “into one another and into all” and “into you.”

The goal of this *eis-ness...into-ness..is* to effect another *eis-ness* or stability represented by the words which read literally “into your establishment,” a verb being used, *sterizo*, which means a making fast or firm. In other words, within the heart or the most center part of a person which reflects this stability by being without blame, *amemptos* or no possibility of reproach. This *eis-ness* is to be situated, if you will, at a future time, not now, or at the “coming” of Jesus Christ, his parousia before God the Father. This noun consists of the root *ousia* or being prefaced with the preposition *para-* or beside indicating a being in the presence of someone as alongside him. This will not occur in isolation, if you will, or between those whom Paul is addressed and Jesus Christ. Jesus will be accompanied with his saints which, given the very short history of Christianity to date (so-called ‘Old Testament’ holy men included), consists of martyrs such as Stephen and those whom Paul himself had persecuted. Most likely Paul knew or knew of many of such saint prior to his conversion.

Paul concludes this section which flows into a new chapter by beseeching and exhorting his listeners, *erotao* and *parakaleo* or to question or challenge and literally to call or summon beside, another use of the preposition *para-*. Both are done in Jesus as Lord who, as the last paragraph has noted, has not yet come. At the heart of Paul’s teaching is the still unresolved problem of Jesus’ coming which for many Christians should have happened already. In other words, people were wrestling with how to interpret this apparent delay. And so the focus can shift from this immediate expectation to living in a way to “please” God, *aresko* being the verb which implies conforming. Note two verbs with the preposition *peri-* (around, about) prefaced to them: *peripateo* (used twice) or to walk around and *perisseuo* (noted above) or to be more than enough. Both are contingent upon earlier

instruction Paul had given (*paraggelia*) which goes unspecified but “through” (*dia*) the Lord Jesus Christ.

6 December, Second Sunday of Advent

(I thank my God in all my remembrance of you) always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (It is right for me to feel thus about you all because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.) For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1,4-6, 8-11 NB: Vss. 3 and 7 are added to make fuller sense of this excerpt; both are in parentheses.

When it comes to making notations on the New Testament, attention is given to prepositions because they play a crucial role whether prefaced to nouns and verbs or free standing. They make the text quite complex in the sense of demonstrating how concepts interlock and therefore work together in a way impossible to render in translation.

Paul gives thanks (*eucharisteo*: 'Eucharist' is derived from it) to God, using the noun *chara* or “joy” which derives from the verb at hand. This double joy, if you will, concerns the *koinonia* or “partnership” with regard to the Gospel, this word being prefaced with the preposition *eis*, literally “into the Gospel.” Paul attributes the good “work” or *ergon* (also as occupation and profit) to Jesus Christ. It is he who had begun this *ergon* in the Philippians: *enarchomai*, a verb prefaced with the preposition *en-* or *in* followed by another use of this preposition, “in you.” Also the root *archo* connotes more than a beginning...something akin to a first principle which carries over into what it gives birth.

Such an *ergon* had a definite beginning and likewise will have a “completion,” *epiteleio*, a verb meaning literally to finish upon, *epi-* which will occur on (*achri*: as far as, to) the day of Jesus Christ. In other words, the *teleo* of *epiteleio* sums up and contains the *archo* of *enarchomai*. One similar reference is 1Cor 1.8: “guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That day is not known but already detected because the *ergon* which is “good” or *agathos* is something that stands outside the bounds of space and time. This adjective is broader in scope in that it involves something which endures throughout that which is transitory, like the *archo* being fulfilled in the *telos* at hand.

Paul is expressing great appreciation for the *koinonia* shown by the Philippians (vs. 5) which he feels in prison as *sugkoinonos*, an adjective related to this noun with the preposition *sug-* (with) prefaced to it. More important than this *sugkoinonos* with his supports or along with it as enlivening it is God who is with Paul as his “witness” or *martus*. Such is the foundation for his yearning and “affection,” *epipotheo*, literally an intense desire upon or *epi-* and *splagnon* which translates literally as inward parts and connotes deep affection welling up from the abdomen. This graphic way of demonstrating his love has as its object an abounding of “love” or *agape* coupled with “knowledge and discernment.” The former is *epignosis* (literally a knowing upon, *epi-*) and the latter is *aisthesis* or sense perception.

For the second time Paul mentions the “day of Christ” so that the Philippians may be “pure and blameless” or *eilikrinos* and *aproskopos*. The first adjective means unmixed or without alloy while the second means without stumbling or without giving offense.

8 December, Immaculate Conception

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1.3-6 & 11-12 (Remarks here are taken from “Notations on Ephesians” posted on this home page).

Vs. 3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in* Christ with* every spiritual blessing in* the heavenly places,

-It should be noted that the prepositions *en* or “in” and *eis* or “into” occur twenty-five times between vs. 3 and vs. 14. This “in-ness” is very important for orientating the reader and will be noted by asterisks.

-The first word of this verse, “blessed” or *eulogetos*, sets the tone for the remaining chapter, and applies to both God as Father and Jesus Christ as “Lord” or *Kurios*. *Eulogetos* consists of the root *logos* (“word”) prefaced with *eu-* (“well”) and has three instances in this one verse: 1) *Eulogetos* or “blessed,” something uttered well on behalf of the Father and Christ and is the only use of this term in Ephesians. 2) The verb “has blessed” or *eulogeo* is the root for *eulogetos* and the only use in Ephesians. So then, those

who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith” [Gal 3.9]. This is the first instance of the use of the preposition *en* or “in” as noted in footnote #1 and sets the tone of “in-ness” through vs. 14, “in Christ.” 3) *Eulogia* or “blessing” which is the only use of this word in Ephesians; the second use of *en* or “in.” *Pneumatikos* or “spiritual” modifies this noun or that which is of the (Holy) Spirit, *Pneuma*. This is the third use of the preposition *en* or “in.”

-“Heavenly places” or *epouranios*, an adjective, and found next in vs. 20: “and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.” Use of this adjective as substantive suggests that the “place” where we have been blessed “with” or literally *en* (‘in’) spiritual blessing is apart from the physical place in which we now reside. In other words, the *eulogia* is kept in reserve for a future use and date and not accessible at the moment.

Vs. 4: even as he chose us in* him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

-This verse continues from the previous one referring to God the Father and begins with *kathos*, “even as” which suggests something on the same level as that which preceded it, the words of vs. 3.

-*Eklego* or “chose” which has the preposition *ek* (from) prefaced to the root *lego* (to gather, to pick) and serves to emphasize the act of choosing. This choosing-from takes place *en auto* or “in him,” the fourth use of this preposition; i.e., an *ek* followed by an *en*.

-*Katabole* or “foundation” literally means a casting or throwing (*ballo*) down or against (*kata-*). This noun isn’t found in the LXX but can intimate the *bara’* or creative action of God in Gn 1.1. The throwing-together of *katabole* differs from the chiseling or carving intimated by *bara’* but can refer to the six days of creation when everything was thus cast together into one whole. The choosing of us “in him” or Jesus Christ thus has taken place before this *katabole*. In the verse at hand, *katabole* is used with regard to *kosmos* which basically means an adornment, usually applicable to a woman and later as order in the sense of good government. The next reference to *kosmos* is 2.2: “(dead through the trespasses and sins) in which you once walked, following the course of this world.”

-*Hagios* (cf. vs. 1) and *amomos* or “holy” and “blameless” which is “before” or *katenopion* which literally means in the presence of compared with the *pro* with respect to *kosmos*. The other reference to *amomos* occurs in 5.27: “that he might sanctify her (the church), having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” Note the sequence of prepositions, free-standing and prefaced to word; they are intended to show the progression of this verse: *ex(lego)->en->kata(bole)->kata(enopion)->en* or from->in->according to or down which is used twice)->in.

Vs. 5: He destined us in* love to be his sons* through Jesus Christ,* according to the purpose of his will,

-The Greek text has “in love” in the previous verse, *agape*, usually considered untranslatable and not unlike the Hebrew *chesed*. This is the fifth occurrence of the preposition *en* or “in.” *Agape* occurs next in 1.15: “Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints.” Such *agape* is tied up with the verb *proorizo*, literally, to mark out with a boundary: *pro* (before) prefaced to *horizo*, to separate by a boundary. “In him, according to the purpose of him (*proorizo* is situated here but not translated in the RSV) who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will” [1.11]. *Proorizo* is used with the sixth instance of *en* or “in” regarding *agape*.

-The single noun *huiiothesia* means “to be his sons” and has the seventh instance of the preposition *eis* (‘into’) and literally translates as “son placing” (*huios* + *thesis*). “So that we might receive adoption as sons” [Gal 4.5]. Such is the object of divine *proorizo* or “marking out beforehand.” A eighth instance of the preposition *eis* (into) which is not translated by the RSV and that reads “into him.”

-*Kata* as “according to” implies a pre-existing plan or foresight which here modifies *eudokia* or “purpose” which means literally good (*eu-*; see vs. 3 for other examples) prefaced to the verbal root *dokeo* (to think, to suppose, to imagine). “According to the purpose which he set forth in Christ” [vs. 9]. *Eudokia* is used with the noun *thelema* or “will” (cf. vs. 1).

-Note the sequence of prepositions, free-standing and prefaced to word; they are intended to show the progression of this verse: *pro(orizo)->eis->dia->eis->kata* or before->into->through->into->according to.

Vs. 6: to* the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in* the Beloved.

-The preceding verse flows into vs. 6 with the ninth use of the preposition *eis* (into) signifying full presence or “being into” *epainos* which also can apply to any type of commendation. It occurs next in vs. 12: “and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.”

-“Glorious” is a noun, *doxa* (‘glory’) and found next in vs. 17: “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” In the verse at hand, *doxa* is used with another noun, *charis* or “grace” which also means favor and goodwill. *Charis* is found in the next verse and derives from the verb *charizomai* or “freely bestowed.” “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you” [4.32].

-*En* or here as “on” is the tenth use of this preposition with respect to the verb *agapao* (perfect passive participle and root for *agape*). Note that Christ is the recipient of the Father’s *charis* and thus becomes *agapao* which means *agape* is exchanged between them both.

Vs. 11: In* him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes* all things according to the counsel of his will,

-This verse begins with the eighteenth occurrence of the preposition *en* or “in” which is followed immediately by the preposition *kata* or “according to” governing the

noun *prothesis* (“purpose”). Literally it means that which is set (*tithemi*) before or forth (*pro-*). “This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus” [3.11]. This is the first of two instance where *kata* is used, one after another.

-*Energeo* is the verb for “accomplishes” and is prefaced with the preposition *en* (in), the nineteenth occurrence and means to work-in or a thorough bringing to effect. “The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” [2.2]. In the verse at hand, the object of such work-in is “all things” or *pas*.

-The second use of *kata* is with regard to “counsel” or *boule* which also implies a given plan. “And will disclose the purposes of the heart” [1Cor 4.5]. Thus *kata* is used with *prothesis* and *boule*, the latter working hand-in-hand with the divine “will” or *thelema* noted last in vs. 9.

Vs. 12: we* who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for* the praise of his glory.

-Vs. 12 begins with the preposition *eis* (into), the twentieth occurrence and here translates something like “for” and is used with *to einai*, “for to be.” The verb *kleroo* as “destined” fundamentally means to choose by lot (*kleros*) and appears in vs. 11 of the Greek text and is the only use in the NT.

Proorizo is the verb for “appointed” and noted last in vs. 5 as “destined.” As with *kleroo*, *proorizo* appears in vs. 11. *Proelpizo* is the verb for “hoped” and fundamentally means to hope (*elpizo*) beforehand (*pro-*). It is the only use of this verb in the NT.

-“To live for” is not in the Greek but reads “into the praise of his glory,” this being the twenty-first occurrence of the preposition *eis* (into). Both *epainos* and *doxa* are noted last in vs. 6.

13 December, Third Sunday of Advent

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4.4-7

Sometimes we forget about what Paul had suffered when he utters such words as these. Even more pressing are the memories of having persecuted Christians which never left his mind despite having been chosen to be numbered among the apostles.

Chairo is the verb for “rejoice” which Paul mentions twice. Note the parallel between *pantote* and *eggus*, “always and at hand.” The former pertains to the present and the

latter to the near future when Jesus Christ was expected to return fairly soon. Such is the basis for rejoicing which in actuality soon began to wear thin because Jesus' return was delayed and seemed further and further off. Paul seemed to grasp the fact that such a return wasn't at hand but reluctant to speak of it, at least for the moment. He sensed that both he and the early Christians had to grasp more fully the role of the Holy Spirit which had descended not long ago at Pentecost even though he wasn't present. In other words, there was a growing need to see how Jesus and this Spirit worked together.

In the meantime among the anxiety about whether Jesus would return soon or not, Paul bids the Philippians to manifest their “forbearance” to everyone, *epieikes*, which means reasonableness or suitableness. He uses this word deliberately in light of non-Christians who've heard about the supposed immanent arrival of Jesus as well as fellow believers. The Christians are to establish themselves in this *epieikes* while dealing with any taunts or intimidation that may come their way.

Paul goes on to speak about *proseuche* and *deesis*, “prayer and supplication.” The former is the general term and the latter being a petition as from one in need. Both are directed to making known (*gnorizo*: become acquainted, discover) to God or *pros* him, direction towards-which. That is to say, any requests are to be done in this immediate, direct fashion which *pros* intimates. In this way the “anxiety” (the verb *merimnao*) which must stem in part from the above mentioned concern about Jesus' delay in returning will be relieved.

All the above concern about Jesus and by implication the role of the Holy Spirit is on the level of thought not informed by faith. That's why Paul mentions God's peace will surpass any and all human “understanding” or *nous* (involves one's heart and soul), the verb being *hupererchomai* or to go over or beyond, *huper-*. Even though this passing over human understanding sounds scary, nevertheless it act as a guard (*phoureo*) not so much over *nous* but *kardia* and *noema*, “hearts and minds,” which may be taken as part of *nous* but the two being divinely informed put the restlessness of *nous* to rest.

In sum, this excerpt deals with human understanding, hearts and minds or *nous*, *kardia* and *noema* to which stands (over against them, if you will) prayer, supplication and God's peace or *proseuche*, *deesis* and *eirene*. The latter there will shepherd the former three into a confined area, namely, “in” Christ Jesus and will keep them there. In other words, once those who have been so corralled will discover what comes next which isn't in accord with their preconceived ideas.

20 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do your will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book." When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Lo, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
Hebrews 10.5-10

The following is taken from "Notations on Hebrews" posted on this homepage.

Vs. 5: Consequently, when Christ came into the world he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me;

-Consequently (*dio*): this word prepares a transition from the cyclic nature of Levitical sacrifices ("but," "for") to that of Jesus Christ which is presented in terms of Ps 40.6-8 (LXX).

-Come into (*eiserchomai*): with respect to Christ who is not mentioned in the Greek text. This verb which is prefaced by the preposition *eis* is used with the same preposition, "into the world." *Kosmos* pertains to an adornment as well as the sum total of everything, i.e., the universe. "From the foundation of the world" [4.3].

-The verses from Ps 40 quoted in vss. 5-7 are put into Christ's mouth to show his role of high priest discussed earlier in Hebrews.

-The object of sacrifices (*thusia*) and offerings (*prosphora*): the latter as in 10.18 ("Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin"). Also, Eph 5.2 which uses the same terms as in the verse under consideration: "...as Christ loved (*agapao*) us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Note the phrase here, *eis osmen euodias*, which literally reads, "into a smell of sweet fragrance" and fills out the meaning of vs. 5.

-God did not desire (*thelo*) he two gestures of Levitical liturgical rites: this verb basically means something a person wishes or intends and involves the correct application of free will. *Thelo* is the LXX for the Hebrew *chaphats* which connotes a sense of intense delight. "He (King Cyrus) is my shepherd and shall fulfill all my purpose" [Is 44.28].

-Prepared (*katartizo*): the object of which is *soma* or body as opposed to Levitical sacrifices; it indicates not only the sacrificial body to be offered (Christ's) but can infer his incarnation. *Kartartizo* more specifically means arranging something for a purpose, putting into proper condition, as well as restoring to order. "...equip you with everything good that you may do his will" [13.21]. The preposition *kata* (according to) suggests this order.

-Instead of the phrase “but a body you have prepared for me,” the Hebrew reads “ears you have dug for me,” *karah*, suggesting the digging of a well. With this association of a well and listening in mind, cf. Jn 4.14: “the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” *Karah* also means to buy, to make a feast: “So he prepared for them a great feast” [2 Kg 6.23].

Vs. 6: in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

The third citation from Ps 40 which adds to sacrifices and offerings those offerings which are burnt (*holokautoma*) and are related to sin (*hamartia*). The former suggests that which is offered in totality (*holos*, adjective); the latter is the common term for “sin” and is not specified by anything especially related to offering, most likely being joined with the former. The preposition *peri* (concerning) is used. The Hebrew terms are *holah* and *chata’ah*; the former derives from a verbal root meaning “to go up” (as smoke ascending) and the latter is the common word for “sin.”

Take pleasure (*eudokeo*): the verb which has as its object the two offerings, rather, what God does not delight in. The prefaced by *eu* (well) is added to the verb *dokeo* (to think, suppose), i.e., to be disposed favorably towards something. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” [Mk 1.11].

-The Hebrew has the verb *sha’al* which means to ask as well as to inquire, thus implying a request which respects the person making the offering. In the verse at hand, God does not make the *sha’al*, a more polite form of withholding.

Vs. 7: Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do your will, O God,’ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.”

-Then (*tote*): this word serves to counter the negative aspect of sacrifices of the previous two verses and shifts to a direct statement (by Christ) to God in the words of the psalmist.

-Lo (*idou*): an exclamation which here demonstrates Christ’s readiness and prefaces his willingness to effect God’s will. “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord’ [Lk 1.38]. The Hebrew has ‘*az* (then) for *idou* as in Gen 1.29: “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed.”

The Greek text reads, “I have come; in the roll of the book it is written of me to do your will, O God.” First is (Christ’s) coming, rather, having come which in itself signifies readiness for action. Such action demonstrates the importance of the roll (*kephalis*, of book or the Torah; only New Testament use), the diminutive form for “head.” The Hebrew for *kephalis* is *migilah*; from the verbal root *galal*, to roll (up, as a book).

-Book (*biblion*): in the sense of a scroll as in Rev 5.1: “And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” An example which pertains to the verse at hand is Mt 1.1: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Both a scroll and a book

are rolled up when not in use, i.e., they are relatively compact for storage and carried easily. The Hebrew for *biblion* is *sepher* which also pertains to the act of counting: “they were more than could be numbered” [Ps 40.5]. In this “roll of the book” the author of Hebrews finds words to put into Christ’s mouth, that is, of me (*peri emou*) in the sense of concerning.

-Will (*thelema*): “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” [Mt 7.21]. The Hebrew text has *ratson* an emotion which connotes delight in addition to an act of the will. Thus “doing” this “delight” conveys a richer meaning.

Verse eight restates the words of Ps 40 quoted in vs. 5 and adds (in parentheses, **RSV**), “these are offered according to the law.” It seems the author of Hebrews wishes to re-enforce the distinction between the Old Testament sacrifices and that of Jesus Christ.

Verse nine similarly restates the words of Ps 40 quoted in vs. 7. The second half of this verse contains the statement: “He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.” Here an order is posited : first (*proton*) and second (*deuteron*). Two references already discussed: “He (Melchizedek) is first, by translation of his name” [7.2]. “Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies” [9.3].

Proton and deuteron involve two verbs of opposite meaning: 1) abolish (*anaireo*) which can apply to execution as in Lk 23.32: “Two others also who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him.” This verb literally means “to take away” in the sense of up (*ana*). 2) establish (*histemi*): “But whoever is firmly established in his heart” [1 Cor 7.37].

Vs. 10: And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

-Another mention of will (*thelema*) which alludes to the Hebrew *ratson* and its association of delight. Note the passive mode of this sentence instead of something like “that will has sanctified us.” Perhaps the author wishes to emphasize the contrast he has been making throughout Hebrews with regard to the Old Testament sacrifices and that of Jesus Christ. The passive highlights “we” as the object of this sanctification (*hagiazō*, verb). 2.11 uses both the active and passive of the same verb: “For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin.”

In the verse at hand, sanctification occurs through (*dia*) the medium of Christ’s offering (*prospora*) which stands in contrast to that of vs. 5, borrowed from Ps 40: “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired.” *Prospora* has a specific object, the *soma* of Jesus Christ. “But he spoke of the temple of his body” [Jn 2.21]: here is a verse which parallels Christ’s own *soma* with the Jerusalem temple.

Once for all (*ephax*): that is, definitely as in 9.28: “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many.”

25 December, Nativity of the Lord

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs. For to what angel did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?" And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."
Hebrews 1.1-6

This excerpt is taken from the Day Mass with notes from “Notations on Hebrews” posted on this home page.

Vs. 1: In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.

-Two similar words prefaced by the adjective *polus*, much, many, which starts off Hebrews: they are the root adjectives *meros* and *tropos* which come from the nouns “part” and “way.” Implied are diverse manners as opposed to a fixed, almost exclusive form of divine revelation. Both are situated in the past, *palai* (of old). This past is specified as belonging to two groups, “fathers” and “prophets.” The latter is obvious reference to prophetic books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah; the former is more general in the sense of Dt 1.8: “A land which the Lord swore to your fathers.” Vs. one literally reads “to fathers in (*en*) the prophets” as if to say the general grouping of the former are situated in the particular “prophets” and maintain their paternity through them.

Vs. 2: but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

-A continuation of vs. 1; “but” is lacking in the Greek text. Note the preposition *epi* (upon) which also has the sense of “through” which follows from the earlier preposition *en*. It is as if to say this divine “inness” flows outward to the period of time the author has in mind. Such “inness” proper to the prophets may be said to be transferred to the “inness” of the Son, *en huio*, thereby coming to fulfillment. There is a definite connection between the Son and “last days” (*eschatos*), this adjective being closely associated with the immanent expectation of Jesus Christ. “He was destined before the foundation of the

world but as made manifest at the end of the times for your sake” [1 Pt 1.20]. It is interesting that in Hebrews the (plural) term “day” is used, i.e., a twenty-four hour period as opposed to a week, month or year which intimates that time is short and therefore can be measured in a more manageable framework. For another use of *eschatos*, cf. Acts 2.17 with regard to Pentecost, citing the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Note the use of *eschatos* here as pertaining to the Holy Spirit in distinction to the Son in Hebrews.

-Verse one has “God spoke” whereas vs. 2 has “he has spoken,” the latter use of *laleo* being more definitive or specific, that is, with regard to the Son. This speaking is done literally “to us” (dative case without preposition) “in the Son.” Such is the word order of this verse.

-*Kleronomos*: heir, which may be seen in light of “fathers” and “prophets,” the obvious successor and inheritor to these two groups. “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” [Rom 8.17]. The third noun has the preposition *sug/sun* (with) prefixed to it. In Hebrews the heir has “all things” which can include people as well as objects. The uniqueness of this divine heir is shown by the fact that through (*dia*) him God created the world or *aion* (plural). In distinction to *kosmos*, this term is related to ages or long yet limited stretches of time, so the Son-as-heir receives not just persons and object but successions of time or ages. For another use, cf. Rom 12.2: “Do not be conformed to this world.”

Vs. 3: He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

-This is obviously the same “he” as the Son and heir of the previous verse, so it is interesting to keep in mind these two characteristics transferred to the verse at hand. The verb “to reflect” is lacking in the Greek which has the present participle *hon*, (being); it is connected with the noun *apaugasma*, radiance, in the sense of a reflected brightness. This is the only New Testament use of the word and suggests Jn 12.45: “And he who sees me sees him who sent me.” Here John uses the verb *thereo* from which is derived the noun *theoria*. I.e., such *theoria* is a kind of participation in the nature of *apaugasma*. Connected with *apaugasma* is God’s glory or *doxa*, the Greek term for the Hebrew *kavod* as associated with Moses’ vision: “The glory of God settled on Mount Sinai” Ex 24.16]. *Kavod* derives from a verbal root meaning “to be heavy” and implies that the divine presence “dropped” from heaven to earth by reason of its weight.

-Very stamp or *charakter*: used with the verb *phero*, to bear, almost in the sense of transporting something. This noun refers to a mark or figure which either had been stamped or burned, that is, having become made permanent and visible to all. For a use in the LXX, cf. Lev 13.28: “For it is the scar of the burn.” *Charakter* is used in conjunction with *hupostasis* (nature), the substantial quality of a person. “Now faith is the assurance

of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” [Heb 11.1]. Thus *charakter* is a kind of deep impression of this divine nature which is borne (*phero*) or carried about from place to place, almost as though it had mobility.

-As noted, the verb *phero* is used with reference to a “static” divine nature. In the same sentence it applies to the universe (*ta panta*), literally “the all.” Here is a shift from imagery of brightness to that of speech which is less discernible in the sense of it being available for perception: *rhema* (word) and *dunamis* (power). The former means anything uttered by the living voice or a sound which has a definite meaning (also from the human voice). It differs from *lego* (from which comes *logos*) in the sense of being the subject of speech. Christ is presented as the *Logos* of God, not the *Rhema* of God. “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” [Rom 10.17]. In the verse at hand, *dunamis* naturally flows from *rhema* and supports “the all” which keeps in line with its Stoic application. “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” [1 Cor 4.20].

-The second sentence of 1.3 is a shift from the cosmic role of the Son/heir to the human sphere, more specifically, to that of purification or *katharismos*, as if the two principles of the first sentence (the visibility of “glory” and the sound of “word”) came to bear as one force upon the newly introduced subject of purification. “And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” [Lk 2.22]. *Katharismos* with respect to sins almost appears as secondary to the primary sitting down at God’s right hand or *en dexia*, “in the right hand.”

The phrase on high (*en hupselois*, plural) contains a second “in” as if to emphasize that Christ was thoroughly situated above the sphere of human activity despite having made purification. Most likely purification here pertains to his suffering and death. Cf. Ps 110.1 (of which Hebrews in many ways is a commentary): “The Lord said to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” The Greek text of the LXX has instead of the preposition *en*, *ek* (out, from), as if to show the derivative nature of this sitting. The Hebrew text has the preposition *l-* prefixed to “right hand,” showing direction-towards-which.

-Compare *megalosune* (majesty) with Heb 8.1: “We have such a high priest, one who is seated at (*en*) the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.”

Vs. 4: having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

-The conclusion of a sentence carried over from the previous verse which commenced with purification and which serves to introduce seven passages from the Old Testament, several of which (vss. 5-13) deal with angels.

-*Genomenos* (having become): directly related to the past accomplishment of

purification (*poiesamenos*, having made). The comparative “better” of *kratos* occurs thirteen times in Hebrews where divine power is stressed in various ways. In the verse at hand, superiority is with respect to angels.

-Vs. 4 begins with *tosoutos* (how much more) to emphasize the comparison or loftiness over angels; it joined with *hosos* (for emphasis, “how very”) to demonstrate the excellency of the divine name. The name is not mentioned here but applies to Christ, The Anointed One. Such a name is obtained (*keronomeo*), better, “inherited.” “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life” [Mk 10.17]?

-Christ’s name is more excellent (*diaphoroteron*) than that of the angels which in Greek pertains to someone who had been sent (on a mission, for example). This adjective is the comparative of *diaphoros*, different in the sense of surpassing as opposed to one used in making a simple distinction. “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” [Rom 12.6]. Note the preposition *dia* (through) joined with *phero*, to bear, to carry, the root of this adjective, which literally means “to carry in different ways.”

Vs. 5: For to what angel did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you?” Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?”

-Both Old Testament verses deal with sonship and paternity to distinguish this divine relationship between Father and Son from that of angels whose nature is to be sent or dispatched on a mission. The first quote is from Ps 2.7. Note the literal text: “I today have begotten you,” “today” being interposed between the person doing the begetting (God the Father) and the “you” or Jesus Christ, recipient of the begetting. *Semeron* (today) is inserted as opposed to “yesterday” or “tomorrow” in order to indicate an eternal reality transcending the limits of space and time.

-Ps 2.7 is used in Acts 13.33 in conjunction with a passage from Isaiah (55.3) as well as Ps 16.10 to bolster Paul’s argument in favor of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Note that the psalm verse is used in the broader context of “I will tell of the decree of the Lord,” this decree (*choq*) dealing with Christ’s begetting.

-The second verse is from 2 Sam 7.14 and is addressed by God to King David. In the previous verse God bids him to build a house for his name. The “I” speaking as pertaining to father/son alludes to future action as opposed to the present-ness of Ps 2.7, “today.”

Vs. 6: And again, when he brings the first-born into the world he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

-It may be helpful to read this verse in light of “he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” [vs. 3], that is, past action. Verse 6 is in the present tense referring to a time preceding this heavenly sitting. Note the two uses of the preposition *eis* (in), better “into,” signifying full presence: *eisago* (to bring) and “into the world.” The term for world

is *oikoumene*, more specifically the inhabited world as opposed to its physical constitution. “I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth” [Rev 3.12].

-First-born or *prototokos*: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation” [Col 1.15]. This term has its roots in the Passover: “At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon and all the first-born of the cattle” [Ex 12.29]. The Hebrew term *bakor* is interesting in that it intimates anything which is early or seasonable and thus pertains to the notion of time. Although Hebrews does not specify when the first-born does his “double *eis*,” most likely it occurs at night if we keep the Passover image in mind.

-The verse at hand has God exhorting the angels to worship (*proskuneo*) the first-born at his birth into the “inhabited” world. Note the preposition *pros* prefixed to the verb, signifying attention towards-which. Vs. 6 suggests the presence of heavenly beings at the physical birth of Jesus Christ: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying ‘Glory to God in the highest’” [Lk 2.13-4]. Here is a singular unidentified angel with a plurality of host (*stratia*), more specifically, a band of soldiers.

27 December, Holy Family

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.
Colossians 3.12-21

This excerpt begins with the image of clothing, as it were, the small word “then” or *oun* being a consequence of the “new nature” or *ton neon* of vs. 10, literally, that which is new. It is “being renewed” or *anakaioo* (the preposition *ana-* as upward, upon with regard to newness) literally *eis* or “into” “knowledge” (*epignosis*: knowledge upon or *epi-*) in accord with the “image” or *eikon* of its creator.

The clothing at hand consists of five pieces, “compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience:” *splagchna* (inward parts such as bowels which is modified by *oiktirmos* and suggestive of pity), *chrestotes* (often in deed), *tapeinophrosune* (humility first with respect to God), *prautes* (not unlike the word before it which spills over to patience with oneself and then to others) and *makrothumia* (literally long suffering, *thumos* or soul, spirit, life). All five work toward a spirit of forgiveness, *chrizomai* which intimates a gracious attitude which prepares oneself to deal with injustices. Also these five garments, as it were, can be summed up as characteristic of *agape*, a bond or *sundesmos* (*sun-* being a preposition meaning 'with') which is “perfect” or *teleiotes*, suggestive of maturity and working of the five pieces of clothing just spelled out. In sum, the often unsavory attitude we have towards the practice of virtue and our lack of it is made more attractive by this image of clothing, of putting on, which is the verb *enduo*, for everyone likes to put on clothes, especially of a finer quality as these five pieces.

Paul urges the “word” or *logos* of Christ dwell in his listeners, that is, what he has uttered. Interestingly, this *logos* doesn't consist of the scriptures which haven't been composed. In their place or more accurately before this, the *logos* of Christ was embedded in an oral tradition in the process of being handed down not just by Paul but other disciples. So this *logos* transmitted orally becomes something done ('in *logos* or deed'). This requires first a close listening followed by bring it over to action which in this excerpt pertains foremost to family relations.

All in all, the reliance upon *logos* to effect the five modes of behavior summed up in *agape* depends upon hearing which can't be sustained by oneself but through familial and broader social interaction. Over time...and it wasn't very long...this bond between the original speakers of Christ's *logos* (he as the *Logos* of the Father) needed to be set down in order to ensure the stability and furtherance of the fledgling Christian community. Once the Gospels had taken shape, it was easier to grasp what Paul was communicating not just here to the Colossians but in his other epistles.

1 January, Mother of God

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir. Galatians 4.4-7

Although this marks the beginning of a new calendar year (2016), it has no concern with the flow of readings when it comes to marking liturgical time, the two running together but in actuality not meeting. Also, they don't conflict with each other nor were meant to do so.

The adverb “fully” is a noun in the Greek text, *pleroma* or fulness, with respect to *chronos* or “time.” In a sense, the combination of these two words could be taken as equivalent to *kairos*, a special time or more an occasion that stands apart from our ordinary experience. Hence a *kairos* event is one which inserts itself into our memories and abides there. As for *chronos*, the passage of time in the ordinary sense (it includes space as well), there is no more need to focus primarily on it, not unlike the above remarks on the parallel running of familiar time with liturgical time. In other words, we're free from its restraints which is more significant than at first glance. John puts this as “And the Word (*Logos*) became flesh and dwelt among us” [Jn 1.14].

Closely connected with this *pleroma* of *chronos* is the verb *exapostello*, “sent forth” which connotes a dispatching by someone in authority. Paul is careful to insert the obvious, “born of a woman,” because the birth of Christ might be interpreted and was interpreted by some as a heavenly being who popped out of the clouds onto the earth. The same applies to his mention of being born in accord with the law or Torah, making Jesus' birth in accord with the Jewish tradition. The affiliation of Jesus with Torah suggests that it requires a certain *pleroma* just like *chronos*, not that it is defective. Note the verb *exagoreo* or “redeem” which translates more literally as to purchase from a market place which in this instance is the Torah. In other words, the Torah is a place from which Jews are bought, taken forth and inserted...literally...into “adoption” or *huiiothesia*, for this word means son-placing.

So once this purchase from the market place of the Torah, if you will, has occurred, the son-placing which now happens qualifies those so purchased as recipients of the “Spirit” or *Pneuma*, this *Pneuma* being associated with the Son or Jesus Christ. Thus the *Pneuma* which brings Jesus into our hearts enables us to cry out to the Father in familiar terms such as “Abba.”

This short excerpt concludes by saying that those formerly under the Torah had been slaves but are no longer so, that is, not just sons but heirs, and the freedom and spontaneity to cry out “Abba” is characteristic of this new way of life.

3 January, Epiphany of the Lord

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming

that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 3.2-6

The following is taken from “Notations on Ephesians” which is on this home page.

Vs. 2: assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,

Ei or “if” is in the Greek text for the English “assuming.”

Oikonomia is the noun for “stewardship” noted last in 1.10 and here refers to divine “grace” or *charis* (cf. 2.8). Such *charis* is bestowed upon Paul not for himself but “for you” or literally “into (*eis*) you.”

Vs. 3: how the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I have written briefly.

“Mystery” or *musterion* is noted last in vs. 1.9 concerning God’s will. Most likely Paul is referring to his experience on the road to Damascus in Acts Nine, the essence of which is Christ’s identity with his followers (“Why do you persecute me?”, vs. 4).

Gnorizo is the verb for “was made known” and was noted last in 1.9. It suggests discovery compared with the more familiar *ginosko* (to know, cf. 1.9).

Apokalupsis is “revelation” noted last in 1.17 and essentially mean an uncovering of that which is already present. The preposition *kata* (according to) is used with it, literally as “according to revelation.”

Prographo is the verb for “have written” with the root *grapho* (to write) prefaced with the preposition *pro* (before), to write-before. “Who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” [Gal 3.1]?

In oligo is “briefly” and means literally “in a little.”

Vs. 4: When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

Anaginosko is the verb for “read” and means to distinguish between, to recognize. The verbal root *ginosko* (to know) is prefaced with the preposition *ana* (upon, up to). “And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans” [Col 4.16].

“This” is given as *pros ho* or “toward it.”

Noeo is the verb for “perceive” which means come to the knowledge of and thus intimates an ongoing process of acquiring knowledge. “Now to him who by the power at

work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” [vs. 20].

Sunesis is the noun for “insight” and means literally a running together, a flowing together (*hiemi*, to put in motion) prefaced with the preposition *sun* or with. “That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” [Col 1.9]. *Sunesis* is personal (‘my’) and again intimates the road to Damascus encounter with Jesus Christ presented here as a *musterion* or “mystery” noted last in the previous verse. It is prefaced with the preposition *en* (in).

Vs. 5: which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Both the insight and mystery of the previous verse are related to the verb *gnorizo* (‘made known’) which is noted last in vs. 3. Here *gnorizo* in the sense of making a discovery is by the “sons of men.” These people are an example much as those listed in Hebrews Eleven or in other “generations,” *genea*. “The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints” [Col 1.26].

While the verb *gnorizo* applies to earlier generations, “now” (*nun*) it is a question of revelation, the verb being *apokalupto*, the now *apokalupsis* (implies an uncovering of that which is already present) noted in vs. 3. “If in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you” [Phil 3.15]. Such revelation applies to both “apostles” and “prophets” (*apostolos* and *prophetes*: cf. 2.20). Note that the adjective *hagios* (cf. 2.21) modifies both categories of people.

Pneuma or (Holy) “Spirit” (cf. 2.18) is the Third Person of the Trinity) responsible for *apokalupto* or for uncovering to the apostles and prophets.

Vs. 6: that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Involved in this verse are Paul’s insight gained on the Damascus road regarding the mystery of Christ (cf. vs. 4), the other generations, apostles and prophets of vs. 5. All work together for the benefit of the “Gentiles” (*ethnos*, cf. vs. 1) not opposed to the Jews but in addition to them or with a full revelation of the divine plan.

The Gentiles have three privileges, all of which are prefaced with the preposition *sug* or *sum* (with): 1) *Sugkleronomos* or “fellow heirs,” a noun consisting of the verbal root *kleronomeo* which, in turn, consists of *kleros* (lot, portion) and *nomos* (cf. 2.15). “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him” [Rom 8.17]. 2) *Sussomos* or “members of the same body,” a noun with the root *soma* (body, cf. 1.23); i.e., “with the body.” It is the only use of the term in the NT. 3) *Summetochos* or “partakers,” a noun with the verbal root *metecho*. Literally it reads to have with, the preposition *meta* being similar to *sum*. The former also means after, in the midst of, next which differs it from the latter. The only other NT reference is 5.7: “Therefore do not associate with them.”

Although “promise” or *epaggelia* (cf. 2.12) is associated directly with *summetochos*, it can be assumed as being associated with *sugkleronomos* and *sussomos* as well, that is, the three “*sum* words.”

The last time the inverse order of “Christ Jesus” is found is in 3.1 with the three nouns with *sum* reside, in him. The manner by which a person gets “in” Christ Jesus is through (*dia*) the “gospel” or *euaggelion* noted last 1.13.

10 January, Baptism of the Lord

And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Acts 10.34-38

Words similar to the opening of this excerpt, “Peter opened his mouth,” are found elsewhere throughout both the Old and New Testaments which indicate a difference between the person speaking and the Lord is communicating through him. It's deliberately made so as not to cause confusion. The phrase is not unlike “Thus says the Lord” but in this instance there's no distinction between the Lord and his utterances. A fraction of a second...a nanosecond...exists between Peter opening his mouth and what comes forth. In that ever so brief span of time his listeners are fully attentive, having suspended all other concerns. It can't last for long, but instances like these don't take the passage of time into consideration. The quality of attentiveness counts, not its duration, which later spills over into the collective memory of those present; that, in turn, can be reflected upon with pretty much the same intensity as the first experience. Everyone present knew this instinctively which is a source of joy for everyone. They could transfer the words from Peter into a collective memory after which it'd take on a life of its own.

The occasion at hand is Peter was at Joppa, Cornelius having asked him to come there. Once those at his house had been assembled, Peter stood ready to open his mouth but only after a quick, all-embracing glance of those present. Before this assembly had convened Peter pretty much confined himself to mission work among the Jews which was only natural. Now as he gazes upon the faces of this mixed assembly he realizes that God “shows no partiality” or lacks *prosopolemptes* which means literally, acceptor of faces or persons. Peter uses the word *katalambano* for “I perceive” meaning literally to seize or lay hold of and connotes a certain suddenness that took him by surprise. In place of this—

and it must have been a bit disconcerting for Peter—the chief criterion is put in terms of fearing the Lord as well as doing that which is right and acceptable. In other words, there's a much looser definition to becoming a Christian than it is for becoming a Jew. Peter also must have been conscious of having betrayed Jesus and shared this with the people at hand though it isn't recorded.

Peter gives a very quick summary of Jesus Christ in terms of the “word” or *rhema* preached from his baptism. Note he uses *rhema*, not *logos*, that which is said or spoken, compared with the latter as expression. However, in actuality Peter is inferring that the divine *Logos* is speaking *rhema*. Peter inserts within his address “he is Lord of all” quickly to show that Jesus is divine, something he and others were still grappling with. Compare these words with those at the end of this excerpt, “for God was with him.” This can be taken as Jesus being inspired or some loose association between Jesus and God which hasn't been worked out yet. It would take some time to reconcile this human being as God incarnate via-a-vis Jewish tradition of a wholly transcendent God. All in all, Peter was off to a pretty good start.

17 January, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. First Corinthians 12.4-11

The readings for the next several Sundays focus upon the notion of unity and distinction with the human body being the analogy.

The opening verse of this excerpt has three occurrences of “varieties” or *diairesis* which connotes a distribution: “gifts, service and working” or *charisma*, *diakonia* and *energema*. The first also means a gift, the second pertains to ministry and the third as performance or the energy put into something. Because all three are of the same Spirit or more exactly, are spiritual (*pneumatikos*), God isn't divided in them as three parts but is the “same” (*autos*). Also he “inspires” them all, *energeo* or is effective in them, this verb being the root of *energema*. Since the Spirit or *Pneuma* essentially is breath and cannot be seen but

felt, the three varieties serve to manifest him, the noun *phanerosis* being used which connotes a bringing to light. Such *phanerosis* is therefore secondary to the *Pneuma* though very close to this Second Person of the Trinity.

Paul refers to this divine gift-giving briefly in Rm 12.6: “Having gifts (*charisma*) that differ according to the grace (*charis*) given to us, let us use them.” The preposition *kata* or “according to” can be overlooked but is important insofar as it suggests a certain order established by God and manifested through the Spirit. *Kata* is found in the excerpt at hand as “by the same Spirit” which is preceded by use of the preposition *dia* or “through the Spirit.”

The *Pneuma*, despite its simplicity and closeness to the notion of breathing, promotes and sustains a lengthy list of spiritual gifts, nine in all: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

The gifts All in this passage mirrors the descent of the *Pneuma* at Pentecost: “And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” [Acts 2.3]. Note the sequence: *horao* (to see, look), *diamerizomai* (the preposition *dia* or through suggestive of thoroughness) and *kathizo* (to make to sit down). In other words, the Holy Spirit (i.e., breath) become visible, is divided-through and then sits down upon each in the upper room. At that point the *Pneuma* becomes invisible again, if you will, but present in a fashion that hasn't been made known before.

24 January, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so

composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. First Corinthians 12.12-30

The opening word “just as” or *kathaper* has as its twin, if you will, *houtos* or “so.” The two are dependent upon each other, setting up both a contrast and similarity between the members of the human body and Jesus Christ. If you understand the unity of the first (i.e., the body), automatically you understand the unity of the second (i.e., Jesus Christ). In other words, it's a one-to-one correspondence based upon human anatomy or our bodies which form our identity. Almost immediately after mentioning Christ, Paul switches to the “Spirit” or *Pneuma* (fundamentally as breath or wind) who is responsible for each person being baptized into one “body” or *soma*, that body being Jesus. And so the *Pneuma* is responsible for keeping each individual member of the body functioning as one unit and does so through the imagery of drinking.

Paul spells this out by a kind of raucous dialogue each member of the human body is having with the others. The essence is that each member cannot say it is more vital than the others. If they adhered to this mistaken view they would miss the fact that God had “arranged” them accordingly, *sunkerannumi*, this verb meaning to mix together (*sug-* as with). The English might give the impression that each member is mixed up with the other thereby forming something amorphous which isn't true. Instead, the mixing is more than that, including a blending.

The imagined dialogue between corporeal members continues, this time with attention upon “need” or *chreia* which also means use or advantage. That is, each member is trying to say it has an advantage over the others and thus is superior. Paul stops this rivalry short in its tracks by focusing upon so-called “weaker and unpresentable” limbs, *asthenes* and *atimos*, the latter intimating organs related to sexual functions. By giving greater “honor” (*time*, the noun and counter-word to *atimos*) to limbs which are considered inferior, God precludes “discord” or *schisma* in the entire body which more properly means a cleft being inserted with violence as with a meat cleaver. The opposite to *schisma* is *merimnao*, a verb meaning having the same care or more fundamentally, anxiety, but one characterized by solicitude.

With these two sets of rhetorical questions being asked among members of the human body

out of the way, Paul builds upon this theme by asking a series of questions relative to persons belonging to the *soma* of Jesus Christ. Despite their variety, he exhorts his listeners to “desire the higher gifts.” So despite the importance of interconnection between each bodily member, there exists something “higher,” *meizona* meaning that which is better...a unity transcending the way these members interact. The object this adjective modifies is *charisma* or “gifts” which forms a lead into the next chapter where Paul speaks eloquently of love vis-a-vis various abilities to act spiritually. Such is the “more excellent way” or *hyperbole*, a noun with the preposition *kata* or in accord with which means literally according to a casting beyond or over. And this casting-beyond is equivalent to the “higher gifts” laying above but not over and against the analogy of bodily unity Paul had just laid out.

31 January, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. First Corinthians 12.31-13.13

This excerpt consists of Chapter Thirteen in its entirety and brings to conclusion the unity of the physical body as mirroring the members of the one body, Jesus Christ, which had formed the them of the past several Sundays.

This excerpt may be divided into four sections, if you will. First, St. Paul offers four pairs of contrasts which are all relative to “love” or *agape* and outlined briefly as follows:

- #1 1) human and angelic tongues
- 2) prophetic powers, understanding of mysteries, knowledge and faith
- 3) faith

4) give away all possessions, including one's body

Despite the high value of each of the four, they fade in comparison with *agape*, difficult if not impossible to translate and equivalent to the Hebrew *chesed*. Wisely Paul earlier has spoken of the relationship of each member of the church in terms of bodily members working together for the good of the whole, especially his emphasis on so-called “inferior parts” noted in last Sunday's excerpt. This concrete example of one's own body makes it easier for his listeners to grasp the nature of *agape* instead of wearying himself in attempts to define it. Surely those Jews among the congregation will see the connection between it and *chesed*, making the transition easier to understand. If the non-Jews still had problems comprehending the nature of *agape*, these Jews could now flesh out for them what Paul is getting at. So despite the importance and value of all four pairs, they are insignificant when it comes to *agape*.

Paul next moves to three pairs of *agape* as how the body of the church functions, again keeping in mind his example of bodily members which constitute a whole. If any were lacking, even just one corporeal member, that person would be ill and require a physician:

- #2
- 1) patient and kind
 - 2) not arrogant or rude
 - 3) doesn't insist on its own way
 - 4) not irritable or resentful
 - 5) doesn't rejoice at wrong

From here Paul moves on to speak directly of *agape* as follows:

- #3
- 1) patient and kind
 - 2) not jealous or boastful
 - 3) doesn't insist on its own way
 - 4) not irritable or resentful
 - 5) doesn't rejoice at wrong but in the right
 - 6) bears, believes, hopes and endures in all things

Finally Paul says that *agape* never “ends” or *pipto*, more fundamentally as to fall. I.e., *agape* never falls down. Compared to *agape* the following will cease:

- #4
- 1) prophecy and tongues
 - 2) knowledge and prophecy (the latter, a second time)
 - 3) imperfect fades when the perfect comes
 - 4) put away childish things (Paul giving himself as an example)

Paul concludes his eloquent words about *agape* in light of the human-to-spiritual body in terms of the present or “now” using the example of a “mirror” or *esoptron* made from polished metal. Despite the quality of such a mirror, never does it reflect an image as with modern mirrors. Thus the image always has a certain tinge of yellow or the like dimmed somewhat by either sunlight or candle light. With this in mind, the just mentioned prophecy, tongues, knowledge and the imperfect in their incomplete state makes more sense. They can't be reflected perfectly. Despite their value, all may be said to be a form of looking (*blepo*) with regard to the mirror at hand, that is, all do it “dimly” or *en ainigmati*, literally “in a riddle” or indistinct image. Paul compares this to an indeterminate future he designates as “then” or *tote* when we will see “face to face” or *prosopon pros prosopon*, the preposition here intimating direction towards-which. That is to say, seeing with regard to *tote* will still be incomplete but an incompleteness of a different order than the current one where spiritual gifts, despite fading away, are nevertheless important.

Paul compares “now” or *nuni* with “then” or *tote* which he puts in terms of knowing. To the former belongs *gignosko*, the common verb. To the latter belongs *epigignosko*, literally, a knowing-upon or *epi* prefaced to the verb. This knowing-upon will turn around, if you will, and reflect back insofar as making a person to be “fully understood” or *epigignosko*. Putting this literally, the knowing-upon will come from Jesus Christ and flood the entire body and its members with this *epi*-ness, his divinity. And so in the last verse of the excerpt Paul mentions faith hope and *agape*, the greatest being *agape*.

7 February, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. First Corinthians 15.1-11

This is the last Sunday in Ordinary Time with Ash Wednesday coming up in a few days, quite early this time around. We won't be visiting these Sundays in Ordinary Time until 5 June, the Tenth Sunday, although 16 May is Monday of the Seventh Sunday, the day immediately following Pentecost Sunday.

This excerpt begins with Paul reminding his Corinthian listeners, *gnorizo* being the verb which means more a bringing to attention with regard to the truth of Christ's resurrection which some had denied. Such *gnorizo* is contingent upon being saved under the condition that they “hold it fast,” *katecho* a kind of holding down of belief in this truth. *Katecho* goes along with standing in the same faith, *histemi*. Thus Paul begins with a message of stability without which the Corinthians would believe “in vain,” *me eike*, or without cause or to no purpose.

Paul next moves to situate himself as a receiver of this faith in Jesus' resurrection, having in mind Is 53.8-9: “By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” Note the two verbs of the excerpt relative to this so-called Suffering Servant quote, *paradidomai* and *paralambano* or “delivered and received.” Both have the preposition *para* as prefaces which means beside or in the company of and are indicative of Paul being passive or better, receptive to what the apostles had taught about Jesus.

And so Paul gives what has become a familiar outline of Jesus' role, careful to situate him in the context of the Hebrew scriptures, namely Ps 16.10: “For you did not give me up to Sheol or let your godly one see the Pit.” Obviously the apostles were very familiar with their scriptural heritage; the same applies to Paul, being the most highly educated of the group even though he was not of the original band. Despite this, Paul plays his role of apostle down, calling himself as “untimely” born or *ektroma*. Nevertheless, Paul was born, if you will, referring to that by Christ's appearance to him, the famous road to Damascus incident. He didn't see Jesus but heard his voice. As for seeing, his account puts Jesus as being identified fully with his church, “Why do you persecute me” [Acts 9.4]? And so for Paul this seeing of Jesus is effected only through dealing with the visible member of his various congregations. Although Paul doesn't come right out and say it, he's trying to push along the Corinthians as being more aware that they constitute Christ's body animated by the Holy Spirit.

Paul continues to say in a straightforward manner that he “worked” harder than the other apostles, *kopiaio* implying laboring to the point of exhaustion, a fact documented by all his epistles. Although this may sound convincing to many, what gets attention is Paul's

relative indifference to his status or fate, the most important thing being that “we preach” with the desired result of the listeners believing. The verb here is the common one *pisteuo* but with the preposition *epi* prefaced to it which reads literally “believe upon” making it all the more more forceful.

10 February, Ash Wednesday

So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At the acceptable time I have listened to you and helped you on the day of salvation." Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Second Corinthians 5.20-6.2

Paul speaks in the first person plural or “we” which most likely refers to the apostles, most if not all of whom were still functioning in various places with the same mission. Thus Paul and they are “ambassadors” for Christ, *presbeuo* being a verb more specifically referring to the role of an elder. To be an elder means holding a position of responsibility, the most important being a teacher which is what Paul is doing at the moment. So here he is, out in the field as an elder, with God appealing through him or better, as the first person plural “we.” The verb is *parakaleo* meaning to urge or entreat; the root *kaleo* means to call or summon with *para-* prefaced to it...a kind of calling to be beside or near (Jesus Christ).

Paul gets right to the point, about being “reconciled” to God, *katallasso* implying the going from enmity to friendship which mirrors his own personal experience, more so than the original apostles since he had been an outright persecutor of the early church. He puts the person of Jesus Christ in strong terms, as having become sin even though he was ignorant of it thus referring indirectly to the suffering servant of Isaiah noted in the last entry. Such a radical transformation from ignorance of sin to actually being sin is stated this way in order to make people not just the “righteousness” (*dikaioisune*) of God but this situated “in him.” And so these words are quite dramatic and for Paul's listeners...anyone, if fact...difficult to grasp, for sin and righteousness are diametrically opposed. One wonders if the apostles preaching concurrently with Paul used these words. Perhaps, for they weren't as articulate. Surely there was some back-and-forth going on between all who listened to the apostles, comparing notes, if you will.

Paul continues to say that he and everyone else are “working together” with Christ,

sunergeo. In a real sense this is hard work (*ergon*), for it means attempting to hold together the just mentioned two radically opposed ideas of sin and righteousness. So to work with (*sun-*) Christ means to hold them in balance, the failure of which results in the acceptance of grace “in vain” or *eis kenon* which reads literally and forcefully as “into emptiness.”

Paul concludes with reference to Is 49.8 which reads in full from the Hebrew text: “In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages.” Note the two references to time, *kairos* as special event or occasion and *hemera* or “day” which, of course, has a broader context than commonly understood. To the first belongs a listening or *epikouo*, literally as listening-upon or *epi* which is a more intense form of paying attention. To the second belongs helping or *boetheo*, to come to one's aid. Finally, Paul united both *kairos* and *hemera* as being present now, neither in the past nor in the future. The former is “acceptable” or *euprosdektos* and the latter is one of salvation. The former is an adjective meaning that which is pleasant and welcoming. It is prefaced by *eu-* or the adverbial form of “well” along with the preposition *pros*, direction towards-which and therefore conveys a sense of both immediate presence and of moving constantly.

14 February, First Sunday of Lent

But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10.8-13

This excerpt begins immediately with a rhetorical question many of Paul's listeners knew, that is, in reference to Deuteronomy (30.14). It reads in full from the Hebrew: “But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.” *Rhema* is used instead of the more familiar *logos*, that is, something said or spoken compared with word as expression. It's a translation of the Hebrew *davar*, pretty much like *logos*, and is suggestive of discourse or the entire mass, if you will, of what's being expressed. Instead of being in heaven or beyond the sea as stated in vs. 11-3, the *davar* is “near” you. It's applicable to what is interior, not so much as proximity as is the case with

the Greek *eggus* and hence doesn't require movement by reason of its abiding presence. Paul spells out this *qerev* further by saying it's located “in” one's lips and “heart” (*kardia*) or the means by which an utterance...*davar*...is conceived and then uttered.

Now Paul moves quickly to trace out the path of this *rhema* or *davar*. First it depends on transiting, if you will, to confessing or *homologeō* (connotes admitting as well as promising) Jesus as Lord and believing that he has been raised from the dead. More to this is involved, of course, doing so in one's heart or *kardia* as noted just above and connected with one's lips. Such *homologeō* is at once easy and difficult to do. However, once done—once the *rhema* or *davar* has exited your lips and heart (actually the heart comes first followed by the lips)--you are saved. Paul doesn't spell out this result, as it were, but simply proposes realization of the divine *rhema/davar* already within oneself (i.e., *qerev* oneself) which effects this. So despite the familiar expression of being saved and the like, the text at hand spells it out more clearly within a larger context.

Following this being saved is being justified which reads literally “believes in his heart (*kardia*) into righteousness (*dikaioσune*).” Note the two prepositions, “in and into” or *en* and *eis*, the latter more suggestive of entering as well as being there, that is, coming into-ness with in-ness (that is, *en*). *Eis* is also used with “salvation” or *soteria*, “into salvation” or a constant moving into and within it. Paul backs this remarkable movement up with a quote from two sources, Is 28.16 and J1 2.32 (in full from the Hebrew): “Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'He who believes will not be in haste.'” And “It shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.” In sum, the theme of the first is building—active building by the Lord—and that of the second is once this building is complete, those who go to Jerusalem will call on the Lord's name resulting in their salvation. That is to say, this salvation (the verb is used, *sozo*) belongs to persons without “distinction” or *diastole*, a drawing asunder or dilation.

21 February, Second Sunday of Lent

Brethren, join in imitating me and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power which enables him even to subject all

things to himself. Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. Philippians 3.17-4.1

Paul issues an invitation to his listeners to imitate him, that is, to “join in” doing so, the noun being *summimetes*, the preposition *sum-* or “with” being used as a preface. He's implying that for some time (at least since his conversion on the Damascus road) he had been doing this, referring back to vs. 12-16. There Paul speaks in terms of pressing on and forgetting the past, still a painful thing to do given the near impossibility to shake memories of his persecution of the budding Christian community. In this regard one wonders if Paul ever had contacted those whom he had persecuted, especially family members of those he had sentenced to death. We have no such record but can speculate that it was likely. As for the invitation to imitate Paul, some may have balked at the idea even though he was sincere and now an established representative of the newly emerging religion.

Wisely Paul adds right after his invitation to “mark” those who are giving an “example,” the verb being *skopeo* (to look at in the sense of to consider) and the noun being *tupos* (pattern, type). Such persons are neighbors, people known by the local community, and can give personal testimony that by trying out this imitating-with or *summimetes*, necessarily they don't have to be like Paul. Instead, their focus is centered upon Jesus Christ. The verb *peripateo* translates as “live” and has the more intimate sense of walking around or among (*peri-*) one's fellows or neighbors.

Such persons who walk around and within the local community serve to offset persons who are enemies of Christ's cross which by this early stage has become firmly planted as the way to achieve salvation. It will remain such, obviously, from this time forward. The verb used for such dissenters is also *peripateo*. They will walk around or *peri-* with regard to a doctrine other than the cross or will attempt to alter its meaning to suit their own *pateo*, the verbal root meaning to walk.

So where does the proper Christian *peripateo* lead? It doesn't stand still, of course, but is in constant motion. Paul now draws upon the image of a “commonwealth” or *politeuma* which involves citizenship with voting rights. There comes to mind the idea of a Greek *polis* or city which in the new Christian world view doesn't belong on earth, for that's where the *peripateo*...the walking-around...of people who are enemies of Christ's cross. The *politeuma* Paul has in mind is in heaven from which Jesus as a savior will come. *Huparcho* is the verb for the simple English “is” and means literally to begin under or to have an *arche* or first principle which is *hupo-* or underneath, from under. In other words, this *politeuma*, not visible to all, has its beginning or *arche* seminally present or supportive of (i.e., *hupo-*) those persons existing in the present. It forms an expectation or

referring to the verb, an *apekdechomai* or intense expectation or anticipation to receive Jesus as savior.

Since Jesus is present in heaven where the *politeuma* exists (again, *huparcho*) in its fulness, he will bring down this new commonwealth a change to our corporeal nature to resemble his glorious one, *metaschematizo* being the verb. It consists of the root *schema* (form, shape, figure) prefaced with the preposition *meta-* or after...to put the existing form after what it currently is. In other words, a transformation that can't be realized by any efforts symbolized by the second use of *peripateo* because it comes from above. This putting-after-the-form is a “power” or *energia* (a working, being effective) belonging to Jesus with the unique capacity to bring into subjection everything to himself. *Hupotasso* is the verb meaning to place under or *hupo-* not entirely unlike *huparcho* mentioned above.

Such is the imitation or *summimetes* to which Paul invites his listeners and as already present among some of them which makes the imitation easier to adopt. The imitation process may be outlined with the key words used thus far as as moving from the divine *politeuma* (which is *huparcho*, of course) to our corporeal bodies on earth: await (*apekdeiknumi*), change (*metaschematizo*), power (*energeia*) and subject (*hupotasso*).

28 February, Third Sunday of Lent

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. First Corinthians 10.1-6 & 10-12

NB: The excerpt at hand doesn't include vss. 7 through 9 but are inserted here in red script.

When Paul ask his listeners to know, he presumed everyone was acquainted with the story

of the Exodus and subsequent years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness. Into this mix Paul inserts the idea of being baptized by Moses, a concept associated with the New Testament. He has in mind that the Corinthians consider this key event in Israel's history as a type...a foreshadowing...of what Jesus had brought to perfection. All this was still very new, of course, for Paul was living while Jesus' disciples were out and about teaching.

Among the several elements to which Paul alludes is the “supernatural Rock” or the rock which is *pneumatikos* or more accurately, spiritual. This brings to mind the incident at Horeb when the people were complaining about a lack of water, right after a similar incident at Marah (bitter water made potable) and the providing of manna and quails shortly afterward. So why this focus upon Horeb? It's an embarrassing incident for Israel, to be sure. The Lord had brought down a series of plagues upon the Egyptians, led them through the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptian army. Despite these incredible events and sure signs of divine favor, the people murmured almost immediately after they had occurred. So while the Lord continued to guide Israel, albeit with correction, more such incidents happened before they entered the promised land of Canaan.

At Horeb the Lord did respond to the people murmuring for lack of water. Paul takes up this theme of giving water in the desert by saying that not only did Israel move on but the water from the rock at Horeb followed them. Note that he doesn't bring up the pillars of fire and cloud. This rock was none other than Jesus Christ whose life mirrored that of the completely transcendent Lord who had been intervening on Israel's behalf. And so for Paul, the Horeb incident, along with others, are “warnings” or *tupos* which fundamentally means a type or example. Not just that, the *tupoi* are more specific, not to “desire” evil, *epithumeo*, a verb whose root *thumos* has a wide variety of meanings such spirit as principle of life, heart and desire. All this is intensified by addition of the preposition *epi-* to the verb meaning literally to desire-upon, here with respect not so much to evil but evil “as they did.” As noted earlier, this refers to Israel's murmuring which seems to be what Paul is getting at here...not directly but by bringing up a familiar incident in Israel's history and applying it to his listeners in order that they avoid the same mistakes.

Later in vs. 11 Paul speaks again of a “warning,” this time the word being an adjective (*tupikos*) which are recorded...written down...meaning that they are inscribed in the Torah. Hence this incident of Horeb which represents an undesirable response possible to divine favor (murmuring or the vivid *gogguzo*) is for our “instruction.” *Nouthesia* is the noun or a warning, literally as a placing in the mind or *nous*. Compared with the historical incidents in Exodus, Paul says that the ones under consideration are first this *nouthesia*...a placing-in-the-mind...conjoined with “instruction” which isn't in the text but pertains directly to the “end” of the ages, *tele* also meaning completion. *Aion* as “ages” suggests a period of existence or generation. The completion at hand is Paul's description

of Jesus Christ as that Rock which is *pneumatikos* finally catching up with the Israelites, if you will. The verb which describes this catching up is *katantao*, to come down (*kata-*) to a meeting or arrive at a goal. And so the generations from Israel as newly released from Egypt's bondage yet still prone to *gogguzo* or murmuring all the way up to those of Paul's time are involved, Paul more or less contemporary with Jesus Christ though he was his chief persecutor.

6 March, Fourth Sunday of Lent

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Second Corinthians 5.17-21

Hoste or “therefore” begins this excerpt which intimates holding in mind right now something important which Paul brought up in the previous verse. That is to say, a new way of conceiving what it means to be a Christian which he couches in terms of “from now on” or *apo tou nun*. Most likely the bulk of listeners couldn't grasp all the implications of Paul's discourse at the moment; it would take them some time to sort out what he was saying. Because of the newness of his message Paul starts off by saying that a person “in (*en*) Christ” is a creation which is new, that is, compared with what went beforehand. That beforehand is the individual person's life which continues in the old creation, if you will, while standing out by reason of his newness, the means by which contact with others like him is made until the old is subsumed by the new. As for “old,” the adjective is *archaios* which more properly refers to an earlier time, not necessarily old in the conventional way.

Paul uses the expression *idou* or “behold” in order to introduce the “new” (*kainos* suggests freshness) creation in the person of Jesus Christ. It comes from God who “reconciled” us to him through Christ, *katallasso* being the verb which means a change from enmity to friendship, hence its close association with “reconciliation” or *katallage* which derives from *katallasso*. While this is clearer to the Corinthians, still like most Christians they were struggling with Paul's attempt to associate a human being...Jesus Christ...who recently had been put to death unjustly and rose shortly thereafter with a broader, even cosmic perception of him. Putting two and two together wasn't easy for the Corinthians just as it remains nowadays. And so Jesus is viewed as not only sent by God

but perhaps on the same footing as God, a completely ridiculous proposition. Apparently Paul holds this but doesn't quite come out to say it though certainly he laid the groundwork for such reflection.

Throughout the process of *katallasso* or reconciling, Jesus refrains from *logizomai*, not “counting” human trespasses. This has important practical ramifications because *logizomai* represents our way of constantly entertaining thoughts or better, allowing ourselves to be entertained by them. Christ has none of that. So to participate in *katallasso* as closely as possible, it's a question of realizing this incessant *logizomai* and not subscribing to it even it's impossible to escape *logizomai* fully or permanently. Instead of this being a weight around one's neck, it can be put at the service of *katallasso* or reconciliation. It means realizing how *logizomai* burdens each person, makes him a slave, and offers freedom from this constant obsession.

Katallage is a “message” or *logos*, a word; not just any word but one of expression and reflection of Jesus Christ as *Logos* or the Word. Now this venture undertaken by a person “in Christ” makes him an ambassador, *presbeuo* being a verb which literally means to be the eldest, hence a presbyter. The task of such an elder, if you will, is to urge *katallage* or reconciliation with to God. If that seems impossible, Paul offers the example of Christ, not knowing sin, to be sin. Although he doesn't delve into this directly, inferred is the passion and death of Jesus which makes those already in him (i.e., 'in Christ') divine “righteousness” or *dikaiousune*. *Dikaiousune* is impersonal, that is, it is the end result of being “in Christ” and going beyond this which is the fulness of the reconciliation spoke of throughout this excerpt.

On a concluding note, pay attention to the prepositions with regard to Christ because they situate us with respect to him: “in (*en*) Christ,” “through (*dia*) Christ,” “in (*en*) Christ,” “for (*huper*) Christ,” “for (*huper*) Christ.”

13 March, Fifth Sunday of Lent

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies

behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:8-14

An understanding of this excerpt rests upon the intricate ways Greek prepositions are used, so dealing with them requires some patience. If space and time were allowed, considerably more could be said about their use in these verses either free standing or prefaced to verbs and nouns.

This passage begins with “indeed” rendered as *alla menounge*, the latter consisting of three particles where Paul emphasizes the radical nature of his conversion: *men* (on the one hand), *oun* (therefore) and *ge* (at any rate). *Alla* means “but.” *Zemia* and *zemioo* or “loss and “suffered the loss” are related which to him are *skubalon*, “refuse” meaning either human excrement or food discarded from a meal. Paul then continues with words colored by a certain urgency and strain that may be difficult for his listeners to get a handle on as applied to their own lives. However, they must be understood in the context of Paul's conversion on Damascus road; other than that, most people would find them difficult to identify with. What struck them, though, was that Paul was haunted by the experience, not being able to shake it off fully. Everyone knew that he had persecuted the church before a radical change of life, so nothing new there.

The next phase of this excerpt, if you will, can be summed up by Paul knowing Jesus, sharing his suffering, and becoming like him in his death: *gignosko*, *koinonia* and *summorphizo*. The first is the common verb relative to knowledge; the second refers to a fellowship generally associated with Christians; the third is the verbal root for *morphe* or form also as shape and implying comeliness. The verbal root consists of the preposition *sum* or “with” as preface...to be-with this comeliness proper to the death of Jesus Christ, if we may put it like this. So Paul focuses upon the undesirable nature of Jesus' suffering and elevates it to a level never done before. However, he is somewhat hesitant in the end, using such words as “that if possible” or *ei pos*.

While holding out the possibility of somehow failing in this *summorphizo* (along with what the other two words represent), Paul hopes to “attain” resurrection, *katantao* suggestive of reaching a destination, the preposition *kata* intimating in accord with a given plan. In other words, he puts trust in the *sum* or “with” of the *morphe* relative to Christ's death as a means...a vehicle...to reach across to the resurrection.

Paul is up front with saying that he hasn't attained this resurrection nor is he “perfect,” the verb *teleioo* suggestive of reaching an end. In place of this *teleioo* he presses on, *dioko* meaning to chase or pursue in a vigorous manner. Such intent focus is centered upon making the *sum* of *morphe* relative to Christ's death and hence his resurrection to which

he hopes to attach the same *sum* or with-ness. The verb *katalambano* is used twice, essentially as to seize for oneself: make my own and “has made his own.” Thus the strenuous nature of this passage is a result of Jesus' *katalambano*.

In the next sentence Paul admits the possibility of failure, that he may not have made this *katalambano* or made it his own. The verb *logizomai* translates as “I do (not) consider” which meaning to reckon or calculate. Sometimes *logizomai* involves thinking too much or pondering things which may or may not come true, that being applicable in this instance. In the next breath Paul continues with one thing he “does” which is rendered by the particle *de* connoting something like “while” or “whereas.” This *de* consists in two parts: “forgetting and straining forward” or *epilanthano* and *epekteino*. Both have the preposition *epi* or upon suggestive of intensity which keeps in line with the overall tenor of the passage at hand. The second adds the preposition *ek* or from, that intensifying the *epi* at hand. So with one *epi* focused on forgetfulness the other *epi* focused upon not so much remembrance but of knowledge resulting from pressing on (*dioko* is mentioned above and here again relative to a goal/prize) as it pertains not of the future but of what is *emprosthen* or “what lies ahead.” This preposition is made up of two others, *em* or *en* and *pros*: in and direction towards which. Both the continuous forgetting-upon (*epi*) and stretching-upon (*epi*) work in two opposite directions simultaneously which if applicable to space and time would cancel each other out.

As for the “goal” or *skopos*, the object on which one fixes attention, it is also a “prize” or *brebeion* as in a race. The former is connected with the latter by the preposition *eis*, literally as “into the prize.” Both consist in a call which is “upward” or *ana*. And so the *emprosthen* or what lies before Paul has this ascending quality coupled with the into-ness (*eis*) of the prize at hand which doesn't come to an end.

20 March, Palm Sunday

The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. Isaiah 50.4-7

Here the Lord addresses his servant as he decides to step in and take action not so much for him but for his people. In the opening three verses of this chapter the Lord comes off

with a series of rapid-fire rhetorical questions to Israel, putting the nation as a whole on the spot with regard to its disobedience. After these questions (and they're impossible to answer), the Lord shifts attention to his servant who will act on his behalf. However, the identity of the servant continues to be shrouded in mystery by reason of lacking a name even though he is both acting and speaking publicly. To have a name is extremely important for one's identity which isn't the case at hand. In fact, the servant could be the Lord himself in disguise.

Note the five instances of the letter "l" or lamed in the opening verse: *ly*, *leshon*, *limodym*, *ladapath* and *lahuth* or "to me," "tongue," "to those taught," "that I may know" and "how to sustain." The first three are centered upon the last two, that is, upon knowing (*yadah* connotes intimate, even sexual knowledge) how to "sustain" or *huth*, this being the only instance in the Bible and connotes hastening. Such sustaining pertains to a person who is "weary" or *yahaph* and can be associated with being tired as from running. A divine *davar* or "word" is the agent at work here which is more than something uttered but an ongoing expression.

One way of showing this continuous expression of *davar* is by the phrase "morning by morning" where the preposition *b-* is used, that is to say literally "in morning in morning." So within this constant *b-*, if you will, the Lord "wakens" (*hur*) not so much his servant by the agent through which the *davar* is passed on to him, that is, but his ear. Such hearing represents the readiness of obedience and is the equivalent of being "taught" or *lamad*. It is a kind of training as well as chastising and here can imply being done by those versed in the Torah.

During this transmission of *davar*, however, there remains the possibility of the servant closing his ear which is expressed by him being "rebellious" or *marah* nor of turning "backward," *sug*. So instead, the servant willingly faces those who abuse him as the Lord is engaged in helping (*hazar*) him, the direct result of *lamad* which serves not to confound the servant. Important as the servant may be, in the long run the Lord has as his ultimate concern the nation of Israel.

27 March, Easter Sunday

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3.1-4

The tiny word “if” (*ei*) suggests that a person reading this epistle may not be raised with Christ. Should this be the case, he is to proceed no further because what follows won't pertain to him.

Sunegeiro or “raised with” means that the person involved, compared with the just mentioned possibility of not participating, has shared in Christ's resurrection at the very time it had taken place “x” amount of years ago. Obviously that event occurred at a specific time and place which is secondary to the reality Paul wishes to convey. To be risen-with Christ means a vivid awareness of that fact as governing one's life here and now. In other words, the life at hand differs from the previous one, if you will, not externally but internally. Nevertheless, it remains for this person to hammer out the details, all of which never will be resolved fully even though the life he now leads differs substantially from his previous one.

Following upon this *sunegeiro* is the imperative to seek the “things that are above” or simply *ta ano*. Seeking them (the common verb *zeteo* is used) in this place, if you will, which differs from everything else tends to inform them. Furthermore, *ta ano* implies they are not present and hence not visible which means some struggle to adapt them to the here and now, not the other way around. *Ta ano* can be identified with the common view of heaven as somewhere up there which it isn't a presented here. One's mind is to be “set” or *phroneo* which means not just having understanding but more importantly, prudence. Such prudence is the quiet way *ta ano* are adapted to the world around oneself which fails to recognize them and without forcing this world to do so. And so the verb *phroneo* relates to *ta ano* just as the other verb *zeteo* relates to *ta ano*: seek *ta ano* and set one's mind on *ta ano*.

Paul situates this twofold action of seeking and setting in terms of death. He puts it almost casually, a matter-of-fact way, “for you have died.” It's the condition for having one's life hidden with Christ in God, Christ being at God's right hand as the opening verse says. Doing this means an indefinite period of waiting but a waiting not concerned with what happens next because it's fulfilling in and by itself. That is to say, the person who is seeking, setting his mind above and has died, will simply appear with Christ when that happens. Actually the event is insignificant for him but not so for those to whom Christ “will appear” (*phaneroo*) in glory. Just like the temporal gap between Christ's resurrection and the person resurrected with him is of secondary importance, so is this appearing of Christ to the person abiding in him.

3 April, Second Sunday of Easter

The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near. John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus....When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter. Revelation 1.9-13 & 17-19

The following is excerpted from *Notes on the Book of Revelation* posted on this same home page.

In vs. 1 John's identification as brother (*adelphos*) with regard to his listeners comes after his lofty calling by an angel (cf. vs. 1). He enhances this identity by sharing (*sugkoinonos*; to have something in common with, *sug + koinonos*). John is on Patmos for two divine reasons: the "word (*logos*) of God and the "testimony (*marturia*) of Jesus." This island was a penal colony in Roman times and implies exile and imprisonment.

Note the two uses of the preposition *en* (in): "in the Spirit" and "on the Lord's day" or *en te kuriake hemera*. The adjective *kuriakos* is derived from the noun *Kurios*, Lord and refers to Sunday. "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat" [1 Cor 11.20]. Also note the position of a voice behind (*opiso*) John. "Then the Spirit lifted me up and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake" [Ezk 3.12]. Such behind-ness intimates divine transcendence. The preposition *opiso* is used in conjunction with a "loud voice" where the adjective *me gas* primarily means great as in size or dimension. Such a voice is compared to a trumpet or *salpigx* which here connotes the immediate presence of the Last Day. *Salpigx* may be related to the Hebrew *sophar* as used with regard to Mt. Sinai: "And as the sound of the

trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder” [Ex 19.19].

The Lord bids John to write what he sees in a book and send it to seven churches, keeping in mind that the trumpet is behind him. This sending (*pempo*) is akin to Christ’s sending of the Apostles though a different verb is used in the latter, usually associated with the impartation of a commission: “As the Father has sent (*apostello*) me, even so I send you” [Jn 20.21]. The preposition *eis* or into suggests a putting-fully into the book at hand; *biblos* is indefinite. While the contents of this book has a direct relationship to the “seven churches,” the image here is of John making an exact copy of his vision in this *biblos*; it is as though there were no temporal gap between the seeing of its contents and its sending without passing through the intermediary of his memory.

In vs. 12 John turns around (*epistrepho*: with the preposition *epi-* or upon) in order to see (*blepo*) which may be contrasted with Moses who was prohibited to see God’s face but only his back: “and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen” [Ex 33.23]. A voice (phone) is invisible yet here is visible (*blepo*) and may be traced to the trumpet. *Epistrepho* is used a second time with respect to “seven golden lamp stands,” this word being reminiscent of the menorah of Ex 25.31: “And you shall make a lamp stand of Ex 25.31 designated for use in the tent (and later temple): “And you shall make a lamp stand of pure gold.”

In vs. 13 there appears one resembling a son of man in the midst of the lamp stands who is clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast. *En meso* for “in the midst of” connotes being at the center of these seven lamp stands. Compare Ezk 1.4: “and in the midst of the fire as it were gleaming bronze.” The son of man (*huios anthropou*) is a title Jesus used of himself most likely in conjunction with Dan 7.13: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man.” Also note that God called the prophet Ezekiel by this title as in Ezk 2.1.

The son of man has two items of clothing: 1) a long robe or *poderes*, literally, “reaching to the foot.” 2) a golden girdle or zone *chruse*. Contrast the other type of garment or zone used by John the Baptist: “Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather girdle around his waste” [Mt 3.4]. Such a zone was around the son of man’s breast (*mastos*). Note the same John having this vision as in Jn 13.23: “One of his disciples who Jesus loved was lying close to the breast of Jesus.” In the verse at hand, the son of man is girded (*perizzonnumi*) with the zone, a verb used with respect to virtue: “Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth” [Eph 6.14].

When John sees this son of man, he fell down as though dead (vs. 17). This verse continues

into the next one, a natural response to divine manifestation as in Ex 3.6: “And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” In the verse at hand, note the importance of touch (*tithemi*, lay) which is followed by speaking. The words “fear not” (*phobeomai*) bring John back to life, as it were. Such confidence is based upon the son of man claiming to be “first and last” or *protos* and *eschatos*. Here the precise nature of this beginning and end is not specified and is also mentioned in 2.8 and 22.13 where they are akin to Christ being the Alpha and Omega. Thus Christ is the first and last letter (implied are the letters in between) of the Greek alphabet, that is, Christ as *Logos* or Word of God. Cf. Is 44.6: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

Christ as the living one in vs. 18 means that he is a kind of living alphabet, the present participle being used instead of the past and future tenses. The son of man spells out this being alive by saying that he has died (clearly the past tense). His death sets the stage, as it were, for being alive. The present participle implies continuation into the unending nature of “Christ-as-alphabet.” In the phrase *eis tous aionas ton aionon* (forever and ever) we have the preposition *eis* (into) which suggests continuous movement into the future. “To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen” [Rom 16.27].

Possession of a key signifies that Christ can let a person in or out from two places: death and Hades, the former being the act of dying (i.e., getting to Hades) and latter being the abode of those who have died (i.e., those who have arrived there). Compare with Mt 16.19: “I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” In a sense, Peter’s possession of such keys is more important because the kingdom of heaven transcends death and Hades. The keys of vs. 18 and Peter may be seen in context of Chapter One or the seven churches, an extension of heaven’s kingdom.

Finally in vs. 19 John is bidden to write what he sees, what is and what is to take place. Note the command to write what John sees, namely, his act of inscribing follows closely Christ-as-alphabet (i.e., as *Logos*). John does not write what he hears nor anything coming from the other senses. “And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” [1 Jn 1.4]. The seeing at hand contains two “is-es:” *ha eisin* (can apply to Christ as first and last, vs. 17) and that which will happen later; *mellei* or about to which signifies action soon to be effected hereafter or “after these” (*meta tauta*), those events in chapters 4-22.