

Just Like

Ephesians 4:32 - 5:2

Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. Motivate 4:32

- a. Forgiving Each other
 - i. Forgive - **to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, *forgive, pardon***
- b. Just As Christ Forgave You
 - i. The preceding section of the letter had dealt with the distinctive conduct required of Christian believers in strong but general terms, choosing to underline the change from their previous behavior and their identity as new people, an identity which must be continually appropriated ethically. A motivation for such action is attached to the last of these qualities and directs the readers' attention to the heart of their experience of salvation, namely that God in Christ has already forgiven them. The concluding sentence in 5:1, 2 exhorts the readers to be imitators of God in the activities described primarily in 4:32 but then also in 5:2—forgiveness and love. The general call to live in love can be seen as a positive summary of the passage's earlier admonitions. Walking in love includes thinking, talking, and working in love. Costly, sacrificial love is to become the distinguishing mark of the readers' lives because, as the traditional formulation embellished by the writer's rhetorical flourish puts it, Christ loved them and gave himself up for them as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
 - ii. The idea of 4:32b, forgive as God forgives, is now widened here into imitation of God and in v. 2 to 'love'. Naturally a widening to imitation can only be partial for it is impossible to imitate
 - iii. The context, 4:32 and 5:2 suggests the readiness to forgive and love, love being a generalization of forgiveness.
 - iv. The motivation to conduct provided here and in 4:32 is not just an additional motivation comparable with those in 4:25–31 but is the basic motivation in a Christian ethic in a way those of 4:25–31

II. Imitate

- a. Imitators
 - i. Imitators

1. Human objects, therefore, ultimately point to Christ
 - a. and the repetition of the same imperative γίνεσθε, “be,” from 4:32, make clear that this exhortation is drawing out the consequences of the previous one. The readers’ forgiving of one another, just as God in Christ forgave them, entails their becoming imitators of God. They are to make God’s activity the pattern for their lives. Their depiction as God’s dearly loved children makes clear the basis on which the demand for imitation is made

ii. Of God

1. Only in Eph 5:1 are believers called to be imitators of God, but even here the example given is Christ: his forgiveness, love, and sacrificial service (Eph 4:32; 5:2). Christ is the incarnate example of God for believers to emulate in their daily experience
2. The writer of Ephesians chooses the highest model possible and in so doing supplies the only passage in the NT where the explicit language of imitation of God is employed
3. as here in Eph 4:32–5:1, imitating God is seen in terms of showing kindness and forgiving. The tradition of the imitation of God has been made to serve the writer’s perspective, in which a new relationship with God is needed for this imitation to be accomplished, and that relationship is based on God’s saving activity in Christ.
4. The idea of the imitation of God in 5:1 is defined both by what precedes (God’s activity in forgiveness) and by what follows (his love, the essential characteristic of his activity in Christ). In fact, the imitation of God turns out to be the imitation of Christ, as in the motivating clause it is the latter’s love and self-giving that are the ground and the norm for the behavior required of believers (see the discussion of 4:32 for the force of καθὼς καί and the “conformity pattern”).
5. With the exhortation of 5:1 to be imitators of God and with the motivations supplied in 4:32 and 5:2, the last part of the section shows that even in his ethical instruction the writer has not lost his theological and Christological perspectives. Indeed, if the command to love can be said to sum up the other injunctions, then the notion of the imitation of God which accompanies it can also stand as an encapsulation of the theocentric focus of the writer’s ethical thinking. As elsewhere in the letter the theological and the Christological go hand in hand, for the God of whom the writer

speaks is the God who has acted to forgive humanity in and through the love of Christ whose sacrifice was supremely pleasing to him. In this way, for believers, imitation of God also turns out to be imitation of Christ in his sacrificial love.

iii. Beloved Children

1. Children - of those who exhibit characteristics of transcendent entities
 - a. Believers have been adopted into God's family (cf. 1:5) and should exhibit the family resemblance. It would be incongruous to be God's dearly loved child and not to want to become like one's loving Father. In fact, the new child-Father relationship not only requires but also enables imitation to take place, as the children live their lives out of the love they have already experienced from their Father.
 - b. as children beloved of God. He adds, says Chrys., another obligation of imitating God, not only because He has conferred benefits on us, but because we are His children

III. Replicate

a. Walk

- i. Walk – **to conduct one's life, comport oneself, behave, live** as habit of conduct; The sphere in which one lives or ought to live, so as to be characterized by that sphere
 1. 2:2; 4:1, 23; the present imperative probably means 'keep on behaving
 2. imperative that believers should live in love is grounded in the indicative of Christ's costly self-giving, which is the historical manifestation of the love of God. The imperative employs the verb περιπατεῖν, lit. "to walk" (see the discussion of the earlier use of this term in 2:2, 10; 4:1), which is found in each section of the paraenesis until the household code—4:1 in 4:1–16, 4:17 in 4:17–24, 5:2 in 4:25–5:2, 5:8 in 5:3–14, and 5:15 in 5:15–20. The language of walking in love had been used by Paul in his exhortation in Rom 14:15. Here, walking in love is the way in which one imitates God. The stress on the necessity of love is similar to that at the beginning of the paraenesis in 4:2, 15, 16 and reflects the emphasis it is given in Col 3:12–14, the text on which the writer draws. Certainly the sacrifice of one's own interests out of concern for the welfare of others is the quality above all that fosters harmony in the community.

- ii. **Love – Agape the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love** (without limitation to very intimate relationships, and very seldom in general Greek of sexual attraction)
 1. Compare John 13:34, “as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” καὶ παρέδωκεν expresses wherein this love was shown. So ver. 25, “loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”; Gal. 2:20, “loved me, and gave Himself for me
 2. As in 4:32 it is difficult to take it as purely comparative for Christ’s love, or God’s love in Christ, is unique in that Christ gave himself for all. Our love cannot lead us to act soteriologically as he did, though in a willingness to forget ourselves and put others first it can be said to resemble his love.
- b. Christ Love You
 - i. Love
 1. Christ loved us ‘and so’, or ‘in that he’, gave himself up. Christ’s love is actualised in his self-surrender
 2. But imitation of Jesus as seen by Paul is not imitation of the day-to-day life of the historical Jesus; it relates rather to his incarnation and death (Phil 2:5–11; 2 Cor 8:9; Rom 15:3, 7)
- c. Christ Gave Himself
 - i. Gave - *hand over, turn over, give up* a person *he gave himself to God for us as a sacrifice and an offering*
 1. The formulation states that Christ gave himself up ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us,” on behalf of believers. He did this as their representative, and sometimes the notion of representation involves that of substitution (cf. also Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:14, 21)
 - ii. Offering– **that which is brought as a voluntary expression**
 1. Here we have a formula which speaks of Christ’s self-surrender (“he gave himself for us”), expanded with sacrificial language from the OT: “as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God” (cf. Ps 40:7; Num 15:24, etc.). The context here is parenetic. It is an appeal to Christians, bidding them to show the same kind of love to one another
 - iii. Sacrifice
 1. Sacrifice – of the sacrificial death of Christ which, in contrast to the earthly sacrifices, is to be classed among
 2. To God
 3. As a Fragrant Aroma - sacrifice, pleasing to God
 - a. The final phrase is frequent in the OT (the genitive εὐωδίας is adjectival, a Semitism); though originally understood

physically as if God was pleased with the smell rising from sacrifices (Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Lev 2:9; etc.) it, like sacrifice, was spiritualised (Ezek 20:41; Dan 4:37a LXX; *T Levi* 3:6; Phil 4:18; cf *Barn* 2:10) and applied to life and action which was pleasing to God.

Word Studies

Imitators - Human objects, therefore, ultimately point to Christ. Twice, Paul calls for his readers to imitate himself, but at the same time he names Christ as the final object of their imitation (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). Only in Eph 5:1 are believers called to be imitators of God, but even here the example given is Christ: his forgiveness, love, and sacrificial service (Eph 4:32; 5:2). Christ is the incarnate example of God for believers to emulate in their daily experience¹

Children - of those who exhibit characteristics of transcendent entities: ²

¹ Michael J. Wilkins, "[Imitate, Imitators,](#)" in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 392.

² William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 995.

Walk – **to conduct one’s life, comport oneself, behave, live** as habit of conduct;³ The sphere in which one lives or ought to live, so as to be characterized by that sphere, is designated by ἐν: ⁴

Love – Agape the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love (without limitation to very intimate relationships, and very seldom in general Greek of sexual attraction)⁵

Finally, Paul implores the Romans by the love of the Spirit (Rom 15:30) to be his allies in the fight. Possibly the author of Colossians was trying to relate the Spirit to love as well, but probably is speaking of the way in which love is demonstrated in the community of the spirit (Col 1:8). The central place which Paul attributes to love is seen most clearly in those passages where he attempts to define the essence of union with Christ. The letter to the Galatians forced that issue. In reviewing the alternatives Paul concludes: It is either freedom under Christ or trying to live under the law. Take it from me, he says: as for those who choose the latter alternative and receive circumcision, Christ will profit them nothing (Gal 5:2). He repeats, “anyone who undergoes circumcision obligates himself to keep the whole law” (5:3). The third statement moves to the one who seeks justification through the law; those people are “cut off from Christ and have fallen from the domain of God’s grace” (5:4).⁶ In contrast to those options Paul emphatically affirms, “But we await our hope of justification by the Spirit through faith. In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision amounts to anything: all that matters is faith activated by love (*6gape*)” (5:6). This fundamental affirmation is supported throughout Pauline writings.

Love stands at the head of the list of the fruits of the Spirit Paul enumerates in Gal 5:22, and appears in a number of other series or lists (Eph 4:2; 4:32–5:2; Col 3:12; 2 Cor 6:6; 2 Pet 1:7).⁷

Gave - *hand over, turn over, give up* a person⁸*he gave himself to God for us as a sacrifice and an offering vs. 2.*⁹

³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 803.

⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 803.

⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 6.

⁶ William Klassen, [*“Love: NT and Early Jewish Literature.”*](#) in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 392.

⁷ William Klassen, [*“Love: NT and Early Jewish Literature.”*](#) in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 392.

⁸ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 762.

⁹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 762.

Offering – that which is brought as a voluntary expression¹⁰ The final stage of the atonement ritual takes place concealed within the innermost shrine of the temple, one of a series of sacrifices performed on that occasion. Now, however, the atonement has taken place on Golgotha for all to see. The Deutero-Pauline saying in Eph 5:2 makes the same point. Here we have a formula which speaks of Christ's self-surrender ("he gave himself for us"), expanded with sacrificial language from the OT: "as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God" (cf. Ps 40:7; Num 15:24, etc.). The context here is parenetic. It is an appeal to Christians, bidding them to show the same kind of love to one another (Hahn 1983:75–76).¹¹

Sacrifice – of the sacrificial death of Christ which, in contrast to the earthly sacrifices, is to be classed among¹²

Fragrant – sacrifice, pleasing to God¹³

¹⁰ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 887.

¹¹ Hans-Josef Klauck, "[Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings: New Testament,](#)" in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 889.

¹² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 462.

¹³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 417.

Commentary Study

5:1, 2 As has been noted earlier, the pericope as a whole ends on a positive note with two exhortations formulated in positive terms and a motivating clause similar in form to the one in 4:32 which has just been examined.

γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.” Both the οὖν, “therefore,” and the repetition of the same imperative γίνεσθε, “be,” from 4:32, make clear that this exhortation is drawing out the consequences of the previous one. The readers’ forgiving of one another, just as God in Christ forgave them, entails their becoming imitators of God. They are to make God’s activity the pattern for their lives. Their depiction as God’s dearly loved children makes clear the basis on which the demand for imitation is made (cf. also Meyer, 263–64; Schlier, 230; Mitton, 175; Halter, *Taufe*, 266; Schnackenburg, 216; Wild, “ ‘Be Imitators,’ ” 143 n. 60). Believers have been adopted into God’s family (cf. 1:5) and should exhibit the family resemblance. It would be incongruous to be God’s dearly loved child and not to want to become like one’s loving Father. In fact, the new child-Father relationship not only requires but also enables imitation to take place, as the children live their lives out of the love they have already experienced from their Father.

A frequent feature in ancient paraenesis was the provision of models for imitation (cf., e.g., Seneca, *Epp.* 6.5, 6; 11.9, 10; 95.72; Ps-Isocrates, *Demonicus* 11.36; *T. Benj.* 3.1; 4.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 8.13). The writer of Ephesians chooses the highest model possible and in so doing supplies the only passage in the NT where the explicit language of imitation of God is employed. (On the idea of imitation in the NT cf. E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* [London: SCM, 1960]; A. Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen* [Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1962]; H. D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1967]. B. Lindars’ article, “Imitation of God and Imitation of Christ,” *Theology* 76 [1973] 394–402, which asserts that the idea of the imitation of God “is neither biblical nor true to the ethical position of Jesus and the early Church, in so far as these can be recovered from the New Testament” does not take into account the language of Eph 5:1.) Paul, of course, urges his churches to imitate other churches (cf. 1 Thess 2:14), to imitate him (cf. 1 Cor 4:16, where he uses the father-child imagery in connection with this imitation; 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7, 9), and to imitate Christ (1 Thess 1:6), but not to imitate God. This language occurs elsewhere in early Christian literature only later (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 1.1; Ign. *Trall.* 1.2; *Diogn.* 10.4–6). The actual language of imitation is very rare in the LXX (cf. Wis 4:2; 9:8; 15:9; 4 Macc 9:23; 13:9) and never used with reference to imitation of God. There are, however, functionally equivalent notions in the OT such as following Yahweh (e.g., Num 14:24; 32:11, 12; Josh 14:8, 9, 14; 1 Sam 12:14; 1 Kgs 11:6; 14:8) or the theme found frequently in the Holiness Code, e.g., Lev 19:2, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” Similarly, there are functional equivalents in the NT. In terms of content, the closest parallel is with Luke 6:35, 36 (cf. also Matt 5:44–48), where God’s kindness and mercy are made the norm for human conduct. But whereas in Luke the eschatological reward for

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imitating these divine qualities will be to become sons of the Most High, in Ephesians this relationship has already been given and is what enables the imitation to take place.

For instances of the use of the actual language of imitating God one must turn to Hellenistic Jewish writings where this notion was traditional (cf. *T. Ash.* 4.3; Philo, *De Sacr.* 68; *De Spec. Leg.* 4.73, 187–88; *De Virt.* 168; cf. also Gnilka, 243; Barth, 556 n. 10, 588–92; and esp. Wild, “‘Be Imitators,’” 128–33; pace Fischer, *Tendenz*, 140, who strangely claims that there is no mention of imitation of God even in Hellenistic Judaism). *De Virt.* 168 shows that Philo equated imitation of God with the ethical goal of assimilation to God (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), a phrase which in Middle Platonism was seen as *the* statement of the purpose of human existence (cf. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [London: Duckworth, 1977] 44, 122, 145, 192, 299). In *De Fug.* 63 Philo cites Plato’s *Theatetus* 176A-B on this: “Therefore we ought to flee from earth to heaven as quickly as we can. This flight means to become like God as far as is possible. In turn this becoming like him means with the help of insight to become just and holy [ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι].” We have already noted that Eph 4:24 also holds that being in conformity to God (κατὰ θεόν) involves justice and holiness. The likelihood that the writer is familiar with similar traditions to those used by Philo is increased when it is observed that in *De Spec. Leg.* 4.72–73, as here in Eph 4:32–5:1, imitating God is seen in terms of showing kindness and forgiving. The tradition of the imitation of God has been made to serve the writer’s perspective, in which a new relationship with God is needed for this imitation to be accomplished, and that relationship is based on God’s saving activity in Christ.

καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὄσμῃν εὐωδίας, “and live in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The idea of the imitation of God in 5:1 is defined both by what precedes (God’s activity in forgiveness) and by what follows (his love, the essential characteristic of his activity in Christ). In fact, the imitation of God turns out to be the imitation of Christ, as in the motivating clause it is the latter’s love and self-giving that are the ground and the norm for the behavior required of believers (see the discussion of 4:32 for the force of καθὼς καί and the “conformity pattern”). The sudden change of focus from God in 5:1 to Christ in 5:2 should be seen in the light of the dual reference to God’s activity in Christ in the motivating clause of 4:32, although its immediate cause may well be simply that Christ was the subject in the traditional formulation which came to the writer’s mind (cf. Gnilka, 244). The love involved in the events of salvation can be attributed both to God, as it is in 2:4, and to Christ, as it is here. The imperative that believers should live in love is grounded in the indicative of Christ’s costly self-giving, which is the historical manifestation of the love of God. The imperative employs the verb περιπατεῖν, lit. “to walk” (see the discussion of the earlier use of this term in 2:2, 10; 4:1), which is found in each section of the paraenesis until the household code—4:1 in 4:1–16, 4:17 in 4:17–24, 5:2 in 4:25–5:2, 5:8 in 5:3–14, and 5:15 in 5:15–20. The language of walking in love had been used by Paul in his exhortation in Rom 14:15. Here, walking in love is the way in which one imitates God. The stress on the necessity of love is similar to that

De Spec. Leg. De Specialibus Legibus (Philo)

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pace with due respect to, but differing from

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at the beginning of the paraenesis in 4:2, 15, 16 and reflects the emphasis it is given in Col 3:12–14, the text on which the writer draws. Certainly the sacrifice of one’s own interests out of concern for the welfare of others is the quality above all that fosters harmony in the community.

The description of Christ’s love is in traditional language, which gives the pericope a concluding rhetorical flourish. The combination of verbs in the assertion that Christ loved believers and gave himself up for them occurs later in 5:25, had been employed by Paul in Gal 2:20, and may have links with formulations in the earliest community about Christ giving himself up (cf. Mark 9:31; 10:33; 14:41). Though the language is likely to be traditional, there is no compelling reason for assigning it to a hymn (pace Barth, 557). The formulation states that Christ gave himself up ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us,” on behalf of believers. He did this as their representative, and sometimes the notion of representation involves that of substitution (cf. also Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:14, 21). Certainly the sacrificial nature of Christ’s death becomes explicit in the liturgical turns of phrase that now feature in this writer’s effusive style. προσφορά καὶ θυσία (cf. LXX Ps 39:6) is a hendiadys employing two general terms, both of which included all kinds of sacrifices, grain and animal, while εἰς ὄσμην εὐωδίας utilizes the frequent LXX metaphor for a sacrifice which was particularly pleasing to God (e.g., Exod 29:18; Lev 2:9, 12; Ezek 20:41). Some commentators (cf. Schlier, 232; Gnllka, 245 n. 6) connect τῷ θεῷ with the latter rather than the former phrase, but because of its place in the sentence this is not as likely a construction (cf. also Meyer, 264; Abbott, 147). The imagery performs a doxological function at the end of the sentence, as through it the writer indicates that Christ’s sacrifice of love was supremely pleasing and glorifying to God. But the rhetoric still serves the paraenesis, and the readers are reminded that Christ’s sacrificial love should find a response in analogous acts of love toward each other. It is significant that Paul, in Phil 4:18, could in fact speak of the Philippians’ sacrificial love for him in the same terms that this writer uses for Christ’s sacrifice, “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”

Explanation

The preceding section of the letter had dealt with the distinctive conduct required of Christian believers in strong but general terms, choosing to underline the change from their previous behavior and their identity as new people, an identity which must be continually appropriated ethically. Now, by means of a series of hortatory sentences on a number of topics, the writer states more specifically what this involves. All but one of the seven sentences take the form of two exhortations followed by a motivating clause (a second exhortation is implicit in 4:29), and the remaining fifth sentence of 4:30 functions as a summarizing motivating clause for what has preceded. Colossians (3:8b, 9a, 12–14) again serves as the basic source for the content of five of the seven sentences but has been elaborated on by means of other traditional material from the LXX, Hellenistic Judaism, Stoicism, and Paul.

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The exhortation of the first ethical sentence in v 25 follows up the writer's talk of putting off the old person and putting on the new person, whose way of life is derived from the truth, by an appeal to put off the lying characteristic of the old life and instead to speak the truth. The grounds for this appeal are then stated—believers are fellow members of the body of Christ. Their solidarity requires the mutual trust engendered by truthful communication. Not only lying, but also anger, presents an obstacle to harmonious relationships, and the second sentence takes up this topic in vv 26, 27. The readers are to avoid anger at all costs, and if they do become angry, they are not to indulge their anger, and thereby sin, but are instead to expel it immediately. The reason given for this counsel is that anger which is indulged gives the devil opportunity to exploit its effects.

Verse 28 treats a third topic that is illustrative of the change from the old to the new way of living. Instead of using their hands to steal, believers will use them to work hard and produce the resources to do good. The motive to which appeal is made in this call to engage in the toil and struggle of work is the well-being of others in the community. The hard worker will have something to share with those in need. The fourth sentence of v 29 returns to the topic of speech but this time employs the categories of good (taken up from the preceding sentence) and evil instead of truth and falsehood. What is prohibited is the use of words in an unwholesome and destructive fashion, and what is encouraged is their constructive use whenever the need for building up another person arises. The motivation and criterion for the right use of language is to be its beneficial effect. In v 30 the readers, who have been stamped with the holy character of the Spirit of God and guaranteed the future aspect of their redemption, are urged to do nothing to distress the Spirit. This fifth sentence functions as a further motivation supporting the preceding exhortations. There is a particular link with the immediately preceding topic, since the Spirit who binds the community together is especially grieved when words are used in a way that is detrimental to his work.

Just as the fourth sentence returned to the topic of the first, so now the sixth sentence in vv 31, 32 returns to the topic of the second—anger. Various vices associated with anger, and which may well progress from its inner core of bitterness through its initial eruption and steady festering to its external expression in yelling and the vilification of others, are all to be removed. In their place is to come the practice of the virtues of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. A motivation for such action is attached to the last of these qualities and directs the readers' attention to the heart of their experience of salvation, namely that God in Christ has already forgiven them. The concluding sentence in 5:1, 2 exhorts the readers to be imitators of God in the activities described primarily in 4:32 but then also in 5:2—forgiveness and love. The general call to live in love can be seen as a positive summary of the passage's earlier admonitions. Walking in love includes thinking, talking, and working in love. Costly, sacrificial love is to become the distinguishing mark of the readers' lives because, as the traditional formulation embellished by the writer's rhetorical flourish puts it, Christ loved them and gave himself up for them as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The earlier part of the letter has reinforced for the readers their identity as part of a movement that is the focus within history of a new reality with cosmic dimensions. Now the attempt is made to show how this body of Christ comes to concrete expression and what exactly is required of its members in their daily living. Because of its general nature, the material in this passage can provide no clues to the specific circumstances of the letter's recipients. Clearly,

however, the writer considers that his Gentile Christian readers need a reminder of some of the basic attitudes and actions necessary if they are to play their part in the Church's growth in unity and love. The topics chosen are illustrative of conduct befitting harmonious relationships. The function of the traditional material in the exhortations, and particularly of the motivating clauses, is to foster the desired conduct by appealing to various assumptions that the writer and his readers have in common as a result of their allegiance to the apostolic gospel and tradition.

What the writer in this passage expects of his readers' practical conduct can now be summed up. Negatively, the lives of the Gentile Christians of the Pauline churches in Asia Minor will be characterized by the absence of lying, destructive talk, stealing, and indulgence of anger or any of its associated vices. Positively, they will be marked by truthful and edifying speech, hard work enabling them to do good deeds, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love. The values and beliefs which are to sustain this quality of life emerge from the writer's motivating clauses. Prominent among these is a profound respect for the corporate nature of Christian existence which derives from his earlier vision of a unified Church; believers are members of one another (4:25), who are concerned about sharing with those of their number in need (4:28) and about the beneficial effect of their words on the rest of the community (4:29). Also involved are beliefs about the roles of God, Christ, the Spirit, and the devil in their lives. The experiential knowledge of God's forgiveness of them in Christ (4:32), of Christ's sacrificial love for them (5:2), and of the Spirit's sealing of them and personal involvement in their communal life (4:30) and the awareness of a personal power of evil able to exploit sinful situations (4:27) are all invoked to shape the response required of the readers in their everyday living.

Earlier in the letter, the writer has depicted the contrast between his readers' previous way of life in the surrounding society and their present existence as Christians in black and white terms. But how different from the surrounding mores are the standards proposed in this passage? Many of the moralists of his own day would have concurred with the writer's assessment and advice. Just as the form of the writer's exhortations—the use of ethical sentences, contrasting negative and positive injunctions, lists of vices and virtues, motivating clauses—can be found in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish literature, so also the content in regard to the specific behavior advocated can be found in that literature. In particular, similarities with the Stoics, Philo, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* have figured prominently in the detailed discussion of the sentences. How many people lived up to the aspirations of the moralists and whether Christians, in fact, achieved any greater success in this regard are questions which do not admit of easy answers. Two points are clear, however. It is the framework of motivations supplied by his gospel that makes this writer's ethical teaching coherent and distinctively Christian. He, at least, is convinced that the power at work in the apostolic gospel should enable his readers to fulfill his aspirations for them, resulting in qualitatively different lives.

Because of the nature of the hortatory material, in this section as in the previous one, the focus of attention is on the readers and their actions. The ecclesiological perspective dominates the early sentences, since three of the first four motivating clauses have in view the well-being of the Christian community. In the other motivating clauses attention is drawn first to the devil and then to the Spirit. With the exhortation of 5:1 to be imitators of God and with the motivations supplied in 4:32 and 5:2, the last part of the section shows that even in his ethical instruction the writer has not lost his theological and Christological perspectives. Indeed, if the command to love

can be said to sum up the other injunctions, then the notion of the imitation of God which accompanies it can also stand as an encapsulation of the theocentric focus of the writer's ethical thinking. As elsewhere in the letter the theological and the Christological go hand in hand, for the God of whom the writer speaks is the God who has acted to forgive humanity in and through the love of Christ whose sacrifice was supremely pleasing to him. In this way, for believers, imitation of God also turns out to be imitation of Christ in his sacrificial love.

The concerns of this passage about both the words and deeds of the readers continue into the next section of exhortation where they focus on sexual morality in particular and are related to the images of light and darkness. The awareness of what is necessary for communal life will come to the fore again in the last part of 5:15–20, and the theme on which the pericope closes, human love as a reflection of Christ's love, will be taken up and elaborated in a striking fashion when the writer addresses wives and husbands in 5:21–33.¹⁴

1. The idea of 4:32b, forgive as God forgives, is now widened here into imitation of God and in v. 2 to 'love'. Naturally a widening to imitation can only be partial for it is impossible to imitate God in everything. Since human beings are part of his creation they can create neither him nor one another. It is only in 5:1 that the NT speaks explicitly of the imitation of God but the theme²³ appears in early post-Ephesian literature (Ign *Eph* 1:1; *Trall* 1:2; *Diogn* 10:4–6; *Iren* 3:20:2).

μιμεῖσθαι and its cognates are rare in the LXX and where they appear they relate to the making of objects to resemble other objects (Wisd 9:8; 15:9; cf Ezek 23:14 Aq) or to one person copying the conduct of another (4 Macc 9:23; 13:9; cf Wisd 4:2; Ezek 16:61 Aq; the *v.l.* at Ψ 30:6; cf *T Benj* 3:1; 4:1). It is unnecessary to trace the origin of the concept in the Greek world where it was widespread, being used in philosophy (the material world an imitation of the ideal, man a microcosm of the macrocosm), in art (artistic creation imitates reality), in the Mysteries (the experience of the initiate imitates that of the god).

¹⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, [Ephesians](#), vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 310–315.

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²³ For the theme and its development see W. Michaelis, *TWNT*, IV, 661–78; H. J. Schoeps, 'Von der Imitatio Dei zur Nachfolge Christi', *Aus Frühchristlicher Zeit*, Tübingen, 1950, 286–301; D. M. Stanley, '“Become Imitators of Me”: The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition'. *Bib* 40 (1959) 859–77; W. P. de Boer, *The Imitation of Paul*, Kampen, 1962, 1–80; A. Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen* (SANT 6), Munich, 1962, 199–251; H. Kosmala, 'Nachfolge und Nachahmung Gottes (II Im jüdischen Denken)', *ASTI* 3 (1964) 65–110; H. D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesus Christi im Neuen Testament* (BHT 37). Tübingen, 1967, 48–136.

In brief, some kind of model is set up for imitation and this appears in varying forms. Important for v. 1 are those places where one person is regarded as imitating, or exhorted to imitate, another: (1) sons to imitate fathers (Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 4:11); (2) subjects, rulers (Xenophon, *Cyropedeia*, VIII 1:21, 24); (3) pupils, teachers (Dio Chrys, *Discourses* 55:4, 5; Seneca, *Ep* 6:5–6); (4) the good are also to be imitated (Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 22:38; 38:61). Parallels exist to most of these in Judaism: (1) 1 Macc 2:51; Philo, *Sacrif Abel* 64; (3) Philo, *Mosis* 1:158; (4) *T Benj* 3:1; 4:1; 4 Macc 9:23; Philo, *Spec Leg* 4:83. *Ps-Phoc* 77 speaks more abstractly of not imitating evil. Philo provides, if not the bridge from the Hellenistic world to Judaism, an example of how Judaism could adopt the theme.²⁴ In him we find both the philosophical and cosmological aspects and the personal (in addition to the above references see also *Congressu* 59; cf *Jos Ant* 3:123; *T Asher* 4:3; *Ep Arist* 188, 210, 281).

Certain factors operated against the appearance among Jews of the idea of the imitation of God: the initial sin of Adam and Eve as the desire to be like God, the existence of human sin, the second commandment forbidding the making of any likeness to God, the Hellenistic usage of imitation in relation to sculpture. Indeed the thought of the imitation of the invisible God is paradoxical. As a result it was only towards the end of the first century that the idea began to appear in Palestinian Judaism (Abba Schaul in *Midrash Siphre* on Lev 19:2; *Tg Jer I*, Lev 22:28; see SB I, 472f). None of this hindered the acceptance of similarity to God in the age to come (cf 1 Jn 3:2). It is sometimes suggested that equivalent ideas to the imitation of God are to be found in the OT (so Michaelis, art.cit.; contrast De Boer, op.cit., 33ff). e.g. following Yahweh, walking in his ways; these ideas however involve obedience. The very centrality of human obedience in the OT may itself have been another factor hindering the concept of imitation from entering Judaism. Lev 19:2 may seem to provide a parallel to imitation with its implication that Jews should exhibit the same holiness as God, and this is certainly how that passage is understood in 1 Pet 1:15f, but in Leviticus the relation is causal rather than comparative. 1 Pet 1:15f (cf Lk 6:36f; Mt 5:44–8; Jn 17:11, 21; Col 3:13, if Lord means God; 1 Jn 4:11) takes it comparatively, showing the idea had entered early Christianity, though Eph 5:1 is its only explicit statement. Paul writes of imitating Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Th 1:6) and instructs his converts to imitate himself (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Th 1:6; 2 Th 3:7, 9; Phil 3:17; cf Gal 4:12) and other Christians (1 Th 1:6; 2:14; 2 Th 3:7–9). We should not then be surprised to find AE speaking of the imitation of God; in doing so he goes beyond Paul, being more open to Hellenistic thought (Ernst). Col 3:10 is not preparation for what AE says for its background is not that of imitation in behaviour but the Genesis creation story; this represents another difference between Ephesians and Colossians (see on 4:23f).

If comparison was absent in 4:32b and perhaps also in 5:2 it is clearly present in 5:1; if so, what features of God's activities are believers to imitate (cf Mackay, 207–11)? The context, 4:32 and 5:2 suggests the readiness to forgive and love, love being a generalisation of forgiveness. Though Philo's statement in *Spec Leg* 4:73 may appear similar, his reason is God's creation of people and not his love for them. In 5:1 believers are described as God's beloved children (cf 1:5);

²⁴ See R. A. Wild, ' "Be Imitators of God": Discipleship in the Letter to the Ephesians', in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. F. F. Segovia). Philadelphia. 1985, 127–43.

SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Munich, 1922–61

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ἀγαπητός is used both of groups of Christians and of individual Christians (Rom 1:7; 11:28; 1 Tim 6:2; Rom 16:5, 8; Eph 6:21), and of Christ (Mk 1:11; 9:7). What is the significance of this address? Are believers to imitate God because they are his children (Bouwman) or in the way children should imitate a parent (Chrysostom) or are both ideas present (Salmond)? As we have seen, the imitation theme was used in the ancient world in respect of fathers and sons (cf 1 Cor 4:14, 16); is this why AE introduces children here? Unlike Mt 5:48 our passage lacks an explicit reference to God as Father. Yet believers as God's children is an important theme of Pauline theology (Rom 8:14–21; Gal 3:26; 4:6f; Phil 2:15) and appears in Eph 1:5. Probably then it was the theme of filial imitation which led to the present description of believers as children, yet it would be hazardous to go further and regard this as implying obedience or any kind of obligation. Action comparable to God's action in forgiving and loving is the primary emphasis.

Imitation of God seems somewhat more arid than imitation of Christ, particularly when the latter is understood as 'living like Jesus'. But imitation of Jesus as seen by Paul is not imitation of the day-to-day life of the historical Jesus; it relates rather to his incarnation and death (Phil 2:5–11; 2 Cor 8:9; Rom 15:3, 7). It may be this which enables AE to move directly from imitation of God to loving like Christ (v. 2), a movement perhaps also inspired in part by the depiction of Jesus as the image of God in the Colossian hymn (1:15), a hymn probably known in the Pauline school. It is through Christ that God's love and forgiveness are known and it is essentially in these that imitation should take place.

2. Since they are children whom God loves (v. 1) love should (καί is almost 'and therefore') characterise the behaviour of believers (for περιπατεῖν see on 2:2; 4:1, 23; the present imperative probably means 'keep on behaving', see MHT, 75). While AE's reference to love might be thought to come from Col 3:14 it is so much the essential characteristic of Christian existence (cf 3:14–19) that its introduction here is perfectly natural and there is no need to identify a precise verse in Colossians from which it may have been drawn. Love builds up the body of Christ (4:15f) and the preceding context suggests AE has the Christian community continually in mind. The nature of love is spelt out as little here as in Mk 12:31 (contrast 1 Cor 13:1ff), though a partial description lies in the positive statements of 4:25ff. No direct connection was made in v. 1 between God's love and that of believers; the latter is now linked to the love of Christ (for the use of the article with Christ see on 1:10). His love is the supreme motivation of human love (cf 1 Jn 3:16).²⁵ As in 4:32 καθὼς καί²⁶ may be either causal (Christ's love as motivation) or comparative (Christ's love as example) or a mixture of both. As in 4:32 it is difficult to take it as purely comparative for Christ's love, or God's love in Christ, is unique in that Christ gave himself for all. Our love cannot lead us to act soteriologically as he did, though in a willingness to forget ourselves and put others first it can be said to resemble his love.

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MHT J. H. Moulton, W. F. Howard and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, 1963

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²⁵ Cf Schulz, op.cit., 275–7.

²⁶ Cf Romaniuk, art.cit.; see on 4:32.

In the manuscripts the two pronouns in the verse vary between the first and second plurals. In view of their proximity to one another in clauses of similar content it is probable that we should read the same person in both cases. In respect of the first occurrence the evidence is relatively well balanced: ἡμᾶς— \mathfrak{B}^{46} \aleph^2 D F G Ψ 0278 33 1739 1881 m lat sy; Cl^{pt} Hier; ὑμᾶς— \aleph^* A B P 0159 81 326 1175 1241^s *pc* it co; Cl^{pt} MVict Ambst Spec. This balance is not true in respect of the second occurrence where the evidence for ὑμῶν (B 0278^c 1175 *pc* b m* co; MVict Ambst Spec) is much weaker than that for ἡμῶν \mathfrak{B}^{46} , \mathfrak{B}^{49} \aleph A D G K P Ψ 0159 33 81 it vg syr^{p,h}; Cl Or Ambst Chrys Hier). We therefore read the first plural throughout. It goes better with the similar formula of 5:25 which refers to the church. This reading is supported if either all or part of ὁ χριστός ... ἡμῶν is derived from a traditional credal formula, for such formulae are usually in the first plural (1 Pet 3:18 is an exception); the same would be true if, as is most unlikely, part of v. 2 is a quotation from a hymn. The consistent use of the second plural in the surrounding verses could have misled scribes into adopting it in v. 2. The possibility also exists of confusion through oral dictation (see on 4:32). On the readings see Metzger, *ad loc.* The variant ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐν φθορᾷ for ἡμῶν προσφοράν has very weak support and may be ignored, as can the variation of the order of the words.

In v. 2b action is ascribed to Christ.²⁷ Normally it is God who is said to love people and either he or a human agent to hand Christ over to death (Rom 8:32). Whenever Christ is the subject of παραδιδόναι (Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 11:23; Mk 9:31; 10:33; 14:41, etc.) the verb is usually passive and the true subject is God or a human. But here, as in 5:25; Gal 2:20, Christ is the real subject, the verbs are active and in each case the aorist tense refers to the historical Christ. Here it is believers whom he loves, in 5:25 the church and in Gal 2:20 Paul. This strongly suggests the use of an accepted form (the idea goes back at least to von Soden). Popkes, 348–41, takes the whole expression as pre-Pauline but it may only be the παραδιδόναι reference which is so (cf Kramer; Perrin; Wengst, 60–77). Within the Pauline school, or at least that part of it to which AE belonged, what Paul said in particular of himself (Gal 2:20) has been generalised so that all believers are set on his level, not that Paul would have wished to imply that he was the unique object of Christ's redemptive activity. If then this is a formula in use within the Pauline school, the acceptance of the first plural reading is made easier. As a formula it may have been originally connected to baptism (cf 5:25; Tit 2:13) with its inspiration coming from Isaiah 53.²⁸ Christ loved us 'and so', or 'in that he', gave himself up.²⁹ Christ's love is actualised in his self-surrender (Aquinas, depending on Gregory the Great). Because of the dual usage of παραδιδόναι (God, or Judas and others, gave

Metzger B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, London, 1971

²⁷ On v. 2b see Romaniuk, *L'amour* 36–45; E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht* (FRLANT 64), 2nd edn, Göttingen, 1963; Kramer, §§25–7; W. Popkes, *Christus Traditus* (ATANT 49), Zürich, 1967; N. Perrin, 'The Use of (παρα)διδόναι in Connection with the Passion of Jesus in the New Testament', *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde* (FS J. Jeremias, ed. E. Lohse), Göttingen, 1970, 202–12; Wengst, *Formeln*; N. A. Dahl, *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1976, 3–9; Schenke, 331–3.

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²⁸ Cf K. Romaniuk, 'L'origine des formules pauliniennes "Le Christ s'est livré pour nous" et "Le Christ nous a aimé et s'est livré pour nous"', *NT* 5 (1962) 55–76.

²⁹ Cf A. Urbán, 'La coordinada modal en el Nuevo Testamento', *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 1 (1988) 193–208.

him up) AE's readers would at once see a reference to Christ's death and this did not need to be explicitly stated. That this death was for the benefit of others was a pre-Pauline belief (Rom 3:24f; 4:25a; 5:6–8; 8:32; Gal 1:4; 1 Cor 15:3–5)³⁰ which Paul continued to hold (e.g. 1 Th 5:10; Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Cor 5:14f; and Gal 2:20, if this is not to be placed in the pre-Pauline material); it is also found in Christian literature preceding or contemporary with Ephesians, if Ephesians is non-Pauline (e.g. Mk 10:45; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; 1 Pet 3:18). Gentile Christians would have been able to grasp something of the significance of such a death, for dying so that a city or state might benefit and dying as atoning sacrifice were well-known ideas in the ancient world.³¹ AE does not provide us here or elsewhere with sufficient information to enable the placing of his view of the benefits of Christ's death in terms of later developed soteriology, e.g. whether Christ died representatively, as a substitute, as liberating ransom, or as atoning sacrifice. Nor can we trace back from his brief reference a clear path to the origin of the idea in Isaiah, in the Maccabean martyrs or in some other source (cf Wengst, 60–77, for discussion). Lacking information about AE's views it is unwise to speculate. It was not his intention here to express a soteriological theory but to remind his readers of Christ's death as one from which they have benefited so that they themselves will live lovingly. The nature of the benefit they receive from Christ's life, death and resurrection is spelt out in other parts of the letter: their sins are forgiven (1:7), they are adopted as God's children (1:5), they have been raised with Christ and sit with him in the heavenlies (2:5f), they belong to his body (4:7ff), they are new people (4:24).

The final words of the verse, which are not part of the formula, are intended to drive home the need to love, but do they not imply an understanding of Christ's death as sacrificial? προσφορά is not a word strongly associated with the sacrificial system; it is not found in the LXX translation of Leviticus (though Aq and Th have it at 1:2); it is frequent only in Ecclesiasticus. θυσία is a very general word. The two words are associated in Ψ 39:7, which is quoted in Eccles 34:19; Heb 10:5, and with other sacrificial terms in Dan 3:38 (LXX and Th). In view of their linkage in Ψ 39:7 and its Christian usage (Heb 10:5) the Psalm is probably AE's source, though not necessarily directly. Neither noun can be given a precise equivalent in the sacrificial system and they are probably a hendiadys (Lincoln) for the whole system (καί is not explicative as Belser suggests) and illustrate once again AE's use of two words when one would do. Atoning offerings would thus be included but they would not be at the top of AE's mind. When we recollect also the way in which sacrifice is spiritualised in the OT (Hos 6:6; Isa 1:11–15; Mic 6:6–8; Ps 50:13f,

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³⁰ See M.-L. Gubler, *Die frühesten Deutungen des Todes Jesu*, Göttingen, 1977, 206ff; G. Delling, *Der Kreuzestod Jesu in der urchristlichen Verkündigung*, Göttingen, 1972, 9–16.

³¹ Cf M. Hengel, *The Atonement. The Origin of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, London, 1981, 9ff; S. K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion), Missouri, MO, 1975, 153–61; Simpson, 114, n. 2.

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23; 51:17; 141:2; cf 1QS 9:4f; 10:8, 14) and then in the NT (Rom 12:1; 15:17; Phil 2:17; 4:18; Heb 13:15f; προσφορά is used of thanksgiving in Acts 24:17 and θυσία of financial support in Phil 4:18)³² it seems probable that in our verse it refers only to Christ's self-sacrifice. This should drive AE's readers to love. That this was how the words were understood in the early church can be seen from their application to martyrs in *Ign Rom* 4:2; *Mart Polyc* 14:1, 2. That it is also AE's view is shown by the closing words of the verse which do not stress the benefits of Christ's death for his readers but the acceptability of Christ's action to God.

The final phrase is frequent in the OT (the genitive εὐωδίας is adjectival, a Semitism); though originally understood physically as if God was pleased with the smell rising from sacrifices (Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Lev 2:9; etc.) it, like sacrifice, was spiritualised (Ezek 20:41; Dan 4:37a LXX; *T Levi* 3:6; Phil 4:18; cf *Barn* 2:10) and applied to life and action which was pleasing to God. Probably then τῷ θεῷ, though its position suggests it completes the reference to sacrifice (so Abbott), should be taken with εἰς ὁσμὴν (there is no reason for taking it with the verb); εἰς ὁσμὴν requires something to complete it and is completed regularly in this way in the OT (Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:9; 3:5; etc.). Alternatively it might be taken as referring to the whole phrase as in many translations, 'a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'. AE has thus concluded the traditional formula with a great flourish of praise wholly in his manner.

The motivation to conduct provided here and in 4:32 is not just an additional motivation comparable with those in 4:25–31 but is the basic motivation in a Christian ethic in a way those of 4:25–31 are not (cf Halter). They were peripheral; this is central.¹⁵

5:1 γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ. "Become therefore imitators of God." γίνεσθε resumes the γίνεσθε of 4:32. The words of that verse, "forgiving ... as God forgave you," show that the imitation inculcated is in respect of this particular virtue, and the οὖν, therefore, connects this verse with that immediately preceding, not with the whole foregoing subject. Imitators of God! The idea is a grand and ennobling one; and our Lord Himself sets it before us, and in the same aspect, when He says, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," namely,

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³² See Best, 'Spiritual Sacrifice', *Int* 14 (1960) 273–99, and the references given in the note on 2:21.

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¹⁵ Ernest Best, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*](#), International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1998), 465–471.

in that “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matt. 5:45, 48). So that we also should love our enemies.

The forgiveness inculcated is obviously free forgiveness, as in the passage just cited and in the Lord’s Prayer. That this is here placed on the ground of imitation of God’s forgiveness is a decisive proof that St. Paul did not view the Atonement in the light of payment of a debt or endurance of a penalty demanded by Divine justice. The most unforgiving of men, if not actually vindictive, might say, I am quite ready to forgive on the same terms on which you say that God forgives, viz. that the debt be fully paid, the offence fully atoned for. Chrysostom has a fine comment on this “forgiving one another.” There is a great difference, he says, between God’s forgiveness and ours, “for, if thou forgivest, the other will in turn forgive thee; but to God thou hast forgiven nought. And thou to thy fellow-servant, but God to His servant, and His enemy, and him that hateth Him. And He did not for give simply without peril, but with the peril of His Son. For that He might forgive thee He sacrificed the Son,—τὸν Υἱὸν ἔθυσσε,—but thou, although often seeing forgiveness to be without peril or expense, dost not exercise it.”

ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά, *i.e.* as children beloved of God. He adds, says Chrys., another obligation of imitating God, not only because He has conferred benefits on us, but because we are His children, nay, His beloved children. “If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

2. καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ specifying, further, wherein the imitation of God is to be shown. Love is to be the rule of our life.

καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. Compare John 13:34, “as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” καὶ παρέδωκεν expresses wherein this love was shown. So ver. 25, “loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”; Gal. 2:20, “loved me, and gave Himself for me.” The verb requires no supplement, such εἰς θάνατον or τῷ Θεῷ see Rom. 8:32; Gal. 2:20, and ver. 25. ὑπὲρ “on behalf of.”

προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ Θεῷ. τῷ Θεῷ is best connected with these words for the reason just mentioned; not with the following, since this would suppose the words placed emphatically before εἰς ὁσμὴν, as if to exclude the idea of human pleasure, which is out of the question. προσφορὰ and θυσία are sometimes said to specify respectively an unbloody and a bloody offering; but such a distinction cannot be maintained either in classical or biblical Greek. The idea of “sacrifice” in θύω is not derived from that of slaying, but of “smoking,” “burning incense.” This was, according to Aristarchus, the meaning of the verb in Homer; cf. Latin “*fumus*,” “*subfio*,” which are from the same root. For biblical usage see Gen. 4:3; Num. 7:49, 73, etc. The alleged sense would be especially out of harmony with the figurative use of θυσία in St. Paul, θυσία ζῶσα, Rom. 12:1; cf. Phil. 2:17, 4:18. Ellicott supposes that προσφορὰ is used as the more general term, relating, not to the death only, but to the life of obedience of our blessed Lord, His θυσία ζῶσα; while θυσία refers more particularly to His atoning death. The words appear, however, to be borrowed from Ps. 40:6 (quoted Heb. 10:5), where they are used simply as together including all kinds of ceremonial offering.

εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας. “For a sweet-smelling savour.” The figure was founded originally on the heathen idea that the smell of the burnt sacrifice did literally ascend to the gods, who thereby participated with the worshipper in the sacred feast. So in Homer often; see especially *Il.* xxiv. 69, 70, οὐ γὰρ μοι ποτε βωμὸς ἐδέυετο δαιτὸς εἴσης, Λοιβῆς τε κνίσσης τε· τὸ γὰρ λάχομεν γέρας ἡμεῖς. It is appropriate only to a burnt-offering.

That St. Paul here speaks of Christ as a sacrifice cannot, of course, be denied. But does he do so by way of stating the nature or manner of the atonement? Surely not. There is not one word to hint at the relation of this sacrifice to God's forgiveness. On the contrary, God in Christ forgiving us, and Christ showing His love by His offering of Himself, are put forward as exactly parallel examples; indeed, in view of the parallel in Col., ὁ Κύριος ἔχαρίσατο, we might say as one and the same. It is this single aspect of Christ's sacrifice as a supreme exhibition of love on the part both of the Father and of the Son that is here presented. Indeed, in Rom. 8:32 the very same word παρέδωκε is used of the Father that is here used of the Son. And if we cannot argue as if the apostle were here stating the essential nature of the atonement, still less are we justified in assuming that he had in his mind the "substitutionary" view of sacrifice. Whatever the original idea of sacrifice may have been (and certainly the substitutionary view is not the only one possible), neither psalmists nor apostles seem to have had this idea present to their minds whenever they spoke of sacrifice. The psalmist speaks of sacrificing thanksgiving and praise (Ps. 50:14); St. Paul, of his offering of the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16). In Rom. 12:1, already quoted, he calls on his readers to present their bodies as a sacrifice. In Phil. 2:17 he represents himself as offering their faith as a sacrifice; and in the same Ep. 4:18, he calls their present to him a sacrifice, an odour of a sweet savour. With the exception of 1 Cor. 10:18 ("they that eat of the sacrifices"), these are the only passages beside the present in which he uses the words. This gives little support to the notion that we are to interpret his words here as if we were dealing with a treatise on scientific theology.

Chrysostorn certainly does not err in this way. He observes: ὁρᾷς τὸ ὑπὲρ ἔχθρῶν παθεῖν, ὅτι ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας ἐστί, καὶ θυσία εὐπροσδεκτὸς κἂν ἀποθάνῃς τότε ἔση θυσία· τοῦτο μμήσασθαί ἐστι τὸν Θεόν.¹⁶

¹⁶ Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1909), 146–148.