



Epignōsis: Cognizance of Divine Thought; Esōterikē & Exōterikē Harmonia: Inner and Outer Harmony of Soul; The Double-Columned Advance, Col 1:10-12

ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis - "Full knowledge, discernment, perception, understanding"

Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr. *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 629, 631:

EPIGNŌSIS, denotes exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition; a strengthened form of **γνῶσις, gnōsis** expressing full knowledge. Paul uses the former 15 times out of the 20 occurrences; Peter 4 times, all in his second Epistle. In all the four Epistles of the first Roman captivity [Paul's "prison Epistles"] *epignōsis* is an element in the Apostle's opening prayer for his correspondents' well-being, Philippians 1:9; Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:9; Philemon 6. It is used with reference to the will of the Lord in Colossians 1:9.

Yeager, Randolph O. *The Renaissance New Testament*. (Woodbridge: Renaissance Press, 1979), 4:165:

γνῶσις. Knowledge. Not to be confused with *epignōsis*, which is a higher sort of perception unavailable to the unregenerate. (*Gnōsis* refers to) knowledge in the sense in which science normally uses the term. That which is known to be true; that which consists with reality.

Yeager, Randolph O. *The Renaissance New Testament*. (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1985), 15:10-11:

Colossians 1:9, Comment: To know the more efficient and perfect will of God we must have more than *gnōsis*. We need the perfective *epignōsis* which is available only to the regenerate. Such wisdom is unavailable except to those who have the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This (Colossians 1:9) is Paul's opening salvo against the Gnostics, who were bothering the Colossian Christians. Ἐπίγνωσις is a κοινή addition to the classical γνῶσις. It was not used in pre-Hellenistic days. Polybius, Plutarch and others used the word for full knowledge. Paul uses it here to reply to the Gnostics who pretended to know it all. The Gnostic assumes that with his native intellectual powers, unaided either by the Holy Spirit or the revelation of Scripture he can arrive at what he calls maturity. He will never know the blessedness available only to the child of God who has ἐπίγνωσις and who thus knows enough to know that until we get to heaven, and perhaps not even then, will our thought be as high as God's.

We further illustrated this concept of the double-column phalanx by referencing excerpts from Stephen Pressfield's *Gates of Fire*. A couple of paragraphs are pertinent to Colossians 1:9:

Pressfield, Stephen. *Gates of Fire*. (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 78, 80-81:

The Spartans have a discipline they call *phobologia*, the science of fear. *Phobologic* discipline is comprised of twenty-eight exercises, each focusing upon a separate nexus of the nervous system. These nexuses are termed by the Spartans *phobosynaktērēs* [φοβοσυνακτήρης, fear accumulators].

Fear spawns in the body and must be combated there. For once the flesh is seized, a *phobokyklos* [φοβοκύκλος, *phoboküklos*], or loop of fear, may commence, feeding upon itself, mounting into a "runaway" of terror. Put the body into a state of *aphobia* [ἀφοβία, *aphobia*], fearlessness, the Spartans believe, and the mind will follow. (p. 78)

Pressfield uses the compound *phobokuklos* and defines it as a "loop of fear." He combines the words *phobos*, "fear" and *kuklos*, "loop." A more instructive set of definitions is provided by:



Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Revised by Henry Stuart Jones. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1007:

κύκλος (*kuklos*): the circle which hunters draw around their game.

Pressfield's "loop of fear" illustrates the soul as being encircled by fear, an emotion that originates in the limbic system of the brain. Once the soul permits itself to become "game" for this encircling *phobokuklos* "hunting party" it results in the phenomenon of the sympathetic nervous system being excited to the point of either fight or flight.

Pressfield continues:

(The) pursuit of *esōterikē harmonia* [ἐσωτερική ἁρμονία], (is) that state of self-composure which the exercises of the *phobologia* are designed to produce. As a string of the *kithēra* [κιθήρα: a lyre] vibrates purely, emitting only that note of the musical scale which is its alone, so must the individual warrior shed all which is superfluous in his spirit, until he himself vibrates at that sole pitch which his individual *daimōn* [δαίμων, "god"] dictates. The achievement of this ideal, in Lakedaemon \la-ke-dē' man\ [the Spartan state that included the territories of Laconia \la-kō' ni-a\ and Messenia \ma-sē' nē-a\], carries beyond courage on the battlefield; it is considered the supreme embodiment of virtue, *andreia* [ἀνδρεία, *andreia*: a manly spirit producing brave deeds], of a citizen and a man.

Beyond *esōterikē harmonia* lies *exōterikē harmonia*, [ἐξωτερική ἁρμονία], that state of union with one's fellows which parallels the musical harmony of the multistringed instrument or of the chorus of voices itself. In battle *exōterikē harmonia* guides the phalanx to move and strike as one man, of a single mind and will. In passion it unites husband to wife, lover to lover, in wordless perfect union. In politics *exōterikē harmonia* produces a city of concord and unity, in which each individual, securing his own noblest expression of character, donates this to each other, as obedient to the laws of the commonwealth as the strings of the *kithēra* to the immutable mathematics of music. In piety *exōterikē harmonia* produces that silent symphony which most delights the ears of the gods.

Colossians 1:10 - That you might walk [*περιπατέω, peripateō*: **manner of life**] worthy of the Lord [**in wheel-tracks of righteousness**], pleasing God in all things, constantly producing [**customary present of καρποφορέω, karpophoreō for habitual action**] every divine work [**divine good**], constantly receiving spiritual growth [**customary present of αὐξάνω, auxanō for habitual action**] by means of epignōsis knowledge [**doctrine taught by the Holy Spirit**] from the ultimate source of God [**biblical revelation**];

Colossians 1:11 - being constantly strengthened [**customary present of δυναμώω, dunamoō for habitual action**] by every enabling power [**the Holy Spirit's**], according to the standard of the power of His glory [**the sovereign will of God backed by His omnipotence**] resulting in patience [**ὑπομονή, hupomonē: endurance and perseverance under pressure**] from spiritual stability [**faith-rest**] and self-restraint under pressure [**μακροθυμία, makrothumia: endurance from a spiritual force, identified as "joy," or**] from inner happiness [**χαρά, chara**].

v. 12 - Constantly being thankful [**customary present of εὐχαριστέω, eucharisteō for habitual action**] to the Father, having qualified you all for a share of the assigned inheritance [**escrow blessings**] of the saints by means of the light [**truth**].



- 36- The second and third paragraphs of Colossians, verses 3-12, affirm the claims of the doctrinal community that the top priority of the Christian way of life is Bible study and that the believer is unqualified and incapable of serving God without spiritual growth through Bible study.