

THE "WITH CHRIST" MOTIF IN PAUL'S THOUGHT

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Although Paul uses the "with Christ" motif 36 times in his letters, few extended treatments of the theme have been attempted. Some authors have touched on the idea in passing, but more attention has been given to Paul's use of "in Christ."¹ When the "with Christ" concept is addressed, it is frequently associated with Paul's eschatology. There is evidence, however, that the phrase relates equally well to the Christian's redemption and new life in Christ. The following study will seek to examine the available data and reach some conclusions about how Paul uses the phrase "with Christ."

I. SURVEY OF PREVIOUS WORK

Lohmeyer has written the premier study on the subject.² Although he acknowledges the presence of the *syn*-compounds he chooses to work primarily with the phrase "to be with Christ" (*syn Christō einai*). For Lohmeyer this phrase does not speak of one happening but of an existence. It expresses the certainty of being removed from this world and of breaking into another world of time and space.

For Schnackenburg the true idea of "with Christ" is sacramental. He thinks that Paul used the phrase to express a double idea: "present sacramental unity with Christ, and the fulfillment with him of his once-for-all death."³ Schnackenburg concedes that in certain passages there is a future idea attached to "with Christ," but he believes that it is part of a pre-Pauline eschatological tradition.

Schweizer seeks to strike a balance between the preceding positions.⁴ He places the "with Christ" idea in three categories: (1) uses found in apocalyptic contexts, (2) uses found in baptismal contexts, and (3) uses found in combined apocalyptic-baptismal contexts. For Schweizer the key is that baptism is an anticipation of eschatological life. As such it anticipates the change of eons by transferring the believer into the coming kingdom.

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¹ The most recent work is M. Parsons, "In Christ' in Paul," *Vox Evangelica* 18 (1988) 25-44.

² E. Lohmeyer, "Syn Christō," *Festgabe für Adolf Deissmann* (ed. K. L. Schmidt; Tübingen, Mohr, 1927).

³ R. Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964) 37.

⁴ E. Schweizer, "Dying and Rising with Christ," *NTS* 14 (1967-68) 3.

With the apparent variety of ideas expressed by "with Christ" it is not surprising that there are many other suggestions for understanding it. E. P. Sanders, in keeping with his concept of participationist eschatology, sees it as a "transfer term" and focuses on the transfer of lordship that takes place by participation in Christ's death.⁵ For Best the most appropriate understanding is "some form of corporate personality or racial solidarity."⁶ Tannehill sees the phrase as one form in which the motif of dying and rising with Christ is expressed.⁷ This collection of interpretations suggests that the phrase "with Christ" is an intriguing concept to study.

II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE IDEA "WITH CHRIST"

Lohmeyer maintains that "with Christ" has no clearly discernible background. He argues that the Pauline formula "to be with Christ" is unique and without clear historical connection.⁸ A brief survey of possible background material suggests that he is right.

The typical OT use is "God with us" rather than "we will be with God."⁹ As such it denotes eternal fellowship with him. Although the idea is present in some uses by Paul, it is not a principal theme in his thinking. In the gospels and Acts the preposition *meta* with the genitive is more frequent, and the idea of "with Christ" usually refers to physical association with the historical Jesus.¹⁰ Paul's use is very different from a simple physical association with Jesus during his earthly life.

The phrase "with (a) god" is present linguistically in much of Greek literature, but it is invariably an expression of the gods' helpful assistance of men in their deeds and travels in this life.¹¹ The usage bears little resemblance to Paul's concept. Best examines the suggestion by some that Paul's references to baptism "with Christ" reflect a dependence on the mystery religions. His conclusion is that "the Mysteries are not the dominating influence in Paul's conception of baptism, and, therefore, not in his conception of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ."¹²

It appears that a single background for Paul's use of "with Christ" is as difficult to identify as a single interpretation of the idea. Although Lohmeyer may be correct in his conjecture that it could be based on an early Jewish-Christian tradition, there is little solid evidence for this suggestion.¹³ Best's comment with regard to another phrase may be appropriate

⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 467.

⁶ E. Best, *One Body in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1955) 56.

⁷ R. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1966) 6.

⁸ Lohmeyer, "Syn Christō" 229.

⁹ W. Grundmann, "syn-meta," *TDNT* 7.774.

¹⁰ For example see Mark 3:14; Luke 22:14; Acts 4:13. See also the distinction between *meta* and *syn* drawn by M. J. Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 3.1206-1207.

¹¹ Lohmeyer, "Syn Christō" 226.

¹² Best, *One Body* 48.

¹³ Lohmeyer seeks to connect the use of *syn Christō* in Paul with John's use of *meta* in Revelation ("Syn Christō" 257).

here: "We must never forget the creativeness of Paul as a thinker; he may have hit on the use of the term quite by himself."¹⁴

III. MATERIAL AVAILABLE FOR STUDY

The sources used for the study will be the thirteen epistles that bear the name of Paul. This decision does not ignore the problems of authenticity associated with 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the pastoral epistles. In the case of 2 Thessalonians the issue is moot since it contains no material directly applicable to this study. The arguments against Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians are not insurmountable, and most scholars—even if they do not accept Paul as the author—recognize that these letters reflect material present in other Pauline writings.

In addition there is one passage from the pastoral epistles that will be used. The authenticity of the pastorals poses a special problem in Pauline studies, but it should not become an issue in this particular case. The "trustworthy statement" in 2 Tim 2:11–13 contains three *syn*-compound words that relate believers to Christ. Virtually all commentators agree that this passage is an early Christian confessional statement or hymn. What becomes evident with further study is that the ideas contained in it are clearly Pauline, and therefore it can and will be used as a source for understanding Paul's use of the "with Christ" motif.

Three types of data are available for the study of "with Christ" in Paul's thought. The most obvious place to turn is that collection of passages where he uses the preposition *syn* with the dative case.¹⁵ This construction occurs 12 times in Paul's letters.¹⁶ A second, smaller group of verses is that which uses the dative association to speak of "with Christ" or "with him."¹⁷

By far the largest body of potential evidence is Paul's use of nouns and verbs compounded with *syn*. There are 85 such compounds, and they occur 158 times throughout Paul's letters. In 76 cases *syn* is part of the meaning of the word, or the word is not significant for this study.¹⁸ Six uses are in OT quotations and are not directly applicable.¹⁹ Eight additional uses are in the negative context of believer with unbeliever or believer with an immoral brother.²⁰ In 47 cases *syn* is part of a compound that speaks positively of relations among believers. These latter uses are not a part of this study. Finally, 21 *syn*-compounds speak of the believer's association with Christ.

¹⁴ Best, *One Body* 94.

¹⁵ Paul never uses the preposition *meta* with the genitive case to refer to the "with Christ" idea.

¹⁶ Rom 6:8; 8:32; 2 Cor 4:14; 13:4; Phil 1:23; Col 2:13, 20; 3:3, 4; 1 Thess 4:14, 17; 5:10.

¹⁷ Rom 6:8; Gal 2:19; Eph 2:5.

¹⁸ Words such as *syngenēs*, *sympherō*, *symphyletēs*, and *syntribō*.

¹⁹ Rom 9:28 (twice); 11:10, 34; 1 Cor 1:19; 2:16.

²⁰ 1 Cor 5:9; 5:11 (twice); 2 Cor 6:15, 16; Gal 2:12; Eph 5:11; 2 Thess 3:14.

IV. GALATIANS: CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

There is considerable discussion about where Galatians fits into the sequence of Paul's letters.²¹ For the purposes of this paper it will be taken as Paul's earliest letter, written to the churches of South Galatia around AD 49–50.²² Paul's famous statement in Gal 2:20 is the one verse pertinent to the present study: "I have been crucified with Christ (*Christō synestaurōmai*); and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me."

The use of the perfect passive *synestaurōmai* differs somewhat from Paul's normal use of the aorist passive in similar statements.²³ It seems designed to emphasize the present condition resulting from the past event. Bruce writes: "The perfect tense . . . emphasizes that participation in the crucified Christ has become the believer's settled way of life."²⁴ The believer's past participation "with Christ" in his crucifixion is the basis for his present life of faith "in Christ."

V. 1 THESSALONIANS: FUTURE LIFE WITH CHRIST

To move to Paul's Thessalonian letters is to move to the future aspect of his "with Christ" motif. Although 2 Thessalonians does not use the expression, 1 Thessalonians uses it three times (4:14; 4:17; 5:10). In each case the construction employed is *syn* with the dative, and the temporal referent is future.

In 1 Thess 4:13–5:10 Paul uses the future coming of Christ to comfort and encourage his readers. When Jesus returns he will bring "with him" (*syn autō*) those who have fallen asleep (4:14). These Christians will be raised in order to return with him (4:16). On that same occasion believers who are still alive on earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (4:17). The ultimate result of the meeting is that all believers, whether dead or alive, will be "with" the Lord. This same idea is reiterated in 5:10 where Paul assures the Thessalonians that Jesus died in order that whether they are awake or asleep, they may live together "with" him. The certainty of a future life with Christ is a hope to which Christians should look forward with anticipation. It should both comfort them in times of sorrow (4:18) and encourage them to live properly from day to day (5:11).

VI. 2 CORINTHIANS: FUTURE LIFE AND PRESENT POWER

The Corinthian correspondence begins to show signs of a new thread in Paul's thinking about the believer's association "with Christ." It is some-

²¹ For a good discussion of the issues involved see F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 43–56.

²² Galatians has only one *syn*-compound relating believers either to Christ or to other believers. This fact is very much in keeping with usage patterns found in the Thessalonian and Corinthian correspondence. Linguistically, at least, Galatians is closest to Paul's early letters.

²³ The perfect is used elsewhere only in Rom 6:5; Col 3:3.

²⁴ Bruce, *Galatians* 144.

what surprising that the phrase does not appear at all in 1 Corinthians and appears only twice in 2 Corinthians (4:14; 13:4),²⁵ although this may simply be a function of the relatively early position of the correspondence in the letter sequence. Both of the verses in 2 Corinthians use the preposition *syn* with the dative case. The ideas expressed, however, are different.

In 2 Cor 4:7–5:10 Paul discusses the suffering and glory of his apostolic ministry. He carried out his ministry even though it involved suffering and affliction. Two convictions enabled him to do this: the conviction that faith cannot remain silent (4:13) and the conviction that "he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus (*syn Iēsou*) and will present us with you" (4:14). The future hope of resurrection and presentation with Christ was one of the incentives that kept him going. This idea is very much in keeping with the use of "with Christ" in 1 Thessalonians.

The idea in 2 Cor 13:4 is different. In 13:1–4 Paul writes of his impending third visit to Corinth. He seems to be addressing the Corinthians' confusion of human power for divine power and their perception that he was weak rather than powerful (13:3). Paul's response was to remind them that Christ was crucified out of what appeared to be weakness but now lives because of God's power. Similarly, although he seems weak Paul also lives a life empowered by God. Hughes comments:

It would be a misconception to understand Paul, when he says, "we shall live with Him," to be speaking eschatologically of the future resurrection to everlasting glory at the end of the age. As the context shows, the reference is limited to his impending visit to Corinth and concerns the power of the authority which he will exercise there against any who are disobedient.²⁶

It may be seen, then, that this use of "with Christ" is closer to present identification with his life and power than to the anticipation of future life with him. In this respect it is closer to uses in Romans than to those in Thessalonians.

VII. ROMANS: FUTURE GLORY, PRESENT LIFE, PAST DEATH

Romans exhibits the widest range of Paul's use of "with Christ." The future referent is still used, although it is less conspicuous (Rom 8:17). The present aspect seen in 2 Corinthians is more prominent (6:8–11; 8:17). Greater emphasis is laid on the past death and burial of the believer with Christ (6:4–7). In the same way that Romans contains elements of all three temporal referents, it also uses both *syn* with the dative and *syn*-compounds. It should be noted, however, that the use of *syn*-compounds is much more frequent in Romans than it has been in the earlier letters.

Romans 6:4–8 is the first of four special clusters of the "with Christ" idea.²⁷

²⁵ 1 Corinthians contains five instances of *syn*-compounds relating believer to believer, but 2 Corinthians has no such occurrences.

²⁶ P. E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 479.

²⁷ The others are Col 2:12–13; 3:1–4; Eph 2:5–6.

Therefore we have been buried with him (*synetaphēmen*) through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him (*symphytoi gegonamen*) in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also [in the likeness] of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him (*synestaurōthē*), that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with (*syn*) Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him (*syzēsomen autō*).

In vv. 4–7 the focus is clearly on the past: “we have been buried with him” (aorist indicative), “we have become united with him” (perfect indicative), “our old self was crucified with him” (aorist indicative). Here Paul uses the “with Christ” motif to highlight the believer’s participation in the redemptive-historical events of Christ’s death and burial.²⁸ The basic concept is summarized by Schnackenburg:

We have been united in the closest fashion with the event of Christ’s dying and burial, and thereby attained to death (for sin). The same line of thought is continued in *synestaurōthē* (v.6) and *apethanomen syn Christō* (v.8).²⁹

In v. 8 the past perspective continues—“we have died with Christ” (aorist indicative)—and the present perspective is introduced even though the verb of “we shall also live with him” is in the future.³⁰ The believer’s death with Christ is considered as a past fact. As a result of that death, Christians will also live with Christ. That Paul has in mind the present life of believers is clear from the context in vv. 8–11. Their past participation in Christ’s death results in the present possession of freedom and power to live with him for God rather than for sin.

Romans 8:17 combines the present and future aspects of “with Christ.” Since Christians are children of God (cf. 8:16) they are also “joint heirs” (*synklēronomoi*) with Christ. The possession of this inheritance will be in the future when they will be “glorified with” (*syndoxasthōmen*) him. The anticipation of the future is again an incentive to present living. For now the believer is to “suffer with” (*sympaschomen*) him in the sufferings of the present time and realize that the future glory will far outweigh those sufferings (cf. 8:18).

Romans 8:29 poses some difficulty. Paul writes that God predestined those he foreknew “[to become] conformed (*symmorphous*) to the image of

²⁸ There has been considerable discussion on the part played by baptism in these verses. Schnackenburg for instance sees it as a “salvation-event” in which new life is sacramentally bestowed (*Baptism* 37). Best on the other hand prefers to view it as a “sealing” of the union already inherent in the racial solidarity of the believer with Christ (*One Body* 55–56). Perhaps the best perspective is that of Cranfield: “On God’s side, it is the sign and pledge that the benefits of Christ’s death for all men really do apply to this individual in particular, while, on man’s side, it is the ratification . . . of the human decision of faith” (C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975] 1.303).

²⁹ Schnackenburg, *Baptism* 36.

³⁰ See the discussion above concerning the present referent of “we shall also live with him” (future indicative).

his Son." This conformity has been interpreted as "final and complete conformity of resurrection glory,"³¹ but the use of the word in Philippians suggests a twofold concept (see below). Cranfield is undoubtedly correct when he writes:

It is probable . . . that Paul is here thinking not only of their final glorification but also of their growing conformity to Christ here and now in suffering and in obedience—that is, that *symmorphous*, *k.t.l.* is meant to embrace sanctification as well as final glory.³²

This interpretation would be in keeping with Paul's emphasis in chaps. 6–8 on the present life of the believer.

Romans 8:32 presents a similar ambiguity: "He who did not spare his own Son . . . how will he not also with (*syn*) him freely give us all things?" The meaning is clear: Since God has already done the costliest thing, he can be relied on to do the lesser things as well. The ambiguity lies in whether the "lesser" things have already been given or are yet to be given. Again, the context of Romans 6–8 suggests a present referent, perhaps "all that is necessary for our salvation."³³

Romans demonstrates the widest range of Paul's use of "with Christ." The anticipation of future life with Christ is still found and offers an incentive for enduring in the present. The participation in Jesus' past death and burial breaks sin's hold on the believer and sets him free to live for God in the present. This present life includes suffering with Christ and being conformed to his image through the ongoing process of sanctification.

VIII. COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS:

BURIED, QUICKENED, RAISED, AND SEATED WITH CHRIST

Although Paul's use of "with Christ" in his earlier letters focuses on the future, in his later letters it focuses on the past. The believer has not only been crucified and buried with Christ in the past but also quickened, raised and seated with him in the past. The ideas that became evident in Rom 6:4–8 gain fuller expression in three other special clusters of the "with Christ" idea: Col 2:12–13; 3:1–4; Eph 2:4–6.

Colossians 2:12–13 falls within the theological argument of the letter (Col 2:6–15). Paul's basic message in this section is that believers have been made complete in Christ and have no need to look elsewhere for anything to add to what they have in him. As part of that message, he reminds the Colossians:

In him you were also circumcised . . . having been buried with (*syntaphentes*) him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him (*synēgerthēte*) through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he

³¹ J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 319.

³² Cranfield, *Romans* 1.432.

³³ *Ibid.* 1.437.

made you alive together with him (*synezōpoiēsen hymas syn autō*), having forgiven us all our transgressions.

As in Romans, participation in Christ's (death and) burial in baptism is highlighted. Now, however, participation in his resurrection is not only implied but also explicitly stated. The Christian has "died with (*syn*) Christ to the elementary principles of the world" (Col 2:20) and has been buried with him in baptism. Equally importantly he/she has been made alive with him and has been raised with him to a newness of life.

These truths are reiterated in 3:1–4, a passage that Ridderbos calls (along with Romans 6)

the locus classicus for the "objective," redemptive-historical significance of having died and been raised with Christ. The new life of believers is that which comes forth with Christ out of the grave, has gone to heaven with him, is there hidden . . . and will once more appear from there with the parousia. . . . What has taken place and will take place with Christ, from dying to coming (again) in glory, has also happened to the church and will happen to it by virtue of its corporate unity with him.³⁴

Participation and anticipation are combined in these verses. The believer has been "raised up with" (*synēgerthēte*) Christ (Col 3:1). He/she has died, and his/her life has been hidden "with" (*syn*) Christ in God (3:3). These events are past. Yet there is also the future anticipation that believers will be revealed "with" (*syn*) him in glory (3:4). The result of these facts is a new mindset—a mind set on things above, not on things below (3:2)—that will have a radical impact on present ethical conduct (cf. 3:5–17).

Ephesians 2:4–6 forms the logical conclusion to the development of Paul's "with Christ" idea:

But God, being rich in mercy and because of his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with (*synezōpoiēsen*) Christ . . . and raised us up with him (*synēgeiren*) and seated us with him (*synekathisen*) in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Here all the activity is in the past: God quickened us with Christ, he raised us with him, he seated us with him in heaven. From a perspective focused primarily on the future in 1 Thessalonians, Paul has moved to a perspective focused primarily on the past in Ephesians. One thing, however, remains the same: Both future anticipation and past participation have an impact on the present. Ephesians 2:4–6 cannot be divorced from 2:10, where Paul reminds his readers that along with quickening, raising and seating them God has prepared good works for them as well. The believer may be seated with Christ in heaven, but he is also living for Christ on earth.

³⁴ H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 212.

IX. PHILIPPIANS: CONFORMITY WITH CHRIST

The place of Philippians in the sequence of Paul's letters has also generated some discussion.³⁵ For the purposes of this paper it will be taken as the last of Paul's prison epistles, written from Rome around AD 62-63.³⁶ Philippians has one use of *syn* with the dative in 1:23 and two *syn*-compounds (3:10; 3:21).

Philippians 1:23 is an instance of "with Christ" that seems most closely related to the uses found in Paul's earlier letters: "But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better." The phrase "to be with Christ" (*syn Christō einai*) found here is an example of the construction on which Lohmeyer built his eschatological interpretation. It has an anticipatory focus, to be sure, and the eschatological hope of eternal fellowship with Christ is the basic idea. But two things should be noted about this verse: (1) The future referent found here is not as widespread in Paul's other uses of "with Christ" as are the past and present referents, and (2) the function of "to be with Christ" here differs from the other anticipatory uses in that it expresses a contrast to present life rather than an incentive for it. These considerations suggest that 1:23 should not be seen as a cornerstone for the understanding of the "with Christ" motif in Paul's writings.

Philippians 3:10, 21 may be considered together because both verses contain cognates discussing "conformity" with Christ. Philippians 3:10 reads: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed (*symmorphizomenos*) to his death." Philippians 3:21 looks forward to the coming of Christ, "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with (*symmorphon*) the body of his glory."

As noted above the idea of conformity seems to have a twofold aspect. Philippians 3:10 points to the believer's present life of obedience and suffering. The verb rendered "being conformed" is a present middle participle. Hawthorne explains the significance of the construction in this way: "It says that Paul, already dead to sin by virtue of Christ's death, nevertheless strives to make the effects of that death an ever-present reality within himself by his own constant choice to consider himself in fact dead to sin and alive to God."³⁷ Here Paul speaks of present conformity as a working out of his past death and resurrection with Christ. It should be noted also that he does this with the future purpose "that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:11).

³⁵ For a good discussion of the issues involved see G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Waco: Word, 1983) xxxvi-xliv.

³⁶ Philippians, in contrast to Galatians, has 15 *syn*-compounds. Twelve of them relate believers to each other, and three relate the believer to Christ. Linguistically, then, Philippians is closest to Paul's later letters.

³⁷ Hawthorne, *Philippians* 143.

Conformity also has a future aspect to it. Philippians 3:21 expresses the anticipation of being transformed into "conformity" with Christ's glorified state. Unlike 1:23, however, this verse is tied closely to a directive for the present. Philippians 4:1 applies the truth of the anticipated transformation: "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

X. 2 TIM 2:11-13: A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT

To some a passage in the pastoral epistles may seem out of place in the study of Pauline theology, but as noted above there are good reasons for including these verses in the material available for investigation:

- (a) For if we died with him (*synapethanomen*), we shall also live with him (*syzēsomen*);
- (b) if we endure, we shall also reign with him (*sybasileusomen*);
- (c) if we deny him, he also will deny us;
- (d) if we are faithless, he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself.

The manner in which the text is set out in *UBSGNT* reflects the general agreement that it is an early Christian confession or hymn. The Greek of the lines marked (a)–(d) are clearly parallel in construction, and their regular rhythm is reminiscent of the great Christ-hymn of 1 Tim 3:16. The initial "for" (*gar*) in line (a) suggests that the verses may be part of a longer hymn, and some commentators believe that the final statement ("for he cannot deny himself") is the author's own addition.³⁸ One final matter to note initially is the fact that the four occurrences of the word "him" are not present in the Greek but are supplied from the use of *syn*-compounds.

Bernard has done a good job of demonstrating the Pauline character of the hymn.³⁹ (1) "If we died with him" is very close to Rom 6:8, and "we shall . . . live with him" is likewise close to Rom 6:8, 11; (2) "if we endure" has a close parallel in Rom 8:17, as does "we shall also reign with him"; (3) "if we are faithless, he remains faithful" carries the same thought as Rom 3:3 (in a different context). Bernard concludes: "It thus appears that clauses 1, 2, 4 of this remarkable hymn are little more than reproductions of phrases from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, clause 3 being based on words of Christ."⁴⁰ The thought of the hymn is Pauline, and the connections between the first two clauses and the letter to the Romans are particularly close. It is in these two clauses that the *syn*-compounds are found.

The first of the compounds is "to die with." It occurs only one other time in Paul's writings, and that other occurrence is not pertinent to the present discussion.⁴¹ The combination of "to die" and "with Christ" (*syn*

³⁸ See the discussion in D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 144–146.

³⁹ J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [1899]) 121–122.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 121.

⁴¹ In 2 Cor 7:3 where Paul, while discussing his relationship with the Corinthians, speaks of living and dying with them in his heart.

Christō), however, also appears in Rom 6:8; Col 2:20. In each case the verb is in the aorist indicative and points to a real event in past time.

The second compound, "to live with," also occurs only one other time (Rom 6:8). As in the first case the combination of "to live" and "with Christ" appears elsewhere (1 Thess 5:10; 2 Cor 13:4). The verb is always in the future and would seem to point to an event in future time.

There is, however, an additional factor to consider in determining the temporal reference in 2 Tim 2:11. As noted above, this line of the hymn relates most closely to Rom 6:8-11:

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death is no longer master over him. For the death that he died he died to sin, once for all; but the life that he lives he lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In these verses Paul is discussing the present ethical life of believers, not their future glorified life. It seems reasonable, then, to consider 2 Tim 2:11 as referring to the present life of Christians lived in the power of the new life available to them in Christ. This interpretation would make the parallelism in lines (a) and (b) progressive rather than synonymous: The believer dies with Christ in order to live, and, now alive, he endures in order to reign with him.

On the other hand the future component of Paul's thinking cannot be denied. The third *syn*-compound is "to reign with" and is in the future tense. The only other place Paul uses this word (1 Cor 4:8) is not pertinent to the present discussion.⁴² There is no parallel combination of the verb and "with Christ," but as noted above there is a parallel idea in Rom 8:17: "Indeed we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." There is little question that the reference here is to a level of existence not yet available to the Christian.

This brief hymn, then, highlights three temporal referents related to the "with Christ" motif. The past aspect may be considered as participation in the redemptive-historical facts of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The present aspect may be thought of as identification with Christ's life of obedience and suffering. The future aspect may be viewed as anticipation of Christ's return, glory and reign. Each of these temporal referents has been seen at different points in the preceding discussion.

XI. CONCLUSIONS

Paul's use of the "with Christ" motif varies widely. The idea is not easily reduced to a simple expression of eschatology or sacramentalism. It goes far beyond the idea of a future "being with Christ" that Lohmeyer proposes or the concept of a sacramental entry into the fellowship of life with Christ that Schnackenburg suggests. As Tannehill notes: "Paul's use

⁴² He uses it sarcastically of his wish to reign with the Corinthians as they are already filled, have already become rich, and already reign without him.

of dying and rising with Christ is complex, emphasizing in turn the past entry into new life, the present participation in life through death, and the future participation in the life of the resurrection."⁴³

There is a general pattern of development discernible from Paul's earlier writings to his later letters. This pattern may be noted both in the grammatical constructions he uses and in the temporal referents of the believer's association with Christ. Two aspects of the "with Christ" statements, however, remain constant: (1) They depict a close association of believers and Christ in the events described, and (2) they have the pastoral function of comforting, encouraging and challenging believers to live for Christ in the present.

Past participation in death, burial, resurrection and enthronement with Christ confers a new status on the believer that makes it possible for him to live for God in the present. Anticipation of future transformation, inheritance and glory with Christ provides a hope for the believer that makes it possible for him to endure the sufferings of the present. Present identification with Christ involves conformity with the suffering of his life and experiential knowledge of the power of his resurrection.

The "with Christ" of the past makes the power for present identification possible. The "with Christ" of the future makes the suffering of present identification bearable. Life "with Christ" in the present looks both backward for enabling and forward for incentive. For Paul, the truth expressed by the believer's association "with Christ" is power and hope for a life in the "now" caught between the "once" and the "not yet."

⁴³ Tannehill, *Dying* 129.