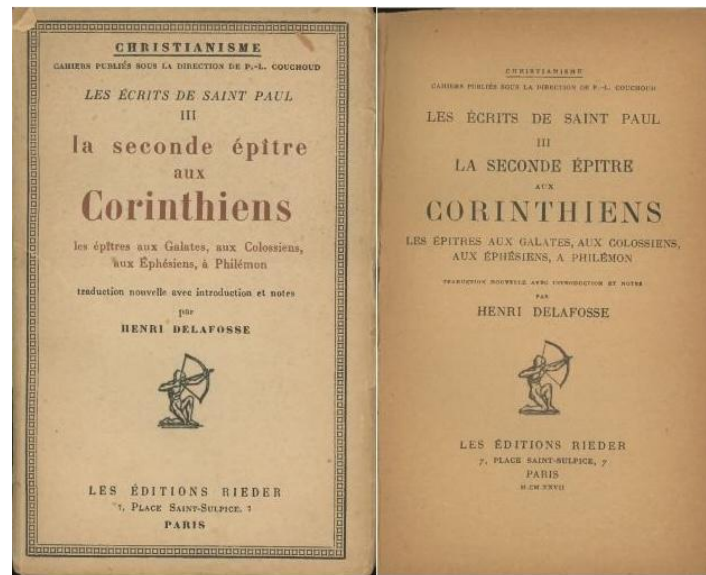


This translation was created October 2021 as a translation for my personal use and without any thought of sharing publicly at the time. I only ask that you keep that in mind when using it. I have made a copy of the French text available at

<https://archive.org/details/turmel-les-ecrits-de-saint-paul-iii-la-seconde-epitre-aux-corinthiens>

Neil Godfrey - November 2023



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## EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

The epistle to the Ephesians is closely related to the epistle to the Colossians. But the critics who generally agree in admitting the authenticity of the latter also agree in rejecting the former. According to them, this so-called epistle is a free composition written using the epistle to the Colossians between the years 100 and 120.

### 1. THE MYSTERY REVEALED NOW... AND TO THE PROPHETS

In III, 3-5 Paul, after mentioning the revelation of the mystery granted to him, says that this mystery was not manifested "in other generations" as it has now been revealed to the "holy apostles". He adds that the said mystery was revealed "to the prophets by the Spirit". Are the prophets mentioned here the characters of whom the Acts speak to us

here and there like Agabus or the daughters of the deacon Philip {Act., XI, 28; XXI, 9, 10)? It is impossible to stop at this hypothesis which nevertheless has supporters. The “prophets” found in the early days of Christianity had the privilege of reading into the future; but they had been initiated into the mystery of Christ by the teaching of the apostles and not by a revelation of the spirit. The prophets in question here, who are placed on the same level as the apostles and to whom the mystery was revealed “by the Spirit”, are the prophets of the Old Testament.

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But here an irreducible antinomy presents itself. If the mystery of Christ was not revealed to the sons of men before the holy apostles, the prophets of the Old Testament neither knew it nor announced it. And if it was revealed “by the Spirit” to the prophets of the Old Testament, men of previous generations were not without some manifestation of it. We cannot resort to the expedient of negligence of style, because we have the very clear impression that all the words in this sentence were put there intentionally. Two authors have been there. One said that the mystery of Christ had remained hidden from men of previous generations. The other noted that the Spirit had revealed it to the prophets. And this is obviously the second to date and his note aims to correct the assertion of the first.

One might think that the second redactor limited himself to adding the words “and to the prophets by the Spirit”, and that the original text mentioned the revelation made “now to his holy apostles”. The Epistle to the Colossians allows us to avoid this error. She presents us with a text parallel to the one we are studying here. She speaks I, 26 of the “mystery hidden from ages and generations (which) has now been revealed to his saints”. Let us notice these “saints” to whom the mystery has now been revealed. It's not the apostles, it's simple Christians. Obviously the formula of the Epistle to the Colossians and the formula of the Epistle to the Ephesians depend on one another, or, in any case, on a common source. Which of the two is primitive or represents the primitive text? It must necessarily be the one which is less favorable to the Catholic thesis, the one which does not mention the apostles. And here is the proof acquired that the interpolator of the epistle to the Ephesians worked either on the text of the epistle to the Colossians, or on an identical text; the proof acquired that he did not limit himself to adding to the primitive wording “the prophets by the Spirit”, that he also introduced the “apostles”.

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This fact, it will be said, is of no consequence. This is what we are going to see. Let us return to our text III, 3-4: "It was by revelation that the mystery was manifested to me, according to what I have written briefly. By reading you can understand my intelligence, in the mystery of Christ. » In the presence of this declaration, which is not exempt from boasting, one gets the impression that Paul was the only one to receive the revelation of the Christian mystery, that he was the only one, at the beginning, to have the intelligence of it. We experience this impression, but we do not stop there, we do not have the right to stop there because of the following assertion which counterbalances: "He has now been revealed to his holy apostles". It is quite obvious that Paul does not claim a monopoly on the revelation of the mystery of Christ since, by his own admission, the holy apostles were – naturally before him – favored with the same revelation. This conclusion is the only one authorized by the current state of the text which serves as its basis. But if the base were to collapse, it itself would be swept away. But we saw the base collapse before our eyes. Our current text is the result of an artificial rearrangement. Originally Paul made no mention of the holy apostles any more than of the prophets. He spoke of his revelation; he only talked about her. The counterbalance, the fix that we see today was introduced later. And here is the consequence of this state of affairs. Currently Paul claims no other honor than having participated in the revelation of the Christian mystery granted to the holy apostles. But originally he had other pretensions. He presented himself as the first holder of the revelation. Having him, no one had known the Christian mystery. He alone had received this treasure directly from heaven and had been charged by God to spread it. Moreover, he carried out his august mission with great protests of humility. He declared himself to be (8) "the least of all the saints", the least of all the faithful, as, later, Pope Gregory would call himself *servus servorum* when he reigned over the bishops of the Latin Church. Paul wanted to be the last of the Christians by virtue. He was content to suppress the apostles. We see that a serious operation was necessary to bring our text into line with Catholic doctrine.

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## 2. THE AGES TO COME

In II, 7, Paul, who has just reported the wonders accomplished by God, adds that God produced them

in order to show to the centuries to come the superabundant riches of his grace through his goodness for us in Christ Jesus.

The “centuries to come” in question here parallel the past “centuries” of III, 9 from which the mystery was hidden. The latter designate past generations. The “ages to come” therefore designate future generations (thirty years were counted for a generation), and the meaning of the text is that the riches of divine grace were poured out on Paul's contemporaries so that this spectacle would serve the instruction of “generations to come”, that is to say the instruction of men who will live two or three generations after Paul. Such a statement is hardly understandable in the mouth of Paul (and those will not contradict me who, based on I Cor., X, 11, think that the apostle believed himself to be on the "eve of the end of the world) ; but it is very understandable from the pen of a writer around 140 who wants to pass himself off as Paul. Text II, 7 is the work of a forger. And this judgment must be extended to all the primitive writing of which it is a part. The name of Paul, behind which the first writer of the epistle to the Ephesians hides himself (I, 15; III, 1, 14; IV, 1, 17) is a fiction.

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### 3. THE DIVINE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

What does this fictional Paul teach? In I, 6 he tells us about the redemption we have obtained. He then unfolds before our eyes the plan of this redemption in the dissertation of chapter II which considers man at two moments: first before the intervention of “God rich in mercy”, then after this intervention. In the first period we were dead in our sins. We lived “according to the Peon of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, according to the spirit which now works in the sons of unbelief.” We were slaves of the flesh and by nature, “angry sons”. Finding us in this terrible situation, God quickened us through Christ, resurrected us with him, seated us in heaven. We are his work, we were created in Christ Jesus who destroyed the law of the commandments and formed in each of us the new man.

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We know the origin of the resurrection of which we are told here that we are beneficiaries from now on; it is a dogma of Marcionite theology (p. 105). And the destruction of the law of the commandments, that is to say the Mosaic law, is another (p. 107). These two acquired results give us the key to certain expressions which, taken in isolation, would be obscure. The “aeon of this world” is the Creator. This cruel god, who only wants our evil, gave us a body of flesh on purpose to induce us to sin and then to have a legitimate reason to vent his wrath on us. We are therefore truly “sons of wrath by nature”, since our carnal nature automatically produces sins for which the Creator will then take vengeance. But we are also, since our redemption, “the work”

(what the Vulgate calls *factura*) of the good God; we are even “created” in Christ Jesus, not by our body of flesh which comes only from the Creator, but by “the new man” (II, 15; see also IV, 24), that is to say by the “new spirit” (IV, 23) formed in us when we become Christians.

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#### 4. THE MYSTERY HIDDEN IN THE GOD WHO CREATED EVERYTHING

The writing of the epistle to the Ephesians is, as a whole, Marcionite. It is on this background that the Catholic publisher applied his embroidery. We already know the one he performed in III, 5. Several others will be noted in the notes. I will only deal here with three alterations which require certain explanations.

In III, 9, Paul tells us that he received the mission to make known the plan of the mystery hidden “in the God who created everything”. The formula “the God who created everything” is unique in the entire New Testament (in Hebr., III, 4 there is an important nuance). His presence here is a strange fact. This fact necessarily has an explanation. What is it? What complicates the problem is that the context is, without any possible doubt, Marcionite and that, according to Marcionite dogmatics, the good God had kept the mystery of Christ carefully hidden from all creatures, but especially from the creator God. Our current text cannot therefore come from the original editor who would have considered it a pure absurdity. Where does it come from and how did it originate? In any case, there is a Catholic alteration here, and the only question is to know what exactly it consisted of. The Marcionites of the end of the second century claimed that Saint Paul had spoken of the “mystery hidden from the God who created everything” and that the Catholics had altered his text by inserting the particle “in”. Tertullian from whom we have this information (*Ado. Marc.*, V, 18) naturally takes the counter part and accuses Marcion of having suppressed the particle which, according to him, is an integral part of Paul's text.

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The solution of the Marcionites of the end of the second century is attractive. Yet I dare not adhere to it. It assumes that the Marcionite editor designated in full the “God who created everything”. But this is extremely improbable. In the Marcionite documents which have passed before our eyes the Creator is called “the Evil One”, “the Devil”, “the Prince of this world”, “the Prince of the power of the air” “the Power of darkness”; other

times it is the subject of turns of phrase which designate it without giving it any name <sup>1</sup>. In only one place (II, Cor., IV, 4) is he called "the God of this age." This last designation thrown there disdainfully does not seem to me sufficient to guarantee the authenticity of the formula in dispute. I therefore believe that "the God who created everything" is the product of a Catholic retouching and that the Marcionites contemporaries of Tertullian, mystified by this expression whose true origin escaped them, got away with correcting it. Their lesson "hidden from the God who created all" is a second interpolation practiced in an earlier interpolation.

1. See the Epistle to the Romans, p. 34.

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Should we conclude that the first redaction spoke of the "mystery hidden in God" (in the good God)? This hypothesis would be plausible if the complement apo ton aïônôn which appears here designated past times. But it certainly designates past generations, because it is from generations or, if you like, from the men who constitute them that we can hide a mystery and not from times. Now with this interpretation the formula "in God" is as naive as it is superfluous. Let us conclude that what belongs to the Catholic editor is not only the incidental "who created everything", it is the entire expression "in the God who created everything. The first editor limited himself to saying that Paul had made known the plan of the mystery "hidden to past generations," without feeling the need to explain that the mystery was hidden in God.

#### 5, ASCENDED ON HIGH...HE MADE GIFTS TO MEN

We read in IV, 7-16 a dissertation, a biblical reference and a commentary on this reference. The dissertation deals with the gifts that Christ distributes to the faithful for the good of his Church which is his body. The biblical reference taken from Psalm 68.19 precisely mentions gifts granted to men by someone who ascended on high and who took captives.

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And the comment? Well, the commentary explains that to go up you first had to go down! He is only concerned with the descent of Christ and, from the text, he only retains the accessory word "having ascended"! Suffice it to say that it has nothing in common with the dissertation whose subject is the gifts of Christ to his Church. It appears as an

attached piece, it and the biblical text it accompanies. The original wording immediately went from 7 to 11: "To each of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he himself made some evangelists..." The biblical quotation with its commentary was inserted by a foreign hand and at a later date.

What does interpolation aim for? Before answering this question, let us first find out what descent she is talking about and, for this, note that she proceeds by way of deduction starting from this implied principle that Christ was originally in heaven. The reasoning is this. "Since Christ ascended to heaven in which he originally resided, he had to temporarily leave this residence and make a descent." Now we easily see that this descent was carried out from the day when Christ came among men, lived with them. The descent that the author has in mind is therefore not the descent into hell, as is often said, it is simply the coming to earth which, in contrast to the celestial heights where Christ originally resided, is described as " low background ".

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So the interpolator mentions the coming of Christ to earth. For what? Because he notes that the coming of Christ can be deduced from a text of the psalms. It is this observation that is its objective. Or rather the second of its objectives. The first is to prove that the gifts made by Christ to his Church were also predicted by the psalms. Because this is how his argument is reconstituted. Reading in the early redaction that every Christian received grace according to the gift of Christ who established evangelists, pastors, etc., he noted that the gifts of Christ to his Church had been restated by Psalm 68:19 : "He gave gifts to men." But as one could have objected to him that this oracle has no Christological significance, he called to his aid the expression "having ascended to heaven". He deduced from this ascension a prior descent of which only an inhabitant of heaven, that is to say Christ, was capable.

It goes without saying that this scholarly exegesis according to which the life and works of Christ were predicted by the Jewish Bible is not idle amusement. She wants to refute Marcionite theology which excluded any connection between Christ and the Old Testament. It is the work of the Catholic publisher. This apologist probably used Justin who, in Dialogue 39, 4 and 87, 6, discusses twice the text of Psalm 68, 19. In any case our epistle and Justin give with a few nuances the same lesson which differs greatly from the current text of the LXX where we read: "Having ascended on high you took captives, you received gifts from men. »

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## 6. IT IS THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

The piece which goes from V, 22 to VI, 9 sets out the duties of the different classes of society. The duty of husbands, which alone concerns us here, is the subject of multiple considerations. The first sets out in lofty language everything that Christ has done for his Church and concludes: "This is the model that you must reproduce; your love for your wives must be similar to Christ's love for the Church. » Then come (V, 30-32) a lesson in theology and a lesson in exegesis. The first teaches that we are "of the flesh and bones of Christ", that is to say that there is a bond of kinship between our flesh and the flesh of Christ (the editors of the Greek text have ruled out wrong this thought that Saint Irenaeus cites in 5, 2, 3). The second gives us the official interpretation of the text of Genesis II, 24 "They will be two in one flesh", it teaches us that this oracle contains the mystery of Christ and of the Church, that is to say describes in advance the union of Christ with the Church.

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These two lessons do not tell husbands how they should behave towards their wives. They are foreign to the spirit of the whole piece which exposes obligations and not curiosities. These are appetizers. They undoubtedly want to prove something, but the demonstration they are intended to provide has no connection with the context.

Let's try to see what they want to prove. Estius, very embarrassed by the text where we read that we are of the flesh and bones of Christ, ends up confessing that there is a testimony in favor of the incarnation of the Son of God who, by coming to earth, took our nature with all its elements. From the end of the second century Irenaeus expressed the same thought in these terms (5.2, 3): "These words cannot be understood of a spiritual and invisible being, given that a spirit has neither bones nor flesh ... » Irenaeus and Estius are right. The oracle in question is a profession of faith in the incarnation of Christ. But this profession of faith could only be promulgated when the need arose, that is to say when the incarnation was rejected. It is intended to demolish the spiritual Christ of Marcionism; it comes from the Catholic editor.

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As for the exegesis lesson which immediately follows the theology lesson, it is clearly intended to complete it. Let us remember that the school of Marcion which rejected the carnal Christ also rejected any connection between the Old Testament and Jesus. It is this second dogma that the text attacks: "There is a great mystery there. » It proves that the Old Testament contains an anticipated description of Jesus' union with the Church; it



comes from the Catholic editor who is therefore the author of all the hors d'oeuvre contained in 30-32. It is also to him that we must attribute 28 and 29 which prepare and bring the two lessons that he was keen to give.

Let's summarize. The Marcionite writing was limited to prescribing husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church for which he gave himself up. It went immediately from V, 27 to VI, 1. Finding himself in front of this editorial, the Catholic editor judged it appropriate to explain that the Christ who gave himself for the Church is a Christ in flesh and blood like us, a Christ of whom Genesis spoke. But as this gloss could not be annexed as such to the original text, he set out to find a connection and, this connection, he thought of realizing it in a maxim which would once again enjoin husbands to love their wives. and who would motivate this injunction by presenting the woman as the husband's flesh. Hence 28 and 29 summarized in 33. They are not wanted for themselves; they serve as a bridge to go from 27 to 30, that is to say from the Marcionite editorial staff to the appetizers that the Catholic editor wanted to put there.

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## 7. REPORTS OF THE TWO EPISTLES

Considered in their original writing, that is to say apart from the additions that each of them received later, the epistle to the Ephesians and the epistle to the Colossians both have a dogmatic part and a moral part. In the dogmatic part they both deal with Christ and the work accomplished by Christ. In their moral part, they both deal with the duties of domestic life. They list the same duties and list them in the same order (duties of wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, masters). They are therefore closely related in the domain of ideas. This relationship extends even into the verbal domain. Many of the texts of one are literally found in the other (it is useless to list these coincidences which are noted in all the Bibles). They give the impression of two twin sisters.

Let us now say that this resemblance does not exclude certain divergent traits. First of all, the parallel texts, except for the moral part, do not follow each other in the same order. Then the epistle to the Ephesians being notably longer than the epistle to the Colossians, necessarily has oracles which belong to it. Moreover, the epistle to the Colossians, although shorter, also has thoughts which are her own and which are not found in her sister. No doubt several of these thoughts which are not duplicates belong to the Catholic editorial staff; but the Marcionite editorial team, which alone concerns us here, itself offers us this spectacle. In short, one of our letters was written by someone

who knew the other inside and out, who had assimilated it and who reproduced it without refraining from a few deletions, a few additions, a few rearrangements. Among the changes, the following deserve special attention:

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Col. I, 4, 9: Having been informed of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your charity for all the saints... we do not cease to pray for you.	Eph. I, 15: Therefore, having been informed of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your charity for all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you.
Col. IV, 3: Pray at the same time for us, so that God will open a door for us to preach the mystery of Christ.	Eph. VI, 18, 19: Pray... also for me so that, opening my mouth, I may speak and make known freely the mystery of the gospel.

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The same thoughts which, in Col., are expressed in the name of a community, are put in Eph., on behalf of Paul. And this fact is not exceptional. In Col., individual writing is limited to a small number of sentences, and it always has the appearance of an hors d'oeuvre or even an overload. It is quite different in the epistle to the Ephesians. Here Paul fills most of chapter III (15 verses out of 21). Elsewhere, it is true, his intervention lasts less long; but it never enters the text through a back door and by means of an incident. We do not encounter in Eph., the spectacle that Col, VI, 3 gives us where Paul slyly sneaks up behind the community asking for prayers. To this first contrast is added a second. In Col., Paul's intervention is the work of the Catholic editor. In Eph., on the contrary, it belongs to the Marcionite writing, and Paul boasts (III, 3) of having known the Christian mystery by revelation. These are the facts. It is in their light that we will seek to which of these two epistles, considered before the overloads of the Catholic edition, the priority belongs.

Paul had incomparable prestige in Marcionite circles. This being the case, let us suppose that a Christian community animated by the spirit of Marcion had, around 140, sent to another Marcionite community a letter written in the name of the community, that is to say analogous to the letter from Clement Romain to the Corinthians. It is easy to understand that, to enhance the authority of this piece, a Marcionite doctor gave it, shortly after, a second edition written in the name of Paul himself. But the opposite hypothesis is absolutely inconceivable. No one will believe that, from a Marcionite letter

written in the name of Paul, a letter written in the name of a Christian community was taken, by way of rearrangement.

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We are simply applying these principles when we state that the Marcionite redaction of Colossians must have preceded the Marcionite redaction of Ephesians. Ephesians is merely an adaptation. It is in the epistle to the Colossians that we must look for the primitive draft; it is this which served as a model for the epistle to the Ephesians.

So much for the primitive edition. Now a few words about the Catholic edition. The formulas which belong to this edition and with which our two epistles are sprinkled have such a pronounced family resemblance that they must have the same origin. Let us therefore say that the epistle to the Colossians and the epistle to the Ephesians owe their present appearance to one and the same author. After applying a Catholic varnish to both, this editor accentuated the kinship he saw between them. Having inserted into the epistle to the Colossians Paul's note of which he was the holder, he introduced an extract from this same note into the sister epistle. Having proved by several attestations that the epistle to the Colossians dated from Paul's captivity, he also furnished proof that the great apostle had written the sister epistle during his captivity.

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## CONCLUSION

The epistle to the Ephesians, in its original form, is a reworking of the letter to the Marcionite community of Colossae, intended to give this letter a Pauline origin. In its present form it is the work of the unknown author to whom we owe the Catholic edition of the epistle to the Colossians.