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EPHESIANS AND ECUMENISM

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EPHESIANS AND ECUMENISM

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Religious Studies

by

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Christian ecumenism has made great strides during the twentieth century but is now widely seen as needing a new path. Avery Dulles has proposed an “exchange of gifts” notion of dialogue in which the participant churches share their understanding of the Christian life and all of the reasons they have for holding their particular doctrines and practices, drawing on whatever normative sources they believe are appropriate. The approach enables the participants to bear testimony in love in the hopes that they may better understand and appreciate each other more fully, thereby opening a path to increased doctrinal consensus and thus greater visible unity among all Christians. For Roman Catholics, the primacy of the Petrine office is a precious gift to the Church, and Dulles, among many other Roman Catholic leaders, has invited non-Catholic Christians to help develop and articulate a way the Petrine office might be exercised in a manner non-Catholic Christians would embrace.

With Dulles, I embrace the “exchange of gifts” model and see the Petrine office as an indispensable instrument for achieving visible unity. As a response to the invitation, this dissertation attempts to demonstrate that Paul’s express purpose for writing Ephesians was to provide a definitive teaching regarding what we today would call an ecumenical theology and a

notion of ecumenical dialogue. After unpacking Paul's message in Ephesians to better understand its ecumenical implications, I then turn to examine the central issues in contemporary Roman Catholic theology in light of that message. That examination enables me to suggest ways Rome might continue its ongoing project of developing its doctrine of primacy after Vatican II, based on the deep insights of some of its own top scholars. As I argue, the light of Ephesians supports and enhances those insights and helps clarify the way forward within Roman Catholic theology on its own terms. I then turn to make modest proposals regarding how Rome might reform its exercise of the Petrine office based on that enhanced clarity. The proposed reforms appear consistent with Roman Catholic doctrine and, if made, should enable most non-Catholic Christians to embrace the Petrine office as shepherd of ecumenism.

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CHAPTER 1

REFORMING ECUMENISM

1.1 Ecumenism As An Exchange Of Gifts

Christian ecumenism has largely stalled out. Despite great strides under the so-called “convergence” model utilized during the second half of the 20th century, most respected ecumenical scholars have come to believe that model has already yielded its fruit in full. In response, many ecumenical theologians and church leaders have simply lost interest in ecumenical efforts, relegating the attainment of Church¹ unity to the day when Christ returns. Others have turned their attention to the development of a new ecumenical model. Avery Dulles, long known as a brilliant ecumenist and top-rate theologian, has attempted to provide one such model.

Dulles proposes an “exchange of gifts” among ecumenical participants that is mutually enriching. In that exchange, the participants are free and encouraged to draw on their own normative sources as they bear witness to their deeply held convictions. The model seeks to avoid gravitating to the least common denominator, a common critique leveled against the convergence model. Under the convergence model, dialogue is limited to claims based on mutually shared normative sources thereby excluding from the conversations some of the most

¹ As used throughout, references to “Church” mean the one, holy, apostolic, universal church and those to “church” or “churches” mean local churches.

important convictions of the participants and thus leading to watered-down doctrinal statements. While gains were certainly made under the convergence model, most scholars have come to recognize its limitations. Dulles's proposal seeks to overcome those limitations by allowing participants to emphasize what they believe to be most important and to do so on the basis of the reasons and normative sources they hold so dearly.

When shared in the context of love and a hope for mutual understanding and unity, the testimonies the participants share with one another amount to an exchange of gifts intended to benefit and enrich the faith of each participant. While Dulles asserts the mutual enrichment resulting from such an exchange of gifts is the way forward for Christian ecumenism, he does not believe adopting this approach is sufficient in itself. For Dulles, the Petrine office must play an important role in ecumenical dialogue since it is a precious gift from God for all Christians and an important and indispensable instrument for achieving visible unity. In keeping with the teachings of Pope John Paul II, Dulles expresses a desire that Christian leaders seek a way for the Petrine office to be exercised in a manner that is beneficial to all Christians.² Dulles states the need to develop ways in which the ministry of the pope may be received by non-Catholic Christians, and he calls on non-Catholic Christians to contribute to that cause.

This work is, in large part, a response to Dulles's proposal and call. Through my own studies, I have come to see the need for something very much like Dulles's proposal, and his work helped shape and develop my own thinking tremendously. As a non-Catholic Christian, I have come to embrace his proposed ecumenical model as the basis for moving the ecumenical project forward. I agree with both his "exchange of gifts" model and his focus on the Petrine

² Dulles, Avery, "Saving Ecumenism From Itself," *First Things* (December 2007): 27.

office as an important and indispensable instrument for achieving visible unity. And yet, as Dulles himself argues, more needs to be done to develop both of those ideas further so they may serve their ecumenical purpose.

My task here is best understood as an attempt to develop a rich theological basis for ecumenism in light of Dulles's own proposal and in response to his call for suggestions to develop the Petrine office in a way it might be more widely embraced by non-Catholic Christians. My own thinking on the matter has been deeply influenced by Paul's letter to the Ephesians³ in which I see extensive, clear support for Dulles's overall approach. I am convinced that an unpacking of Ephesians, particularly from the perspective of what it offers the ecumenical cause, will provide a rich theological basis for establishing and further developing Dulles's exchange of gifts model for ecumenism. If my project is successful, its theological contribution will make contributions to two ecumenical goals: (1) the development of a vision and a mandate for overcoming the obstacles currently impeding further ecumenical progress, and (2) the justification of the importance of the Petrine office as an important instrument of unity to non-Catholic Christians.

As will be made clear, Paul's notion of the glory of God in Christ and in the Church, and his related ideas of peace and dialogue⁴ among the members of the Church, are the foundational

³ I will take up the issue of the authorship of Ephesians briefly in chapter 2. Here, I will simply state that I see little sound evidence to doubt Pauline authorship and many reasons to affirm it. Regardless, it is not necessary to affirm Pauline authorship in order to learn the message of Ephesians and its importance to ecumenical theology.

⁴ While use of the word "dialogue" in reference to what Paul is prescribing for the Church in Ephesians is somewhat anachronistic, it does effectively capture and articulate his idea for the modern reader. Likewise, because Paul's idea is greater than the typical meaning of the word dialogue today, using it to summarize his idea greatly enhances our understanding of what Christian dialogue can and should look like if we are serious about seeking unity in the Church. Paul has in mind certain kinds of words and deeds among those who share a common bond in Christ and are thus committed to peace and glory in the Church. All of this will become abundantly clear below.

elements for further developing Dulles's ecumenical model. Those three elements, as they are most fully developed by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, need to be carefully unpacked in order to demonstrate their relevance to the ecumenical life of the Church. Doing so will also enable an evaluation and development of Dulles's proposed exchange of gifts model and a modest proposal in response to Dulles's call on non-Catholic Christians. That modest proposal will suggest ways the Petrine office might be reformed and further developed in a manner both consistent with Catholic concerns and precedents and acceptable to many non-Catholic Christians, all in light of the ecumenical theology offered in the main portion of this work.

1.2 The Gospel Of Peace And Our Proper Response To It

While it may be clear to most readers why dialogue is important for Church unity, it is likely less clear what peace has to do with unity, much less what glory has to do with it. Nonetheless, all three of these ideas have deep ties to Church unity in Ephesians, as well as extensive ecumenical implications. I will spend significant time on each of these ideas below, but the focus in this section is to make clear my position that peace is at the very heart of the Gospel, and that the Church's proper response to that Gospel involves a certain kind of dialogue. That specific kind of dialogue proceeds on different assumptions than are commonly held today, and it involves more than mere discussions about theological or doctrinal convictions. It is a way of life consisting of certain practices befitting our calling to peace. That way of life and set of practices is best described as a naturally occurring dialogue under the Headship of Christ. When done correctly, such dialogue leads to the manifestation of glory in the Church and an effective proclamation of the Gospel to the world.

Markus Barth, long considered one of the great interpreters of Ephesians, gives us a sense of the centrality of peace to the Gospel and the importance of a proper response to it informed by

the content of that Gospel. Barth says “Ephesians may well contain a summary and application of the Pauline doctrine on the sacrifice of Christ.”⁵ He goes on to say that the sacrifice of Christ is an intercessory prayer directed at unification, pacification, and reconciliation among men and between men and God.⁶ In short, Barth is making the connection between the sacrifice of Christ and peace as the application of that sacrifice to our lives. Elsewhere, Barth is direct on this point when he states “one new social order, called ‘peace’ in Ephesians 2:13-17...is the content of the Gospel.”⁷ Echoing Ephesians 6:15, Barth likewise calls the message of Ephesians the “gospel of peace” and notes that Jesus Himself is the bringer of that good news and the bringer of peace itself.⁸

Barth is also clear in his summary of the Church’s proper response to the Gospel of peace according to Ephesians. The Church, upon receiving the Gospel, is to respond by manifesting the Gospel by its very existence – it is to exist in peace – in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world.⁹ Proclaiming the Gospel is done by living it out. The Gospel of peace is received and given a proper response when the Church manifests peace in its very life and worship.

If, as Barth says, peace is the content of the Gospel and the proper response of the Church to the Gospel is to manifest peace, can the Church rightly persist in its divisions? Without some overriding reason, clearly not. As will be shown, peace and unity are deeply tied in the Christian Faith and stand at the center of the Gospel. It is not an afterthought to or simply one aspect of

⁵ Barth, 301.

⁶ Barth, 301f.

⁷ Barth, 44.

⁸ Barth, 44.

⁹ Barth, 350.

the life of the Church. The question each church must therefore ask itself comes into clear focus: on what conditions should it persist in division with other churches given that Christians have a mandate to respond to the Gospel by manifesting peace and unity with all other Christians?

Historically, the answer has typically been that doctrinal disagreements are sufficient to justify separation and persistent division.¹⁰ When we believe we hold true beliefs and others hold false ones, we tend naturally to believe we are justified in separating or remaining separated. Indeed, even when there is an atmosphere of increased cooperation and desire for greater unity, the underlying assumption still persists that doctrinal unity must be achieved before any real reunification can be attained. This assumption is simply mistaken, and it is *the* central error standing in the way of real unity today. As I will make clear, Paul gives no prerequisites for seeking peace. Christ has accomplished everything necessary for humanity to live in peace, making it possible for the Church to manifest peace by means of His sacrifice and by sending His Spirit upon the Church. The Church needs to understand the Gospel of peace and then respond properly by cooperating with Christ and the Spirit in obedience. Failing to seek unity and peace, whether out of ignorance of the Gospel of peace or willful disobedience, is a failure to respond to the Gospel properly.

No doubt there are preconditions we may rightly assert are necessary before *engaging* in the sort of full visible unity that involves worshiping and working together, though two important points must be made to those who would be inclined to respond with that objection. First, the same cannot be said about preconditions for *seeking* unity. There simply are no differences a church can justly assert as grounds for not *seeking* to attain peace and full, visible

¹⁰ By the term “doctrinal disagreements,” I mean here to include all theological and doctrinal matters that divide the churches, including those of polity, sacraments, and order as much as those of faith and morals.

unity with other churches who call Jesus Lord. Seeking peace and unity under the Headship of Christ is *the* primary mandate for those who claim Him as Lord and would respond properly to the Gospel of peace. Second, while some doctrinal differences are significant enough to preclude us from *engaging* in full, visible unity, such differences are vastly fewer than what is typically thought today. Most of our long-held preconditions for visible unity are unjustified and even appear trivial in the light of the Gospel of peace.¹¹

1.3 Reversing A Long-Held Assumption

The assumption that doctrinal unity must be achieved before unification can be realized is the key assumption under scrutiny in this project. It is a false assumption that is deeply ingrained in the churches today, having stood as a virtually unquestioned assumption for several centuries of Church history. If this assumption can be overturned, it will make all the difference to Christian ecumenism, as I hope to make clear. No doubt there will be other serious obstacles to full unity, but many of those obstacles will fall once this key assumption is overturned.

To state the issue succinctly, Paul teaches us in Ephesians that a proper response to the Gospel of peace involves certain practices aimed at manifesting peace, the *result* of which includes the attainment of doctrinal unity and true knowledge of the Faith and of Christ.¹² Paul

¹¹ I will say much more about this below in the last chapter of this work. While I will not presume to lay down a definitive list of justifiable preconditions for visible unity, I will consider some of the more typical candidates mentioned in ecumenical theology in terms of the theology offered in the main portion of this work. In the end, I will offer a strategy for how each church ought to decide for itself what preconditions it will hold for engaging in visible unity with other churches. Essentially, the approach I will suggest is to actively seek to find ways to eliminate doctrinal differences from one's list of preconditions, making every possible effort in pursuit of that highest of goals. We cannot be casual about or indifferent towards the primary mandate to seek peace and unity, as if those goals are less important than other concerns. Neither can we be overly confident in our doctrinal judgments, which leads to the same result. Instead, we must be passionate about seeking peace and unity and be willing to reconsider our conclusions with all humility, expecting fully and with the sincerest hope that we will find ways to remove long-held doctrinal differences from our lists of preconditions.

¹² Ephesians 4:11-16, New Revised Standard Version, especially 4:13.

teaches us to manifest unity through certain fundamental practices comprising the life “worthy of the calling to which you have been called”¹³ and promises that we will attain unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God as a result of that way of life.¹⁴ Yet, the key assumption operative in the vast majority of churches today would turn this Pauline teaching on its head, saying instead that we must somehow first come to unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God before we can act like we are part of one Body. Then, we wonder how to achieve doctrinal unity or waste time and effort telling our own church members or other churches why we are right and other churches are wrong. Paul teaches us otherwise, and understanding Paul on this point goes a long way to pave the road to unity, as I will demonstrate.

So, those who claim doctrinal disagreements justify current divisions and properly preclude the possibility of reunion are contradicted by Paul. While there is one Faith which has been revealed, the Church will not attain a full understanding of the Faith until *after* it properly functions to manifest the Gospel of peace – a full understanding comes as the *result* of the manifestation of peace under Christ the Head. The command is simply to live a proper response to the Gospel of peace. The result of obedience to that command, we are told, will be doctrinal unity and fullness of understanding of the Faith. There are no legitimate theological, historical, institutional, philosophical, or doctrinal reasons for failing to obey this simple command. Contentment to remain in disunity is a sign of a failure to understand the Gospel of peace or a willfulness to preserve and assert one’s own doctrinal expressions in contravention to the clear command to seek unity within the Body of Christ.

¹³ Ephesians 4:1.

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:13.

No matter how convinced we may be of our own doctrines, no matter what justification we hold for them, we must humble ourselves and cling to the Gospel of peace and to the Church's proper response to it above all other matters. This does not mean abandoning our dearly held doctrinal convictions, but it does call for more humility and patience. Indeed, as I will argue, I want to assert there are core doctrines that ought to serve as preconditions to engaging in full, visible unity – namely, the ones Paul articulates in Ephesians. As I will argue, Paul deemed those teachings as they are articulated in Ephesians to be all that is required for those in Christ to walk together in full unity. Adding other doctrines to the list as among those required for reunion simply fails to understand and appreciate what Paul is teaching us in Ephesians.

The principle I am suggesting stands on the recognition that doctrines developed and articulated by a *subset* of Christians (i.e., by one church or subset of churches) cannot justifiably be used to create or sustain division within the Church, given that the command is to manifest peace and the promise that clearer doctrinal understanding will *result* when and to the extent peace is pursued and attained by the Church. So, we must each seek to reduce our lists of doctrinal preconditions for unity to the ones Paul tells us are sufficient, even as we continue to hold and share our other deeply held convictions in loving testimony with one another within the Church and seek to manifest peace and unity.

In short, I largely agree with Dulles's proposal of bearing mutual testimony to one another. The goal is to show *why* his approach is essentially correct in light of Paul's teaching in Ephesians and to help propel his proposal forward, even if some important changes must be made to Dulles's ultimate conclusions. At the same time, I am challenging some of the long-

held assumptions in the churches (both theological and philosophical¹⁵) which work to prevent meaningful ecumenical endeavors. By further developing an ecumenical approach in light of these considerations, I hope to help reignite a widespread passion and expectant hope for visible Christian unity.

1.4 Attaining The Unity Of The Faith And The Knowledge Of The Son Of God

Standing at the heart of my proposal is the thesis that Ephesians 4:13 explicitly links a vision of peace with a specific kind of dialogue. As the wider passage of Ephesians 4:1-16 makes clear, a proper social ordering under Christ is the proper response to the Gospel of peace. This proper social ordering enables Christians to develop and articulate doctrines of the Christian Faith in a way that is both truthful and capable of capturing the assent of all those Christians who took part in such development and articulation. According to this claim, both truth and unity are *results* of a proper social ordering in response to the Gospel of peace.

So, most doctrinal expressions cannot rightly be preconditions for engaging with other Christians in a proper response to the Gospel of peace. If fullness of truth comes as a *result* of a proper response to the Gospel of peace, then most doctrinal expressions cannot be preconditions for taking up that proper response. Therefore, if a church holding certain doctrines that were developed apart from (or in opposition to) other churches holds the position that such truth claims are preconditions for unity with other churches, then that church has fundamentally misunderstood the causal dynamic prescribed by the Gospel of peace. Typically, such a church believes it is being faithful to the Gospel and to Christ when it forgoes visible unity with those

¹⁵ As I will argue, obedience to Paul's teaching on the Gospel of peace and our proper response to it entails that we reexamine not only our set of doctrinal preconditions for seeking unity but also some of our philosophical rationales and presuppositions standing behind those doctrines. The Gospel of peace stands at the center of Paul's thought and properly belongs at the center of Christianity among the foundational truths of the Faith.

who do not share their doctrinal claims. Paul's teaching says otherwise. Breaking unity or maintaining division on the basis of doctrinal claims in the way most churches do today violates the Gospel of peace, which calls instead for a different response.

The Church gains increased truth and unity when Christians seek to organize themselves according to the proper social response to the Gospel of peace. Organizing a church according to something besides a proper response to the Gospel of peace results in both entrenched division and less truthful doctrinal claims. As will become clear below, the proper social response involves putting on a set of practices befitting the Gospel of peace.

1.5 Assent And Doctrinal Development

If, for whatever reason, a group of Christians is left out of the process of developing and articulating certain doctrines, it will be very difficult for such "outsiders" to assent to the doctrines produced by that process. Even if the resulting doctrines are true, achieving unity with outsiders around those doctrines will be very difficult. If outsiders do not matter to the mission of the insiders, then this result is not an issue. However, Paul makes it clear, as do the documents of Vatican II, that those in Christ, no matter who they are, *do* in fact matter to claims of truth and unity and to the mission of the Church.

By and large, non-Catholic Christians have not taken part in the development and articulation of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. They were outsiders to the process and thus are unlikely to assent to those doctrines in any large numbers. One could hold the view that those doctrines are in fact true but that unity has nonetheless been compromised given the historical divisions in the Church. This is essentially the position of the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II, and the relevant question for them thus becomes how they are to engage with those who are in Christ but outside the Roman Catholic Church.

If this is and continues to be the stance of the Roman Catholic Church, my proposal will still have something to contribute, but I also wish to assert further that the Roman Catholic Church should take a more nuanced approach to the truth of their own doctrines. The Roman Catholic Church, in the interest of unity, must at least recognize that unity has been compromised by the *mutual* exclusion of non-Catholic and Catholic Christians over the years, and that remedial steps must be taken if unity of belief is ever to be achieved. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Church must at least take steps to include non-Catholic Christians in the life and worship of the Roman Catholic Church in such a way that they are able somehow to participate in the life of the Roman Catholic Church as trusted insiders.¹⁶ It is only through such interactions among *insiders* that unity of belief can arise, and so the Roman Catholic Church must think strategically about how to produce this type of naturally occurring dialogue that leads to unity of belief. I will offer some concrete proposals in this regard.

The more nuanced approach I recommend to the Roman Catholic Church (or any church) with respect to the truth of their own doctrines is to continue to hold them as true but as *incomplete* and in need of further development with the aid of those in Christ who have not yet participated in the development and articulation of those doctrines. If truth and unity are inextricably related in the Christian faith, then the idea that one can have fullness of truth without the fullness of unity comes into question.¹⁷ So, under this line of thinking, the doctrines of the

¹⁶ Ideally, non-Catholic Christians should also include Roman Catholics in their own life and worship so they can participate as trusted insiders there.

¹⁷ These claims about the link between truth and unity are not essential to the practical suggestions I am proposing for the Roman Catholic Church (or any other church). Those suggestions can and should be implemented even if the Roman Catholic Church does accept this link. However, if I am right about the inextricable link between truth and unity, then failing to reform such practices will result in lesser unity, and less fully developed doctrinal truth.

Roman Catholic Church could be true as far as they go or to some degree of specificity, while they do not represent the fullness of truth because they were developed and articulated in a context of less than full unity of the Body.

To put the matter in more Pauline terms, truth is only fully manifest in the Church when the Church properly receives the Word by manifesting its message in fullness. The glory of God is fully manifest when the Word is fully and properly received, and this occurs only when peace exists in fullness in the Church. To be clear, this will not occur until the eschaton, but it does exist in greater or lesser degrees during history to the extent the Church in each time and place embodies peace. We are *called* to such peace, such unity. Our proper response is to manifest it, and a result of doing so is doctrinal unity and fullness of truth.

1.6 Epistemic Practices And The Worthy Life

As stated above, the proper response to the Gospel involves taking up a set of practices befitting the Gospel of peace and constituting a life worthy of our calling. Among those practices of the worthy life are what might best be called *epistemic* practices of the Word. They are epistemic not in the sense we might expect a traditional philosopher would prescribe but rather in the sense a sociologist, cultural anthropologist, or social epistemologist might.

Without getting into the nuanced analyses or observations these various disciplines might have to offer, I mean here simply to employ a basic concept shared by those disciplines: everyday living shared by those who trust one another leads to shared beliefs about the world. This is the essence of the insight and prescription Paul gives us in Ephesians, particularly in Ephesians 4:11-16. Yet, Paul goes further with his claims, stating that such shared beliefs, when centered on the Word of God and generated by a unified Church, are true. The Body of Christ, when it takes up the practices Paul describes, will arrive at unified, true belief about matters of

the Faith and about Christ. The practices of shared living in the manner described by Paul are built upon and enhance mutual trust, leading to shared beliefs about the Word that are true.

While calling such practices epistemic does not capture their full essence, neither would describing such practices without mentioning their epistemic nature be complete. It is primarily in this sense of the social construction of belief systems that certain prescribed practices of the worthy life may be called epistemic. But, they are explicitly epistemic practices, according to Paul, because they lead to unified, true doctrines about Christ and the Faith. This is precisely the key point Christians need to grasp – we will never achieve doctrinal unity until we become sharers of the same household, mutually submitted and trusting one another in the manner Paul describes. Only then is doctrinal unity possible; indeed, it is promised.¹⁸

To connect this discussion more fully with the traditional parlance of ecumenical theology, I must note that the epistemic practices of the Word prescribed by Paul comprise a kind of naturally occurring *dialogue*. Many theologians have sought to define the rules and parameters of dialogue for when various existing churches choose to engage in attempts at greater unity. Paul's notion of dialogue is different. Paul starts with one Church and the duties and norms of living to be shared among all those who claim Christ as Lord, rather than starting with already existing divided churches and trying to build something from there. Paul starts with the fact of unity among those who are members of Christ's Body and describes what faithful living looks like in terms of a set of practices befitting the Gospel, rather than starting with the

¹⁸ This will be a primary focus of Chapter 5 below.

“fact” of division as if such division were somehow justifiable and defensible, despite the reality of the oneness of those who are in Christ.¹⁹

Paul recognizes that the Church does not yet share perfect unity or hold perfect knowledge of the Faith or of Christ. Given the promise that our unity and knowledge will one day be perfected, Paul therefore encourages us to take up the proper practices of the Word. Rather than setting out a set of principles or guidelines for how separated groups can and should interact while they persist in their separate identities, Paul sets out a way of life that is both consistent with the reality of our current bonds of unity in Christ (as described in Ephesians 4:3-6) and helpful for bringing about our future perfect unity and knowledge.

Paul does not prescribe a kind of dialogue for those groups with different ways of life to try to bridge the gaps between their beliefs; instead, he prescribes a single way of life to be shared and lived out in everyday life together in mutual trust by *all* those who call Christ Lord regardless of the gaps between their beliefs. Unity of belief comes as a result of shared living, and it will lead to truth if it is focused on the Word in the manner Paul prescribes in 4:11-16, as more fully described in the following passages in chapter 4 and in chapter 5 of Ephesians. Unity of Christian belief does not come in any other way or by any other kind of dialogue. Those models of dialogue which fail to begin with everyday life shared by those who trust one another will be very limited in their ecumenical results.

Paul’s prescribed way of life must be seen through this epistemic lens or else we will fail to see the fundamental shift necessary in our understanding of ecumenical dialogue. Models of ecumenical dialogue which begin from the premise that divided groups living different ways of

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:3-6.

life can somehow have discussions with one another that will lead to unified belief all fail to account for the social aspects inherent in the construction of belief systems to which different persons will assent. Paul's notion of dialogue begins instead with the premise that belief systems are socially constructed and therefore *urges* believers in Christ to recognize their unity in Christ and live life in a manner worthy of such unity and of our calling to participate in it more fully. When we engage in those practices befitting such unity, one of the results is that we will eventually come to unity of belief and true knowledge about the Faith and the Son of God.

Paul's notion of dialogue could not be any more practical or natural. It is practical in the sense that he is prescribing a set of concrete practices that we can easily grasp and live out, with the power of the Holy Spirit and mutual participation of fellow believers. While Paul's writings often reach the highest abstractions, it is always only for the sake of helping us understand the very tangible, concrete practices he prescribes for a holy, faithful response to the Gospel.

Paul's notion of dialogue is natural in the sense that, unlike many contemporary ecumenical theories, it does not consist of rigorously analyzed and defended ideas about the nature of language or communication, or of a negotiated set of fundamentally shared beliefs and rules for discussions, or some other brilliant invention by brilliant Christian minds. Those ideas indeed may be helpful, but they are artificial, at least when compared to Paul's notion of naturally occurring dialogue.

So, Paul has in mind the type of dialogue that naturally occurs among those who trust one another as they navigate life together towards common goals. According to Paul, those who are in Christ are *in fact* unified, so we can and should live life together in mutual trust because Christ the Word and the Holy Spirit enable us to do so. The dialogue we are to have is what we already do naturally with those whom we trust and with whom we engage in daily living. The natural

result is shared belief, and if we engage in the specific practices Paul prescribes for us, the natural result will also ultimately be full and complete truth about the Faith and about Christ.

1.7 Ephesians Is An Ecumenical Document

While Ephesians 4:13 stands at the center of this work, it is the message of Ephesians as a whole that drives my proposal. I will seek to unpack Ephesians as it relates to ecumenical thought in the next chapter, though it is important here to outline how Ephesians 4:13 fits into Ephesians as a whole.

At its essence, Ephesians *is* an ecumenical document, intended both to give a theology of the unity which results from Christ's work and to encourage Christians to engage in the practices of unity. As the self-identified apostle to the Gentiles,²⁰ Paul demonstrates his understanding and deep concern that the Gospel involves bringing all sorts of diverse people groups into the single Body of Christ, to be unified under the Headship of the Messiah and formed into a single people. In place of the hostility among the diverse groups that would typically result from their differing values and ways of life, a hostility exacerbated by misunderstandings of one another, Christ created peace by grafting the different groups into Himself, creating in Himself one new people.²¹ This is precisely the same message today's divided Church needs to hear.

Though different churches each claim the very same Christ as Lord and trace their understanding of the Faith back through the teachings of the very same apostles appointed by Christ, they persist in divisions today. Despite the clear teaching that unity in Christ is a fundamental truth of the Gospel, the various churches generally have relegated unity in Christ to

²⁰ Ephesians 3:1.

²¹ Ephesians 2, especially 2:11-22.

a diminished status, at least in practice. As I have suggested above, the primary reason for this demotion of unity in the various churches arises from a fundamental mistake – namely, that differences in doctrinal understanding somehow justify the divisions that persist among those who are in fact one in Christ. Yet, Paul is clear on this point. Those who are baptized into Christ, into the one new humanity created by Him and in Him, are to take up a set of practices which, when implemented, have the effect of creating unity among people of divergent beliefs, values, and backgrounds.²²

Paul relies on the themes of glory and peace to articulate his theology of unity in Ephesians. Both themes have a long tradition of use in the Old Testament, and Paul’s own usage stands squarely in that tradition. In simple terms, Paul’s use of the theme of glory relies upon the rich tradition throughout the Old Testament of using God’s glory to denote the presence of God and all the blessings that come with it, particularly in the Temple. God’s glory is present where God reigns, where His presence dwells, where His Word is followed and put into practice. In Ephesians and elsewhere, Paul speaks of the glory of God dwelling in Christ and then again in the Church, the new Temple.

Likewise, Paul’s use of the concept of peace stands in the rich tradition of the notion of *shalom* used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the presence of everything that is good in the land as a result of God’s blessing. When God’s people are turned to Him so that they hear and obey His Word, the blessing of God comes upon them and the land in which they dwell. As will become clear later, such blessing comes naturally when God’s Word is allowed to put things into their natural or proper order, the order intended by their Creator. Consistent with Pauline

²² Ephesians 4:11-16, especially 4:13. Indeed all of chapters 4 through 6 of Ephesians ought to be seen as supporting this central thesis in Ephesians, as I will demonstrate.

and Old Testament usage of the notion of peace, Augustine says the peace of God is best defined as the “tranquility of order”,²³ by which he means the proper ordering of things according to the Word of God. In short, when people in a particular place are turned to God to hear and obey His Word, their lives are ordered according to God’s best plans for them and they therefore experience the shalom of heaven on the earth where they dwell.

When Paul utilizes the themes of glory and peace in Ephesians, he intends to invoke the rich traditions of each concept and put them to work in his theology of the unity that comes from the work of the long-awaited Messiah. That unity is so extensive in scope and so central to the work of God in human history that Paul refers to it as the mystery of God’s will made known to us through Christ and a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ.²⁴ This cosmic mission of Christ involves the restoration of the proper ordering of all of creation under the headship of Christ, and it includes a proper social ordering in the Church so that it can function as the true Temple of God in which God’s glory may dwell fully and permanently. It is in precisely this way that Paul’s theology of unity is articulated in Ephesians in terms of the rich traditions of glory and peace found throughout the Old Testament.

Understanding Christ’s unity in terms of glory and peace provides a rich theological vision of the trajectory of God’s work in human history and its culmination at the eschaton, a vision which informs and motivates the kind of life Christians are to live in response to God’s work through Christ. Not surprisingly then, Paul follows his theological discussion of glory and peace as they relate to and articulate God’s work to unify all things in Christ with a discussion of

²³ Augustine, *The City of God* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2000), 13:XIX, 690.

²⁴ Ephesians 1:9-10.

practical instructions regarding humanity's proper response to God's work. God is unifying humanity and all of creation by ordering all things according to His Word, Christ Jesus. The result is the expanding of the presence of God's glory and peace from heaven to the earth, until they fill the whole earth. The properly ordered Church under the Headship of Christ is obedient to His Word and therefore unified and formed into the very Temple of God. The Church thus experiences peace and the presence of God's glory, and it is empowered by the Spirit and the Word of God to expand such blessings throughout the earth. The blessings of God's glory and peace will one day extend throughout the whole earth and eventually all of creation because of the work of Christ through His Body, the Church.

So, God's glory and peace expand from heaven to the earth in and through the Church, at least when the Church willingly participates in the ongoing work of Christ and the Spirit. As I will make clear, this is the primary meaning of the notion that the Church is Christ's Body – Christ, who is now seated at the right hand of God, is continuing his very same earthly ministry of bringing the reign of heaven to the earth through a new Body, the Body of Christ, the Church. But, God respects the image of Himself He placed within us and does not force us to participate. That is why Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the calling of the Gospel.²⁵ The proper response to Christ's work is thus to become properly ordered socially under the Headship of Christ (i.e., unified, in a particular way), and this is specifically to take up a way of life consisting of certain practices worthy of the calling to the unity that is marked by God's glory and peace.

²⁵ Ephesians 4:1.

To complete the point in this section regarding how Ephesians 4:13 fits within Ephesians as a whole, that verse makes clear that doctrinal truth and unity *result* from Christians engaging in the prescribed practices of the way of life worthy of the unity, glory, and peace towards which Christ has called His people. Those practices are perhaps best summarized as a life of mutual submission²⁶ whereby each member of the Body plays its proper role. Mutual submission involves mutual trust and thus a natural dialogue that comes from mutual service, living together, and engaging life together, including reasoning together.

Some among us are special teaching ministers who are charged with guiding the natural dialogue of the Body via teaching God’s Word to the people.²⁷ As I will spend some time discussing, truth and unity are intimately and inextricably related, and they *both* result from Christians living the worthy life constituted by the kind of dialogue Paul describes in Ephesians – a naturally occurring dialogue lead by Christ our Head through His divinely ordained teaching ministers and marked by mutual submission.

So, at the heart of Paul’s ecumenical message in Ephesians are the concepts of the glory and peace Christ works to bring about on the earth, together with Christians’ willing participation in that work when they properly respond to it by engaging in the practices constituting the way of life worthy of it. These three concepts – (1) glory, (2) peace, and (3)

²⁶ Ephesians 5:21 is more than just an introduction to the household code which follows it. It is a summary statement in the middle of Paul’s practical instruction, meant to encapsulate the essence of that practical teaching and then apply it to further instruction regarding life in the home. Mutual submission is an essential element of the worthy life and helps us understand the nature of the practices which constitute the worthy life. Much more will be said about mutual submission in later chapters.

²⁷ Ephesians 4:11-16. Much more will be said about these “special teaching ministers”, as I shall call them, since the importance of Ephesians to ecumenism today hinges on the nuances of Paul’s teaching regarding them.

worthy way of life (also referred to herein as Paul's notion of dialogue) – will be the focus of chapters 2 through 5 of this work.

1.8 A Modest Proposal

In the final chapters, I will propose a theory of ecumenical dialogue rooted in Paul's ecumenical message in Ephesians. The theory is intended to carve a theological pathway by which Christians from many different churches may take up the ecumenical cause in earnest, and do so in the manner Paul prescribes. By building the theory primarily on a New Testament source, my hope is that the theory may be given serious consideration by Christians of all stripes.

I will also spend time analyzing notions of ecumenism and reform put forth by some of the most prominent Roman Catholic ecumenists in light of Paul's ecumenical message, in order to then articulate my proposed theory of ecumenical dialogue and proposed reforms to the exercise of the Petrine office in a manner consistent with Roman Catholic theology. There are three main reasons why I, an Anglican Christian, would focus on these scholars in developing and articulating my own proposal. First, they contain many important ecumenical insights that should be considered by any serious ecumenist. Second, at least for practical and historical reasons, if not also theological ones, the pope must play a key role in any ecumenical endeavor involving the whole Church if such endeavor is to be successful. Simply put, articulating a thoroughly Pauline theory of ecumenical dialogue in light of Roman Catholic teaching is necessary if there is any real chance of involving Roman Catholics.

Third, if non-Catholics are able to see how thoroughly compatible the teaching offices of the Roman Catholic Church are with Paul's teaching, they will be more likely to accept them on some level, at least in ecumenical endeavors. Such acceptance by non-Catholics will only be possible if the Petrine office is reformed. Rome does not merely need a better apologetic –

though that would no doubt be helpful – but rather also a real reform of the Petrine office. Dulles’s invitation to non-Catholics to suggest ways to reform the Petrine office to make it more acceptable to non-Catholics itself suggests he believes something similar regarding the necessity, or at least wisdom, of seeking such reform.²⁸ I will therefore conclude this work with a modest proposal for reforming the Petrine office on the basis of the proposed theory of ecumenical dialogue as that proposed theory is informed by Rome’s own ecumenical teachings.

My proposed reform of the Petrine office in light of Paul’s ecumenical message seeks to answer Dulles’s call on non-Catholics to suggest ways to reform the Petrine office. As I will argue, the Petrine office has tended to emphasize truth to the detriment of unity over the last few centuries following the Reformation. I am not suggesting here that Rome is responsible for Christian division, at least not any more than other churches.²⁹ Instead, the great acrimony within Christianity that persisted from the time of the Reformation into the late 20th century, and in smaller ways continues into the current century, has tilted the focus of the various churches towards asserting and defending truth claims even when those claims have not enhanced unity. In this context, Rome rightly perceived attacks on its doctrines and truth claims and therefore sought to uphold the truth of the Gospel as developed within its own tradition.

This dynamic happened in every church, not just the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of such acrimony and in response to such attacks, those who *should* have been treated as

²⁸ Vatican II documents generally recognize the need for constant reform of the Roman Catholic Church and the ability and importance of non-Catholic Christians to help in that effort. *Ut Unum Sint* calls for a mutual reexamination of longstanding misgivings and prejudices as a means to purification of past memories. Dulles’s own invitation to non-Catholics stands in this same vein.

²⁹ While I certainly do not intend to cast stones at the Roman Catholic Church, I do believe some reforms of the Petrine office are needed if it is to serve as an effective and faithful instrument of unity. That is the spirit of my modest proposal.

trustworthy “insiders” because they are “in Christ” were instead treated like “outsiders.” Truth and unity were unwittingly set at odds because those who share the bond of peace treated each other as outsiders, accusing each other of wrongdoings and false doctrines. That period was made still worse by the rise of secular humanism and its attacks on Christianity, and particularly its attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. As Dulles and others have argued, the time of extreme acrimony within Christendom has passed, and a new era of cooperation is at hand.

Paul’s ecumenical message suggests truth and unity are inextricably tied together. Thus, when Christian truth is pursued to the detriment of Christian unity, *both* goals are compromised. The corollary gives us reason to expect the suggested reformation of the Petrine office will actually enhance its ministry of truth if it does in fact enhance its ministry of unity. For, if truth and unity are inextricably tied together, enhancing one will enhance the other.

Given the historical importance of the Petrine office, its development over the long life of the Western Church into its current form, and the sheer number of Roman Catholic Christians today, any notion that there should not be a special role for the Petrine office is simply unrealistic. Certainly, strong theological arguments for upholding the Petrine office add to the practical ones, but the theological arguments are not needed to justify the importance of the Petrine office to the ecumenical life of the Church. Nonetheless, it is on theological grounds, bolstered by philosophical insights, that I will go on to suggest the Petrine office³⁰ plays a vital

³⁰ While the theological grounds I will demonstrate do not establish the Bishop of Rome as necessarily playing this role, they will suggest the need for a shepherd over ecumenism. Likewise, the theological grounds do not weigh against, much less rule out, the Bishop of Rome serving in this role. Once the theological necessity of the role, or something very similar to it, is realized, practical arguments then become relevant. If there is to be any agreement between Roman Catholics and other Christians, this appears to be the space where it will be achieved.

role in ecumenical endeavors and that it fulfills its ministries of truth and unity best when functioning as shepherd over the ecumenical dialogues.

The mere fact of Christian disunity *itself* demands ecclesiological reform, especially when seen in the light of Paul's ecumenical message in Ephesians. That message provides a model and the intellectual capital by which to pursue such reform. Given the vital role the Petrine office ought to play as an instrument of unity among Christians and the fact that such role does not currently enjoy wide acceptance outside the Roman Catholic Church, there is no more important place currently to focus such reform efforts. In light of these factors, I will suggest a way to reform the Petrine office so that its ministry of unity can be heightened without compromising its ministry of truth.

My approach to developing a proposal for reforming the Petrine office seeks to do so in light of an increased understanding of the Gospel. Paul's ecumenical message, with its articulation of unity in terms of glory and peace, stands at the very center of the Gospel. Unity of all things in Christ³¹ *is* the focus of the Gospel, it *is* the very goal of Christ's work in the past, present, and future. The proper response to that Gospel is a corporate way of life consisting of certain practices befitting the Church's calling to participate in such unity, peace and glory. The proper response is a naturally occurring dialogue among Christians who obediently align themselves with the work of Christ and seek to bring unity to all things. Paul's ecumenical message thus gives great weight to the notion of renewing ecclesiology with a focus on ecumenical concerns. To do so is to renew ecclesiology in light of the Gospel, because the focus of the Gospel is the unity of all things in Christ.

³¹ Ephesians 1:9-10

My proposal to reform the Petrine office in light of Paul's Gospel as articulated in Ephesians hinges on a fundamental premise embedded in Paul's approach to unity, namely that some amount of diversity of belief properly exists among those who are in Christ, at least during human history. Far from a mere assertion, this fundamental premise derives from a careful understanding of how beliefs develop over time among different communities. Recognizing that different communities develop their beliefs about the Faith differently over time, as Paul recognized, is absolutely crucial for us today if we are to fully understand and appreciate the wisdom in Paul's prescription for how to live a life worthy of our calling to unity when such diversity in fact exists within the Church.

Different church communities naturally develop their doctrines and responses to the Gospel separately from one another. Over time, they develop different traditions which are held by their respective communities to be faithful responses to the Gospel, in terms of both doctrine and praxis. Certainly, there are more and less faithful traditions, with greater and lesser degrees of accuracy. While it is necessary and prudent to evaluate different traditions for their faithfulness to the Gospel, we must resist the natural inclination to do so without first seeking to harvest what fruits may be available to us from first taking a different approach. Even the most faithful traditions have blind spots and blemishes in need of reform, and dialogue with those "insiders" in Christ who may be "outsiders" with respect to our own communities is one of the best ways to overcome such weaknesses.

By engaging with those "insiders" in Christ who are "outsiders" with respect to my own church community, I effectively make my community larger and increase the chances that my own beliefs and practices will have fewer blind spots and blemishes. Different developments by different communities are conditioned by and limited to the limited input and perspectives of the

members of each community, as compared to the inputs and perspectives of the whole Body of Christ. Moreover, different traditions typically are more or less advanced in their developments of particular aspects of the Faith. Limiting ourselves to a single tradition by prematurely evaluating and rejecting other traditions forecloses two very important possibilities: we may fail to learn something from a different tradition that is more developed on certain points than our own, and we may fail to share other points from our own tradition effectively with those in other traditions.

Here we can see some of the wisdom in Paul's approach. We are to put on the practices of unity even when – and *especially* when – we do not agree doctrinally, so that we may mutually benefit one another and one day come to unity of faith and knowledge of Christ. My proposed reform of the Petrine office will revolve around this wisdom. I will suggest reforms of that office in light of Paul's Gospel in Ephesians, reforms I believe would make the Petrine office more capable of carrying out an effective ministry of unity among *all* the members of the Body of Christ. That ministry of unity, when reformed in light of Paul's Gospel, does not compromise truth at all but instead strengthens it. It enables all of the separate traditions within the Church to learn and share insights, to help one another grow, to participate in the kind of ecumenical dialogue that enables them to develop their beliefs and practices *together*, just as any community naturally does, rather than developing different traditions apart from one another. By bringing all of those in Christ into this type of dialogue, the Petrine office can put the whole Church on the path Paul says will one day bring all those in Christ to full unity of faith and knowledge of Christ.

Again, this whole approach hinges on the notion that there is a legitimate diversity of doctrines and practices within the Church among those who are in fact in Christ, even if they are

not all part of a particular denomination. Those who might deny this notion can only do so out of hubris or a misguided idea that their own understanding of the Faith is both without error and a complete understanding. Even if they might not be willing to admit an error in their own understanding, only the least informed could possibly claim to have a *complete* understanding of the fullness of God's revelation. Regardless, addressing Christians who do not accept such legitimate diversity among those who are in Christ is beyond the scope of this work. There is no hope for unity with those who persist in such hubris or ignorance. No doubt this author has a touch of both, as we all do, but this fundamental premise of legitimate diversity among those in Christ, once accepted, is a much needed antidote for both ills and is the only realistic starting point for those who truly desire unity.

This fundamental premise of legitimate diversity of practices and beliefs within the Church is embedded in Paul's approach to unity, for it underlies the very idea that we must make every effort to maintain unity with those who are in Christ, even when and especially when we do not currently agree. Paul's approach is that we are to develop beliefs and practices *together* and, by doing so, move closer to the goal of one day attaining full unity of faith and knowledge of Christ. When two Christian traditions with differing doctrines and practices developed separately over many years can come together and learn from one another, an increased understanding of the Gospel is possible, thus enabling greater renewal in the Church.

The Gospel of peace and its implications for reconciliation in Christ do not end with the reality that those in Christ are in fact united in Him because of those permanent bonds – they continue to the very practical instruction regarding how we are to respond to the work of God already accomplished in Christ. That practical instruction is to respond to the Gospel by cooperating with Christ and the Holy Spirit as we participate in God's continued work to bring

us to a more perfect visible unity on the earth. We are not only to declare we are at peace with one another; we are also to work to realize and experience peace in greater and more complete ways. If we do not hold the fundamental premise of legitimate diversity within the Church, then we are prone to sever ties with those who disagree with us. Yet, that is precisely the opposite of what Paul teaches!

The Petrine office must be reformed so that it both (1) serves as an instrument of unity in just this sort of dialogue among those in Christ who disagree and (2) can be more widely recognized and accepted by non-Catholic Christians as vital to the Christian unity which stands at the very heart of the Gospel. My task is thus to help articulate Paul's understanding of the Gospel and our proper response to it as he lays it out in Ephesians, in order to be able to make suggestions for reforming the Petrine office in light of that understanding.

If non-Catholic Christians can come to understand Paul's articulation of the Gospel and notion of dialogue that comprises our proper response to it, then acceptance of the Petrine office as a vital instrument of unity becomes much easier. I will make the arguments for such acceptance of the Petrine office as shepherd over ecumenism, especially if the exercise of that office is reformed in light of the Gospel as better understood through Paul's message in Ephesians. If I am successful, I will have painted a picture of a reformed Petrine ministry that many non-Catholic Christians will be *eager* to embrace. In painting that picture, I will also give reasons why I believe the proposal can and should be accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in light of its own teachings, for those teachings are largely consistent with and contain many of the key insights of Paul's ecumenical message in Ephesians.

CHAPTER 2

EPHESIANS AS A BLUEPRINT FOR ECUMENISM

The message of Ephesians could not be any more important for the Church's current ecumenical efforts. Indeed, Paul's very purpose for penning Ephesians, as I will argue, was to implore the various churches and the Church towards greater unity. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the importance of Ephesians for ecumenism and to provide an overview of the particular themes in the document that demonstrate that importance. Those particular themes will be taken up in greater detail in subsequent chapters, but a broad overview will be helpful to chart a course and lay a foundation for appraising current ecumenical proposals. This chapter will also address many of the "introduction" issues typically discussed by New Testament scholars because of their importance for understanding the letter's purpose and central themes.

What will become clear is that Ephesians was written for the very purpose of helping to establish and maintain unity in the Church as a proper response to Christ's work to unify all things in Himself.¹ Its central themes and teachings are designed to spur followers of Christ towards concrete, visible unity in Him, laying down a blueprint for Christian ecumenism for all time.

There is little need to establish the centrality of the themes of unity or ethnic reconciliation in Ephesians – these have been aptly demonstrated by many commentators and are

¹ See Ephesians 1:9-10.

widely understood. What are less well understood, however, are the details regarding what such unity and reconciliation look like and, most importantly, *how* they are attained. Those details will be a central focus of this chapter.

Even less well understood than Ephesians' details regarding unity and reconciliation are the *implications* of those details for the life of the Church and for ecumenism, implications which have been largely unexplored. The most significant ones will also be mentioned briefly in this chapter in order that they may be explored more thoroughly in the following chapters. Those implications comprise the heart and soul of this entire work and provide the underpinnings for a more robust theology capable of advancing the cause of ecumenism.

2.1 Overview and Relevance To Ecumenism

In Ephesians, Paul lays out his vision for the Church in terms of the proper response Christians are to have to the work of God through Jesus Christ. To understand the message of Ephesians is to understand the duty of all Christians to be directly involved in those particular practices which build up the unity of the Church and further to see that duty as the single most important Christian duty. All other facets of the Christian life are tied to this fundamental duty to engage in those particular practices of unity. Those practices are precisely how we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and how we love our neighbors. They constitute the proper expression of our faith in Christ and the proper expression of our service and mutual submission to one another. They constitute precisely how we are to declare the Gospel of Christ and the love of God to the world, and how we are to go forth making disciples and teaching them to obey the commands of Christ.

In this chapter, I will attempt to articulate the overall message of Ephesians with a particular emphasis on its relevance to ecumenical theology. To be clear, I intend to show that

such relevance is not merely a theme or implication of Ephesians but rather the very purpose of the document. As I will argue, Paul, writing near the end of his life and reflecting on the work of God in light of all his cumulative wisdom and experience, authored Ephesians as a summary of the Gospel of Christ expressly for the purpose of informing and instructing churches throughout Asia Minor in his day and future churches throughout the earth regarding how specifically they are to live their lives in a manner worthy of that Gospel. By first summarizing the work of God through Christ in chapters 1-3 and then summarizing our proper response to that work in chapters 4-6, Paul is able to give concrete instruction, rooted in Christ's ministry and teachings, about those particular practices which are to constitute the life of the Church, the churches, and indeed every person who would claim to follow Christ. That concrete instruction, those constitutive practices, are centered on the unity of the Body of Christ, and they are the subject of this chapter. Their relevance to the Church's ecumenical activities today could not be any greater.

Before further elaborating on this summary of Ephesians and its relevance to ecumenism, some comments about the so-called "introduction" issues typically addressed in any scholarly study of Ephesians are in order. To be sure, only select introductory issues will be discussed, and only in a limited way. To treat those issues in a more comprehensive way is beyond the scope of this work, and certainly is not necessary to it. The issues chosen are those which are relevant to ecumenical theology because they are relevant to the message Ephesians has for ecumenical theology. So, while the following discussion will touch on the main introductory issues, it will focus on those which are relevant to establishing and understanding the substance and importance of Ephesians to ecumenism. The remaining introductory issues, important as they may be, will be set aside for another day.

2.1.1 Authorship

The issues surrounding the authorship of Ephesians are among those most heavily debated by New Testament scholars since the advent of modern critical methods of studying scripture. In the introduction to his commentary on Ephesians, Harold Hoener examines and helpfully summarizes the data regarding those scholars who have examined the issue of the authorship of Ephesians from the early church fathers through 2001.² His data show that scholars before 1792 were virtually unanimous in favor of Pauline authorship and that it is only in the Western church since then that the Pauline authorship has been doubted in any serious way.³ Despite assertions that modern scholars generally dispute Pauline authorship, his data show that those for and against Pauline authorship in recent decades remains roughly equal in number.⁴ While there are many ways to characterize this data, the most helpful is simply to note first that there is no clear consensus and then seek to understand why. The very fact that New Testament scholars have been unable to find a consensus suggests either that more data are needed or that New Testament scholars may need the help of outside resources. In the absence of additional data, we must either be content with ambiguity or turn to outside resources to see if they may be helpful. What follows are some suggestions from a budding philosophical theologian and practicing lawyer who believes the work of New Testament scholars employing modern critical methods would benefit from certain bits of wisdom gleaned from philosophical theology and jurisprudence.

² Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2-20.

³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6-7.

⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 19-20.

Often, when there is no consensus regarding how to interpret a finite set of data, there is a basic misunderstanding of that data among many or most of the interpreters of that data. Just as often, other factors *outside* the data drive the various conclusions and entrench scholars in their interpretations, even as the scholars themselves may continue to debate at the level of the data. I believe both phenomena are occurring among those examining whether Paul authored Ephesians, as I hope to make clear below. I also believe New Testament scholars should avail themselves of certain concepts from the realm of jurisprudence to help address this particular issue, namely the concepts of presumption and burden of proof. In many areas of the law, disputes are helpfully and correctly decided according to these two concepts, and scholars in other realms would do well to borrow those concepts when appropriate. As I will attempt to show, the issue of Pauline authorship is ripe for this sort of analysis. At the end of this section, I will also show that my analysis of these authorship issues is wholly consistent with the clear teaching of Ephesians itself regarding how to pursue such issues, serving as an example of the very kind of unifying practices Paul advocates in Ephesians.

Beginning with the basic misunderstanding of the data regarding Pauline authorship, I turn first to a quote from N.T. Wright that frames the discussion quite aptly. After stating his own conclusion that Paul wrote Ephesians, Wright makes a statement regarding a better way of doing theology than that of those who oppose Pauline authorship:

Like most things in ancient history, this hypothesis [that Paul wrote Ephesians] remains unprovable, putting six and six together and making fifteen. But, twelve out of fifteen isn't bad. A lot better than imposing a nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism on Paul and then declaring that Ephesians doesn't fit.⁵

⁵ N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) 1515.

Wright's statement starkly poses a central two-part question to those who would deny Pauline authorship on the grounds that the theology of Ephesians differs from that of the undisputed Pauline documents – are you sure you have understood the theology of those undisputed documents, and if so, are you sure it is best to use such understanding to evaluate whether Paul wrote Ephesians? As is well known, Wright has written extensively, following E. P. Sanders and Dunn, in favor of a new perspective on Paul in which he argues modern scholars have in fact misunderstood the theology of the undisputed Pauline corpus and have done so under the influence of the so-called Lutheran view of justification. In the quote above, Wright is making the point that misunderstanding Paul's theology in his undisputed letters has led many scholars erroneously to conclude that other letters traditionally attributed to Paul were not in fact written by Paul because of alleged significant theological differences. To be sure, other esteemed scholars have noted the same issue.⁶

So, if this purported theological tension is rooted in a misunderstanding of the undisputed Pauline writings, many of the arguments against Pauline authorship of Ephesians disappear or are at least weakened when given their proper weighting. The same would also be true if the purported theological tension is rooted in a misunderstanding of Ephesians. I contend that both types of misunderstanding are rampant today and that advancements in our understandings of both the undisputed and the disputed Pauline letters will show the true theological tension to be much less extensive than we are led to believe by those who argue against Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

⁶ See particularly (Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 18, 23-25); (Allen Verhey and Joseph Harvard, *Ephesians* (Louisville: John Knox 2011), 23-24).

I believe my proposed understanding of Ephesians accomplishes this very thing – it provides a way to understand Ephesians on its own terms, the result of which is less tension with the undisputed Pauline writings. Additionally, it aligns with the thinking of commentators such as Wright who have sought advances in our understanding of the theology of the undisputed Pauline writings. Furthermore, it even offers hypotheses for *enhancing* our understanding of the undisputed Pauline writings, for if Ephesians is to be counted among the writings of Paul, we no doubt can and ought to be able to explain how they are all consistent. If Ephesians was in fact written by Paul, we would expect a better theological understanding of Ephesians to be a better understanding of Paul and his thinking, thus producing hypotheses for increased understanding of Paul's other works. At the very least, a better understanding of Ephesians, if written by Paul, would enable us to better understand why Ephesians sounds different to us than Paul's other writings.

Following Wright's line of thinking, the primary insight here is that while Ephesians seems to many scholars today to be saying something different than the undisputed Pauline writings, that seeming difference does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Ephesians was written by someone other than Paul. There are other, better explanations of that seeming difference. First, we must allow that early Paul may sound a little different than late Paul. The idea here is that Paul's own thinking developed over time, particularly as he continued in his ministry and saw how the Holy Spirit worked in and through the Church. No one doubts Paul had a brilliant mind; it would be foolish to doubt one with such a brilliant mind would not grow in his own faith and understanding of the Gospel as he watched its truth and wisdom transform lives and cultures. Second, we must allow that Paul writing as shepherd of his own churches may sound a little different than Paul writing as an evangelist and teacher to new cultures and

future generations. The idea here is that the same brilliant mind that ruminated on the Gospel and the works of God throughout his lifetime also became conscious of the fact that his writings and teachings would (or at least were likely to) be passed on to other Christians at other times and places. The Paul who admonished the Corinthians to imitate him⁷ and who explained to the Corinthians that he becomes all things to all people in order to win some⁸ is the very same Paul who recognized his influence would in fact be imitated from generation to generation and who sought to articulate the Gospel in differing manners to different peoples and cultures. In other words, the suggestion here is that Paul's brilliance included the ability and desire manifested in Ephesians to write in a different literary style more fitting for the different peoples and cultures to receive that writing, as compared to his earlier writings.

Combining the above suggestions, my argument is first that most of the tension between the undisputed Pauline writings and Ephesians is resolved when we properly understand the message of Ephesians and then investigate whether that proper understanding helps us better understand the theology of the undisputed Pauline writings. I contend it does, but showing this is beyond the scope of this work. Nonetheless, some tension will remain unresolved by this first step. The second step is to demonstrate why that remaining tension does not (or at least need not) count as evidence against Pauline authorship but rather is better explained by recognizing the brilliance and flexibility of Paul. More specifically, Paul's message in Ephesians demonstrates a development in his own understanding of the Gospel towards the end of his life and reflects an intentional shift in his writing style given his intended audience and purpose in

⁷ 1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1.

⁸ 1 Cor. 9:22.

writing. As I spell out more fully below, Paul authored Ephesians as his magnum opus, a full articulation of the Gospel and its implications for the life of the Church, written late in his life and intended first to be circulated throughout Asia Minor and then passed down from generation to generation within the Church wherever it may exist.⁹ Ephesians was a traveling sermon, meant to be proclaimed in the churches in a manner that would make Paul himself present in the midst of those in attendance so that they could hear the fullness of the mystery of the Gospel proclaimed just as if Paul had delivered it himself.

Ephesians is thus seen as having been written by Paul late in his life in a manner reflecting his mature thinking and pastoral wisdom. It contains Paul's most fully developed theology, shaped into a practical homily that begins with truths about God's work through Christ and moves steadily to practical instruction aimed at helping those hearing the homily understand their identity in Christ and those practices which comprise their proper way of life. At this stage of his life, Paul knew his own mortality, and he also understood his primary role was to transmit the Gospel to the Gentiles faithfully.¹⁰ Authoring Ephesians was his way to ensure he could proclaim his understanding of the Gospel to the various churches he would never visit in person, both in his own day and in later generations. In this sense, we may say that Ephesians was his final missionary journey, a journey that has not yet come to its end since it continues to be

⁹ Several scholars note Ephesians was intended for more than one church and was written in a more general manner than other Pauline writings. See (George Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 11-12); (Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 48-49, 86-87); (Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 11-12); (Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 1996), 21); (Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007), 2). Echoing those scholars, I contend Paul intended Ephesians as an encyclical to be circulated throughout the Church in every generation, as I explain more fully below.

¹⁰ See Ephesians 3.

proclaimed in the various churches and the Church today. Or, at least it should be so proclaimed, since Paul intended that it would be. It was and still can be a way for Paul to be present among us proclaiming his own, fully mature understanding of the Gospel, thereby fulfilling his ministry to be apostle to *all* Gentiles.

So, while basic misunderstandings of Ephesians and the undisputed Pauline writings have created space for modern scholars to challenge Pauline authorship, a more robust understanding of Ephesians coupled with insights about the purpose and timing behind Paul's authorship of Ephesians narrow that space considerably. These points will be fleshed out more fully below, and they deal with the issue of misunderstanding the data relevant to Pauline authorship. We now turn to some of the other factors outside of the data that, I suggest, are driving the various conclusions of New Testament scholars regarding the authorship of Ephesians.

That the Church fragmented into an ever-increasing number of denominations and churches during the modern age is a fact no one can dispute, though unfortunately only some bemoan it. More generally, scholars across many diverse disciplines and fields have documented the steady increase in individualism in Western societies and some of the consequences for our institutions and selves. Without discussing the causes or opining on the consequences of these forces, I instead wish only to note a similar trend in the epistemic practices in the academy, the Church, and Western society at large. As we have become more individualistic in our thinking and have tended increasingly to eschew corporate identities, we have consequently become less trusting of others and more reliant on our own thinking. Instead of striving for truth together and valuing the importance of a more collaborative approach which is willing and eager to hear from dissonant voices, we more easily dismiss those other voices. The ability to think for oneself has been elevated to the status of an ideal, with reliance on tradition being seen as a weakness and

rejection of traditional ideas seen as progress. The academy has not been immune to these forces. With the rise of individualism in the West, our epistemic practices – those activities we esteem as helping us arrive at greater truth – have been shaped accordingly.

It is no wonder then that modern scholars have tended to reject traditional accounts of ancient authorship in favor of the conclusions stemming from more recent approaches. More recent approaches such as various modern critical methods certainly have borne much fruit. However, those approaches too often suffer from a pride that presumes ancient voices were less sophisticated and more prone to error than we moderns. They are thought to be guilty of bad reasoning, false motives, flawed methods, or lack of diligence. All of this ignores the basic fact that the ancients undoubtedly had much more direct evidence that would be relevant to issues such as authorship than modern scholars could ever hope to have.

This prideful approach takes an even worse form in modern scholars who tend to discount not only ancient witnesses but also anyone who does not agree with them. Too many modern scholars therefore convince themselves of their own theories and cling to them even when no one else accepts them, and they are likewise much more skeptical of the theories of others. The typical career path of most scholars encourages and reinforces these prideful epistemic practices – the most prestigious scholars must publish fresh insights to obtain or keep their coveted jobs and to gain the respect of their peers. They are individually rewarded (or punished) based on their individual endeavors, and these career pressures serve to reinforce individualistic epistemic practices. Despite the appearance of a corporate endeavor through the various conferences and dialogues modern scholars have, they are by and large individuals

striving to develop, articulate, and defend their own individual theories. Furthermore, the more time they invest in those theories, the more they are convinced of the truth of them.¹¹

In just this way, these individualistic epistemic practices work as factors outside of the available data regarding the ancient world that contribute to the lack of consensus among modern scholars about such things as whether Paul authored Ephesians. More specifically, when they are added to the basic misunderstandings of Ephesians and of Paul's theology in his undisputed writings, these epistemic practices unwittingly help ensure that scholars continue to wrangle over whose own particular view of Pauline authorship is correct.

As will become clear, Paul has put forth certain epistemic practices in Ephesians which are more fitting for those who are in Christ. These practices do not contradict modern scholarship methods per se but rather only the more prideful manifestations of them. Paul has shown us a better way, and not surprisingly we can rely on that way to help us sort through the issue of the authorship of Ephesians. That better way involves members of the Body of Christ in every generation submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.¹² By giving proper deference to those within the Body of Christ who have preceded us, we can allow their testimony to play a proper role in our own reasoning and in the development of our own conclusions. The next point about presumptions and burdens of proof helps make clear this important point regarding proper deference to voices of the past.

¹¹ Undoubtedly, this analysis is overly simplistic and generalized, and I certainly do not mean to impugn the hard work and great advances of all modern scholars. Nonetheless, the point stands that the forces of individualism have shaped, to some degree, the epistemic practices of the academy, and it serves as a warning and wake-up call. The intent is to show a clear contrast with the epistemic practices Paul advocates in Ephesians, which will be described in some detail below and will help drive home the point here.

¹² I cite Ephesians 5:21 here as a general epistemic practice. Much more will be said about this in Chapter 5 of this work, though a little more will be said in this chapter below.

Turning to the realm of jurisprudence, we find a ready-made, well-developed principle widely used in various areas of the law to help with the resolution of difficult issues. The legal system deals with practical, everyday issues and disputes that cannot linger for years or decades but rather must be resolved so that those involved in a particular case can get on with their lives. As a result, rules have been constructed over time to help produce such resolutions when there is insufficient data otherwise to do so. This is why it is sometimes said that the legal system does not arrive at the truth, only resolutions of disputes. However, the fact that the legal system aims at resolutions and not at truth does not mean it is indifferent to the truth; instead, it provides mechanisms designed to arrive at the truth whenever it can, and when it cannot, it provides practical solutions believed to return what is most likely true or closest to the truth.¹³ This sort of practical reasoning, born out of necessity in the case of jurisprudence, may be carefully employed in other situations, with much to be gained from doing so. One such practical solution is the notion of presumption, with its necessary corollary known as the burden of proof.

Presumption in jurisprudence can be used for many practical purposes and can come in many shapes and sizes, including rebuttable presumptions, conclusive presumptions,

¹³ Sometimes, those practical solutions are driven by values and interests deemed so important that they cannot be compromised without clear and compelling reasons for doing so. For example, presuming an individual innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt favors the preservation of an accused's freedom unless a high burden of proof is met. The truth of the case matters deeply, but a mere preponderance of the evidence is not enough to deny someone their freedom even if it might be enough for reasonable people to draw conclusions about the truth of the matter. In other words, the facts have to show with a very high degree of certainty that the accused is guilty, or else the accused's freedom will not be taken away. Even in these matters, the concept of truth and how to attain it is front and center, but it is balanced with practical concerns such as an accused's own freedom and the tendency of people with biases to overdraw their conclusions about guilt in certain circumstances. These practical considerations demonstrate the complexity and difficulty of arriving at truth, and the legal doctrines built around those considerations manifest the development of wise *epistemic practices* that have developed over hundreds of years of dealing with the necessities of life. The same practical considerations are not extant in philosophical or theological endeavors, which unfortunately enables scholars in those areas to persist in the employment of unwise, less fruitful epistemic practices without ever receiving the benefit of the same kind of feedback from the practical world that lawyers, judges, and many legal scholars receive. In short, many philosophers and theologians likely have something to learn from the realm of jurisprudence.

presumptions of fact, presumptions of law, and presumptions of innocence, to name a few.

Whatever other observations we may make from this fact of variety of use of presumption in the legal system, we may safely say that the notion of presumption has proven so useful that it has been utilized in many areas of the law and modified as necessary to make it fit each particular context. The suggestion here is that it can and should be used when confronted with authorship issues, particularly because it can be used in a manner reflecting the kind of mutual submission¹⁴ Paul urges us to incorporate as part of our epistemic practices.

Turning back to Wright's quote above, we can see this principle of presumption at work regarding how we ought to approach issues of ancient authorship: we should not be so quick to dismiss the conclusions of those who were closest in time to when those texts were written and who had much more evidence, now lost to us, upon which to base their conclusions. Instead, we should *presume* they are correct and only overturn that presumption when we have sufficient evidence to justify doing so. Theories rebutting the conclusions of ancient witnesses can be put forth, but if they ultimately are not convincing to the community of modern scholars, then they cannot be said to carry the argument. From this posture, scholars are less prideful, being less willing to be convinced by their own reasoning and more willing to accept that their own theories could have flaws. If their theories are sound, then others will find them convincing; if not, then they should be abandoned, at least eventually, and the scholars who proposed them should move on to other issues. The virtuous scholar will manifest this type of humility.

¹⁴ See Ephesians 5:21. This verse is central not only to its immediate context in Chapter 5 (both the section preceding it and the so-called "household code" following it) but also to the letter as a whole. As I will argue, the verse constitutes a running recapitulation and further development of Paul's central message regarding the proper ordering of relationships in the Church as the fitting response to the Gospel of peace and God's glory in the Church. The point here is that certain epistemic practices are among the set of practices that constitute the way of life Paul urges us to take up. Mutual submission sums up the type of naturally occurring dialogue Paul describes as our fitting response to God's activity. All of this is made clear below.

Moreover, acting out of humility, we should look for ways to reconstruct and confirm the conclusions of the ancient witnesses for ourselves, only seeking to posit different hypotheses when the evidence demands it. If the evidence suggests they may be wrong, we should test that evidence to make sure we have not misinterpreted it or failed to consider all of it. This level of deference is proper, and this presumption in their favor is best, because we acknowledge that the evidence was more plentiful when those earlier conclusions were first drawn and much more scant now when we are drawing our own conclusions. We must call out those who contend that early witnesses are somehow untrustworthy, who instead propose to begin with a “clean slate” or some other modern theory or theological framework (e.g., a nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism, as Wright would have it) and then seek to decide matters for themselves based on the very limited evidence available today. This prideful endeavor is made worse still when scholars cling to their own conclusions and pet theories even when few others ever find those conclusions convincing.

Simply put, we should presume ancient witnesses are correct in their conclusion that Paul wrote Ephesians because they no doubt had more evidence than we do today. That presumption can be overturned by sufficient evidence, but the burden of proof is on modern scholars. Absent the kind of evidence that most scholars would find convincing, the presumption should stand. Furthermore, when we evaluate the arguments of modern scholars, we must be wary of attempts to count as *evidence* those arguments based on the alleged inconsistency of the theology of Ephesians with that of the undisputed Pauline writings. Those arguments are more in the vein of abstract conjecture and hypothesis than true concrete evidence. While true inconsistency should count as evidence, mere claims of inconsistency may turn out to be misunderstandings of Ephesians or the undisputed Pauline writings, or both. Those who argue against the Pauline

authorship of Ephesians must concede, at the very least, that arguments regarding inconsistency should not count as evidence in attempting to rebut the presumption of Pauline authorship if such alleged inconsistency can be shown to be based on misunderstanding.

In the end, putting all of these factors together, the argument made here for Paul as the author of Ephesians comes into sharp focus. We should presume ancient witnesses were correct in their testimony that Paul authored Ephesians because we must recognize they had much more evidence than we could ever hope to find. The ancient presumption of Pauline authorship must stand unless and until modern scholars have met their burden of proof to overturn it, and such burden must be met with evidence that is widely convincing to the community of scholars, not mere conjecture or fine sounding theories. The data that we currently have do not enable us to overturn the ancient presumption because all attempts to date have failed to bring scholars to any sort of consensus or near consensus. These factors are clues that we should therefore explore whether there is some basic misunderstanding of the data we currently have and whether factors outside of the data are driving the various conflicting theories and conclusions. If there turns out to be a basic misunderstanding of the theology of the undisputed Pauline writings or of Ephesians (or both), and if we see solid evidence that individualistic epistemic practices are at work to falsely bolster arguments against Pauline authorship, we have further grounds for upholding the presumption in favor of ancient witnesses. They are members of the Body of Christ, and we owe them some level of deference. The above proposed level of deference would appear to be sound.

Cues from philosophical theology and jurisprudence enable us to advance our reasoning on the matter of Pauline authorship, upholding the conclusion of ancient witnesses as the most sound and reasonable one today. The discussion above exemplifies a notion of dialogue

whereby later generations attempt to give proper weight to the voices of the ancients (as well as to their own voices and those of their contemporaries) in a manner reflecting the best and most well-developed reasoning practices available. That notion of dialogue fits squarely within Paul's own teaching in Ephesians regarding proper epistemic practices among those in Christ.

I have spent precious time on the issue of the authorship of Ephesians for two primary reasons. First, I believe it helps us better understand the message of Ephesians if we can see it as an outworking of Paul's own sense of his ministry. I contend Paul wrote Ephesians late in his life for the purpose of making himself present as apostle to *all* Gentiles by means of a circular letter containing a carefully crafted sermon¹⁵ designed to proclaim his mature understanding of the Gospel and its implications for the Church to all Christians in all times and places. If Paul is not the author, then a different purpose was behind Ephesians. In that case, much of the message of Ephesians would still be important for ecumenism, but at least a portion of its ecumenical thrust would be lost. For this reason, I will spend a little more time on the context and occasion of Ephesians below, though I contend the above arguments should suffice to establish Pauline authorship. Second, my analysis provides an example and a taste of how the epistemic practices prescribed by Paul in Ephesians work in the real world. We do not blindly defer to the voices that have preceded us or to current authorities who claim to speak the message of those same voices, nor do we minimize or ignore those ancient voices. Instead, we marshal the best

¹⁵ Several commentators have noted that Ephesians consists largely of a sermon meant to be read aloud. Andrew Lincoln states Ephesians generally lacks the marks of a typical Pauline letter addressing particular and immediate issues, that it reflects the manner in which Paul preached in the synagogue, and that it is best seen and analyzed as a homily or sermon. (Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), xxxix, xli). See also (Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 24); (Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 22); Witherington states that, given how aural and oral cultures such as the Greco-Roman world were, ancient writings were works that were meant to be heard and thus were crafted rhetorically to ensure things like rhythm, assonance, and alliteration worked. See (Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 36, 97).

resources reason provides us, whether they come from modern critical methods, philosophical theology, jurisprudence, or anywhere else, as we actively participate in the ongoing dialogue to which Paul has called us. Mutual submission under the headship of Christ in the orderly manner he prescribes (i.e., according to the spiritual gifts Christ gives us) constitutes a dialogue in which each member plays an active role, and that dialogue extends across all generations within the Church and the churches. Certainly, there are other issues related to the issue of the authorship of Ephesians, but enough has been said for purposes of this work.

2.1.2 Context and Occasion

Paul authored Ephesians as an encyclical to proclaim his fully developed notion of the Gospel first to Asia Minor and then beyond, and it was intended as a surrogate for his final missionary journey which he knew he would not be able to make. This section attempts to articulate this view more clearly and to show the scholarly observations which support it, all for the purpose of helping show the importance of Ephesians for the ecumenical cause today.

I begin with a brief examination of the relation between Colossians and Ephesians to help shed light on the context and occasion of Ephesians. The two letters undeniably share many of the same themes and even many similar phrases. As in the authorship section above, the discussion here of the similarities between the two letters is not comprehensive but rather aimed at merely helping to demonstrate the relevance of Ephesians to ecumenism.

All serious scholars, regardless of their conclusions regarding Pauline authorship, have noted the close similarities between the two letters and have had to deal with how those similarities relate to their conclusions regarding authorship and the context and occasion for

Ephesians.¹⁶ Drawing on the discussion in the previous section on authorship, I note that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate any one view or another, and it is highly likely that outside factors are driving many scholars' conclusions. However, unlike the section above, we cannot rely on the tools of presumption and burden of proof to help with these issue regarding the relationship between Colossians and Ephesians, except to say that Paul authored both documents. Based on that starting point, we can then attempt to characterize the similarities and differences between the two letters in a manner that helps explain the data, even if we must acknowledge that any such characterizations will have at least an element of speculation baked-in.

Siding with those scholars who believe Paul wrote both letters, I argue he authored them simultaneously or closely in time and that it does not matter which letter was written first. Instead, the different occasions for the two letters account for their differences in style, content, and structure. To be clear, I believe it is more likely Paul used Colossians as a basis to write his magnum opus Ephesians, taking the themes of the more context-specific letter and generalizing¹⁷ and developing them further so that they could be proclaimed to Christians in all times and places. In short, Ephesians is the more self-consciously timeless letter of the two.

¹⁶ According to many scholars, the author of Ephesians penned that document shortly after or perhaps concurrently with Colossians. Other scholars believe Ephesians was written much later than Colossians by a different author who relied upon Colossians for much of Ephesians's content. Those who reject Pauline authorship typically cite its literary associations with Colossians as the weightiest part of their case (see (Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 23); (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 32-33); (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 8)). They frequently observe that the author of Ephesians used Colossians as source material (along with other material attributed to Paul) and developed it in a different direction much later on and in a manner demonstrably different than Paul's own vocabulary and writing style (e.g., (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, iv-iviii)). It is worth noting that other scholars have argued that the author of Colossians used Ephesians as source material (e.g., (Ernest Best, *Essays on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 72-96); (Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 20-25)). By contrast, other scholars argue Paul wrote Colossians and then at a later date drew on Colossians to write Ephesians (See (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 20-21).

¹⁷ Snodgrass concludes that Paul used Colossians to write Ephesians, taking the former document and making it more *general* in order to craft a letter to encourage, unite, and inform believers and thereby to shape their identities in Christ. See (Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 23) and (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 1-li).

Regarding whether the two letters were written at roughly the same time or one was written later, I do not believe the evidence can show definitively. My preference for the conclusion that Ephesians was written by Paul at a later date is based on the notion that it is his magnum opus. While this characterization of Ephesians as Paul's magnum opus is based primarily on theological conclusions, it does have the support of several prominent scholars, both directly and indirectly. Hoehner suggests Ephesians may demonstrate a development in Paul's own theology,¹⁸ while O'Brien calls it likely.¹⁹ Though Lincoln does not believe Paul wrote Ephesians, he sees the same evidence of development from early Pauline concepts to conclude it is most likely that a student of Paul provided a fresh interpretation and an updating of the Pauline gospel in the generation after Paul's death.²⁰ Caird, who argues the difficulties in attributing Ephesians to Paul are insignificant compared to the difficulties of attributing it to an imitator, notes that the grandeur and originality of Ephesians are worthy of the full extent of Paul's genius.²¹ He also notes that Ephesians is a new and original treatise on a subject not systematically treated elsewhere in Pauline writings and that we should fully expect that Paul, when he fully devoted himself systematically to a fresh theme, would develop that theme further than what he said only in passing in other earlier letters.²²

Given the proper presumption of Pauline authorship discussed above, the best characterization comes from Markus Barth, who states that Paul wrote Ephesians toward the end

¹⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 54-55, 61.

¹⁹ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 25-27.

²⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lv, lviii, lxxii.

²¹ Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 12, 26, 29.

²² Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 20, 26.

of his life and that it represents a development of his own thought and a summary of his message contained in his undisputed letters.²³ Barth believes it best to see Ephesians as a late stage of theological development reached by the apostle himself,²⁴ and he sides with those who see Ephesians as “the crown of St. Paul’s writings” and “a summit, perhaps the summit, of the Pauline work”.²⁵

In short, I stand in good company and on solid ground when I assert Paul used Colossians as a basis to write Ephesians as his magnum opus to be circulated throughout the Church in all times and places. The rest of this section will focus on fleshing out and explaining the differences in style and structure between the two letters.

Regarding style differences, it is crucial to observe that the language and style of Ephesians is in the form of Asiatic rhetoric. As Ben Witherington describes it, Paul was using a particular style of rhetoric commonly used in Asia Minor called epideictic rhetoric. The style is intended to remind the community of certain truths and virtues they already know and acknowledge, and thus to urge them to embrace those truths and virtues. It paints a picture of the community at its *ideal* best and then urges *realistic* practices the community can take up in order to move towards that ideal.²⁶ It is worth noting that while some modern scholars cite style

²³ Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 1-3 and 4-6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 3-4.

²⁴ Barth, *Ephesians*, 36.

²⁵ Barth, *Ephesians*, 50.

²⁶ Witherington, *The Letters*, 16-7, 219-23. Witherington notes that the use of epideictic rhetoric was becoming increasingly widespread and important within the Roman Empire in Paul’s day and that Christianity sought to utilize the same rhetorical techniques to proclaim its teachings. Lincoln likewise sees great value in using rhetorical analysis as a tool to address authorship issues and an aid to understanding the content of Ephesians. See (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xli-xlii, lxxv). O’Brien raises some issues with the use of rhetorical criticism, though he ultimately acknowledges Paul employed a number of rhetorical stylistic devices. His central conclusions are that Paul should not be interpreted through the grid of ancient rhetorical rules and that any study of Ephesians should be focused on Paul’s own methods of argument within the letter rather than trying to fit his arguments within ancient

differences in Ephesians as compared to the undisputed Pauline letters, those scholars make the fatal mistake of overdrawing their conclusions based on such stylistic differences, as if Paul was incapable of writing in different styles for different occasions, messages, and audiences.²⁷

Paul's message in Ephesians is thus best seen as a proclamation of the Gospel to those who already understand it at some basic level and embrace it. It is a reminder and further explanation of the deep truths comprising the Gospel as well as the practices that are proper and fitting for those who already accept that Gospel. At the same time, it is an impassioned exhortation to Christians to embrace and live out those truths and practices as well as a plumbing of the theological depths of the Gospel. Paul is thus teaching the Church to recall this vision of the Gospel of peace and its members to take up the practices that bring it about.²⁸

rhetorical categories. See (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 73-82, esp. 79 and 81). While O'Brien's comments are well-taken, the observations of Lincoln and Witherington that Ephesians is primarily oral in nature and relied heavily on epideictic rhetoric are convincing. The proper balance would seem to be to avoid any straightforward, wooden analysis which fits Paul's arguments and style into any ancient set of rhetorical rules. Paul was simply too brilliant to limit himself to such confines. More likely, he used the rhetorical devices freely as his argument and his needs dictated.

²⁷ As Caird puts it, "The argument from style has a certain limited validity, but we must not push it to the fatuous point of assuming that a man can have only one style, whether he is debating, joking, praying, telling a story, or writing a love letter." (Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 17). Thielman likewise contends that Paul could write in a different manner if circumstances demanded it. (Thielman, *Ephesians*, 10-11). O'Brien holds that to suggest Paul could not have written in the different rhetorical style of Ephesians is erroneously to question Paul's resourcefulness. (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 7). Witherington states that ancient writers like Paul were rhetorically adept by training and adopted different styles for different audiences. (Witherington, *The Letters*, 2). Paul's purpose to write an enduring sermon embedded in epistolary form and intended as an encyclical would seem an adequate reason to employ a different style from his earlier letters. It is the reason he chose to employ epideictic rhetoric, which is enough to account for the stylistic differences.

²⁸ I believe Paul used epideictic rhetoric not only because it is well known throughout Asia Minor (his immediate audience) and not only because it is used to remind the community of truths and virtues they ought to embrace passionately, but also because of its emphasis on unity within the community. See also (Witherington, *The Letters*, 17). Paul wanted to stress the unity that comes in Christ.

Though many scholars have noted and grappled with the overlapping content of Colossians and Ephesians, there are of course important differences,²⁹ and those differences are best explained by the distinct purpose of Ephesians. Most likely, Paul used the basic content of Colossians to compose a carefully constructed sermon in the form of a circular letter. Though Ephesians is in the form of an epistle, its epistolary structure is only used to turn his masterful sermon into a sort of traveling sermon. As Witherington puts it, Ephesians is best seen as a circular homily written with only the bare minimum of epistolary elements added to it so it could be sent as a written document. Paul wrote a sermon in the well-known epideictic oratory style and gave it a customary epistolary introduction and conclusion.³⁰

When Paul could not be present in person with his intended audience, his letters were a way for him to make himself present as an apostle.³¹ Paul wrote Ephesians to all of the churches of Asia Minor, beginning with the Church at Ephesus³² but intending the letter to be circulated throughout Asia Minor as if Paul himself were touring through those churches. Ephesians was

²⁹ Especially helpful analyses are (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xlvii-lviii); (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 8-21); (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 30-38).

³⁰ Witherington suggests Paul added 1:1-2 to give it a bare minimum of an introduction and chapter 6:21-24 as a conclusion. (Witherington, *The Letters*, 2, 217, 227f). The practice of churches circulating letters written by the apostles was common by the end of Paul's life, and I believe Paul intentionally relied upon it to ensure his message contained in Ephesians would travel throughout Asia Minor and beyond. The epistolary structure of Ephesians is merely tacked on in order to enable Paul's message to be circulated in the same manner other apostolic epistles had already been circulated, including some of his own. See also (Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 22); (Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 24); (Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 27).

³¹ Witherington states that the New Testament letters are not typical letters but rather discourses, homilies, and rhetorical speeches with epistolary elements. Paul would typically send a co-worker to orally deliver his message in a rhetorically effective manner when he could not be there himself. (Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 3). See also (Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 34-35).

³² Ephesus was a wealthy city and a major hub for commerce, a place where many people would be exposed to different ideas which would then be transported throughout the known world. I believe Paul strategically relied on this reality when he chose to send Ephesians first to that city in order that it would indeed be carried throughout Asia Minor and beyond.

therefore intended as the next best thing to Paul being present at the various churches throughout Asia Minor, teaching the deep truths of the Gospel to those who had already accepted it.

Using epideictic rhetoric and the basic content of Colossians, Paul sought to articulate his fully developed understanding of the Gospel in a carefully crafted sermon embedded in a letter that would be passed around the Church until the end of human history. The style was eloquent and fashioned in the popular rhetoric of the day, and it was intended to endure. The content was his mature, fully developed understanding of the work of God and the Church's proper response to it. The structure was a masterful sermon wrapped in an epistle. The result was Paul's magnum opus and a timeless teaching meant to provide a blueprint for the Church's role within God's continued work and to urge the Church in every generation to take up that calling faithfully. Paul authored his most definitive and comprehensive proclamation of the Gospel to be read during worship at *all* churches in all times and places, as if Paul himself were present each time proclaiming the Gospel and encouraging them to take up the practices of unity that comprise the life worthy of the Church's calling. In Ephesians, we therefore see that Paul carried out his apostolic role in the most faithful way he possibly could.

To summarize, Paul had planted a church in Ephesus, and, later in his life, he wrote a homily inserted into a letter sent first to Ephesus with the intention of it then passing throughout Asia Minor so that, when the letter was carried to each church in Asia Minor and read out loud, Paul would effectively be present as orator in their midst. Paul was seeking to spread the message of the Gospel to a thoroughly Gentile territory he believed he would never be able to visit again. He thus put forth a rhetorical and theological masterpiece tailored to Asian Christians in an epideictic style they would immediately recognize, summarizing the implications of the Gospel of peace for everyday living. Paul also understood that his letter

would be circulated more broadly, and with this fact in mind, he used the content of Colossians to help structure the message and content of Ephesians in a more general way, to be a conduit for Paul to proclaim the Gospel to all Christians, a lasting legacy for the Church.

In a very real sense, then, we may say the context and occasion of Ephesians continues today in every historical context in which the Church exists. Though written in the first century and initially intended to be circulated throughout Asia Minor, it was also intended to be circulated much more widely, to every church in every time and place. Unlike Paul's earlier letters, the instruction in Ephesians is intentionally timeless,³³ and yet it is practical at the same time. Ephesians begins with cosmic theological statements regarding the work of God in Christ and then moves to practical instruction regarding the proper practices Christians are to take up in response to that ongoing work in Christ.

Those practices must be fleshed out more fully by each church in those contexts in which they find themselves. Ephesians was intentionally written for every church, a sort of operating manual containing policies and procedures for how to live a faithful life as each particular context requires. Each church is to anchor its identity in Christ Himself and the one Church which is His Body on the earth, and it is to function as that one Body by first doing everything it can to become more like a fully functional, mature body. So, the practical instruction Paul gives, beginning in chapter 4, describes how to become more like a fully functional, mature body patterned after Christ Himself. Each church is equipped with certain gifts of the Spirit and urged to come together via mutual submission so that the various gifts can build up each church (and

³³ I do not mean to suggest here that Paul's instruction in other letters does not have enduring value which transcends cultural contexts throughout the ages but rather merely that his instruction in Ephesians was unique in its clear intent that it would be read by all churches going forward.

the Church) in a manner befitting the Gospel. Ephesians does not give Paul's view of this or that particular issue but rather gives an identity "in Christ" and a prescribed set of practices befitting that identity together with an urging and encouragement that each church is fully equipped to navigate their own context.

Though written in the first century context initially to Christians in Asia Minor, Paul's ambitious occasion for writing Ephesians was therefore intentionally to transcend his particular context by giving universal instruction applicable to every context. Whereas his earlier letters were written to particular churches to address their particular contexts and then later circulated by the churches who wanted to know Paul's instruction better, Ephesians was self-consciously written to all churches to proclaim his fully mature understanding of the Gospel late in his life in a timeless manner. That Gospel message is that God has begun to reconcile all things to Himself through Christ and will continue to do so until that work is complete.³⁴ The Church and the churches are therefore to take part in that work, first seeing themselves through that lens as having the identity of being "in Christ" with all other Christians, and then devoting themselves to those practices which make the unity of the Church more of a reality on the earth. Ephesians is, simply put, an encyclical intended for all Christians at all times, and its message is fundamentally ecumenical in nature. Understanding this reality transforms how ecumenism is pursued, or at least how it ought to be. More accurately, it transforms how every aspect of the Church's life in Christ is to be pursued, ecumenism being but one of the central aspects.

³⁴ Ephesians 1:9-10.

2.1.3 Summary Outline of Ephesians

While a comprehensive commentary on Ephesians would undoubtedly be helpful for unlocking the full ecumenical importance of the letter, it is well beyond the scope of this work. Something less will have to suffice for purposes here. What follows is a summary of the structure of Ephesians and a broad overview of its central themes and content, to help articulate the overall message of Ephesians and demonstrate its relevance to ecumenism. As with all such summaries, it is admittedly and necessarily selective in what it includes, and it should not be seen as anything more than an aid to understanding what is said in later chapters about the message of Ephesians and its relevance to ecumenism.

In chapter 1, the central themes of Ephesians are introduced, and the overall message is articulated. Paul identifies himself as the author and states the capacity in which he is writing the letter. He has been sent (i.e., as an apostle) by the Messiah who is carrying out the will of God. Paul is declaring and foreshadowing what he will discuss at more length later, namely that God's grace involves not only rescuing humans from sin but also giving them particular parts to play within the Church, which itself has a very special role in the continued work of God on the earth. Paul's role is as an apostle of Christ, and it is fundamental to his identity. Paul also indicates that his intended audience is those who are in Christ, and he calls them both saintly and faithful. God's grace to those in Christ is to make them holy and to bind them together in a single body politic (i.e., in Christ) in such a way that they demonstrate faith in Christ and in one another.³⁵

³⁵ Ephesians 1:15 is usually translated to say that Paul is giving thanks because he has heard of their faith in Jesus and their love toward all the saints, following the usual decision of textual critics to insert "love" into the text despite the fact that the earliest and best manuscripts omit it. This is usually done primarily for theological reasons given that the text would otherwise read as if Christians are to show faith in Jesus and towards one another, and this somehow seems improper. More will be said in Chapter 5 about this verse, but I wish to assert here only that the claim we are to show faith towards one another is intended and that it is more consistent theologically with the

The social ramifications of this will be spelled out much more fully in the rest of the letter, particularly in chapters 4 through 6. Already in the first verse of the first chapter, Paul has set the stage for the rest of the letter.

In verse 2, Paul gives us the remaining central themes of the letter. Grace and peace are somehow tied up with the activity of God the Father in and through Christ. They are also the traditional greetings for Greeks and Hebrews, respectively, and Paul uses the two notions to summarize the one Gospel of Christ and the unity of the two races in Him. Moreover, Christ is referred to as Lord, both putting Him on par with God the Father and declaring Him, as opposed to Caesar, as the true Lord of the cosmos.³⁶ Christ is therefore the only King truly worthy of being followed, and his messenger (Paul) therefore ought to be heeded. The second verse, like the first verse, is pregnant with content just waiting to be unpacked. Those initially receiving the letter in Paul's day would undoubtedly have caught these themes immediately upon hearing them and would have been primed and ready to hear the following homily. Like any great orator, Paul grabs his audience's attention at the start in a way that promises interesting and exciting lessons.

Having grabbed their attention, Paul begins his homily in verse 3 with a call to action, telling them to bless God. This command is immediately followed by reasons why they ought to seek to bless God, and those reasons carry on through the end of chapter 3 when Paul then picks the command back up in Ephesians 4:1 to explain precisely *how* to bless God. Thus, from 1:3 to 3:21, Paul gives us detailed content about what God has done and continues to do in and through Christ to bless us. By the time Paul gets to the end of chapter 3, he has laid a theological

remaining message of Ephesians. When we place our faith in Christ, it necessarily involves faith in other Christians. This is a central part of Paul's message in Ephesians, and it is important to grasp this both here and in later chapters.

³⁶ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 21-24.

framework for *why* we should bless God, and he then uses that framework in chapters 4 through 6 to flesh out precisely *how* we should bless God. As will become clear, we do so by living a life worthy of our call to be God's holy and faithful people.

In 1:3-14, Paul declares how God has acted first, because of His grace and His plan for all of time, to bless those who are in Christ with all of the blessings of heaven. Because of His work in and through Christ and His gracious gift of the Spirit, we can participate in the life of heaven.³⁷ Paul fleshes out what the blessings of participation in this heavenly life look like starting in verse 4, including making us holy and blameless in God's presence, adoption as God's own children, redemption, forgiveness, and enlightenment regarding God's will. Paul adorns these descriptions with flowery words intended to convey the richness of God's love, the extent of His grace, and the strength of His insight and power.

Part of God's blessing is to reveal to those in Christ God's plan for all time to be achieved when human history comes to a close. Thus, in 1:9-10, Paul declares the mystery of God's will that has been revealed through Christ, a plan to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ. God's actions in human history have always been and continue to be aimed at extending the blessings of heaven to all of creation by means of renewing creation and making it worthy of God's presence. In these two verses, Paul is declaring that the work of God in and through Christ is the very same work God has always done in creation going all the way back to Genesis 1, namely to make the earth a temple of God, connecting heaven and earth in such a way that

³⁷ Thus, Paul says in 1:3 that the Father "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Those in Christ receive every blessing of the Spirit that the residents of heaven experience. God's presence in heaven is what produces those blessings, and the work of Christ and the Spirit is to bring those very same blessings to the earth by manifesting God's presence in those who are in Christ. Heaven is made present on the earth through a permanent connection enabled by the work of Christ and the Spirit. A permanent, mobile temple on the earth exists wherever the Church exists.

God's presence may dwell on the earth.³⁸ Paul is practicing systematic theology in these two verses, declaring that everything in salvation history can be summed up in light of what has been revealed in and through the work of Christ, namely that God is working to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ. So, those already in Christ have been united to Him and may experience every spiritual blessing of heaven; God's will and plan is to continue the process of uniting more and more of creation to Christ until all of creation is in Christ, thereby fully uniting heaven and earth.

Paul then turns in 1:11-14 to begin explaining how Christians fit into God's grand plan. By God's grace, we have been counted as His children and promised an inheritance. While we have the blessings of heaven available to us now, we currently experience them only in part. Yet, we also have the promise of still further blessings. More specifically, our place in God's overall plan is that we will one day be made into a perfect, living temple and thus live to the praise of His glory. Having been sealed with the Spirit and thus currently experiencing the spiritual blessings of heaven's life in part, those blessings are but a foretaste and promise of the full inheritance we know with confidence we will one day possess. When that day comes, we will live to the praise of God's glory. Together with all of creation, when it is fully united with heaven, we will experience the fullness of God's presence among us and will shine forth His glory.

As Paul makes clear, we are not passive in bringing this about but rather must cooperate with Christ and the Spirit as God continues to act in human history to accomplish His plan. In fact, this is the very thing Paul is wanting us to do – to bless God by properly responding to His

³⁸ This is precisely what a temple is – the place where earth is able to access heaven, and where God dwells. The purpose of God's plan is to make *all* of creation His dwelling place.

incredible blessings through Christ. That proper response is to participate in God's work to make His glory present on the earth. Paul is telling us in these verses that we have a special role to play within God's plan, artfully leading us to wonder just what that role looks like and how we might properly respond to God's activity so that we participate in it.

In 1:15-23, Paul continues with his description of how Christians fit into God's overall plan, providing more theological insight as he attempts to stir their hearts towards a proper response to the blessings God has already bestowed and promises to bestow on them. He recognizes their faith and love as he articulates the prayer that they would develop an even deeper understanding of God's plan and their role within it. His effusive language is meant both to inspire them and to make clear the abundant, phenomenal love and power of God at work in the world and in their midst to accomplish God's plan. If they come to understand all of this more deeply, they will be better prepared and motivated to participate in that work. The passage again focuses on glory, further demonstrating it to be a main theme in chapter 1 and thus in the rest of the letter which builds off of it.

Fittingly, Paul concludes the passage in verses 22 and 23 with a summary of the Church's role in God's plan that is described in terms of glory. Though there are several different interpretations of the specific details of these verses, there is a general consensus that they proclaim both the intimacy of the Church with Christ and that the Church shares in Christ's own glory. As I will make clear in the next chapter of this work, the presence of God's glory on the earth is due to the continued presence of God's glory in Christ, and the Church, which is Christ's Body, is to manifest that same glory by properly receiving and obeying God's Word. Christ was

a walking tabernacle when He walked the earth as the incarnate Word,³⁹ and those in Christ are being fashioned into the heavenly temple (as Paul tells us at the end of Ephesians 2).

The Church's special role within God's plan involves being Christ's Body on the earth, the place where God's glory is manifest as a sort of re-incarnation of the Word. This is precisely what Paul means when he refers to the Church as the temple in Ephesians 2, just as he does in Ephesians 1:22-23 – the Church is where God's presence and thus His glory are manifest on the earth, to the extent the Word is properly re-incarnated in the lives of the Christians who comprise Christ's Body.

Tying all of this back to Ephesians 1:3, Paul's command to bless God comes into sharper focus. The way the Church blesses God is by understanding its special role in God's plan more fully and then fulfilling that role more faithfully. The Church participates in God's ongoing activity to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ so as to make all of creation His dwelling place. The rest of the letter serves to enhance this understanding and to show Christians how to fulfill that role more faithfully.

Both the blessings received so far from God and the blessing to be able to participate in God's own work are the result of God's grace to those in Christ. When we connect this notion of grace with the Hebrew concept of *shalom* Paul invokes along with it, we see the ready-made content of the latter concept used to describe the former more fully. Indeed, Paul juxtaposed Ephesians 1:2 (“grace...peace”) with Ephesians 6:22-23 (“peace...grace”) in a brilliant use of a chiasmus to drive home the central, twofold point that God's grace is fully fleshed out by the traditional notion of *shalom* and that God's plan includes both Gentiles and Jews participating in

³⁹ John 1.

His grace and peace. More specifically, grace and peace are experienced when the perfect unity which exists in heaven is made manifest on the earth. Those who experience that manifestation of unity are said to experience shalom, and it only comes about as a result of God's grace. The unity of all things in Christ begins with the Church, His Body, where God's glory is manifest to the extent Christians submit to the Spirit and allow the Word to reign in their lives.

Ephesians 2 drives home these connections and lessons. It begins with God's grace to unite Christians with Christ and each other, moves to the social implications of such unification, and then ties both concepts to the Church's special role to become united in Christ in order to manifest fully the glory of God in a living temple. So, 2:1-10 describes how those in Christ were once dead in their sins, walking according to the passions of the flesh and the spirit at work in those who are disobedient to God. Then, God graciously acted out of His mercy and great love to save us by uniting us together and with Christ in three specific ways – made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Christ, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Each of the three words used to describe these various aspects of unity with one another and Christ were invented by Paul in order to convey how novel God's work through Christ is.⁴⁰

Paul importantly describes all of this as an act of creation, stating that we are God's workmanship and that we have been re-created for good works that participate in God's plan for human history and that constitute our way of life. The emphasis here is on God's grace as an act of creation, not only to bring new life to us (since creation always brings new life) but also to put

⁴⁰ Each of the three new words is a verb starting with the prefix "συν-" which generally means together. The three verbs describe precisely how God acted in order to rescue us by His grace. The very fact that His gracious actions necessarily involve social reconciliation by drawing various people into a single people group headed by Christ is precisely what Paul wants us to see here. These actions of grace create peace by connecting each of us to Christ and simultaneously to one another. Grace and peace are inseparable. The acts of salvation are by God's grace and they are best described in terms of peace.

us to work in our special role of participating in God's continued work to renew all of creation and make it His temple.

Ephesians 2:11-22 likewise uses the “before and after” pattern of 2:1-10 to emphasize the activity of God to bless us by His gracious actions, thereby giving us the life of heaven and inviting us to take part in His future acts of grace towards the rest of creation. Though 2:1-10 is universal in its application, 2:11-22 is specific to Gentiles, as we should expect from the self-described apostle to the Gentiles. As Paul moves from more general teachings and applications to more specific ones (indeed, this is true of the entire flow of Ephesians), Paul essentially takes two opportunities to describe the *very same* gracious activity of God in and through Christ. Rescue from sin and its consequences into Christ and the life of heaven is the focus of the first passage, with grace being the primary concept employed by Paul to describe that activity. That very same rescue gets fleshed out more fully in terms of its social implications in the second passage, and the rich concept of shalom is put to work to describe those implications. Whereas grace is in the foreground and peace in the background of the first passage, the reverse is true of the second. Paul, as apostle to the Gentiles, is moving his audience from the more general concept of grace to the more detailed description of that grace in terms of the concept of shalom.⁴¹

⁴¹ It is worth noting that Paul creates three additional new words, each starting with the prefix “συν-” and describing the gracious action of God to rescue Gentiles from their life apart from God (one in 2:19, one in 2:21, and one in 2:22). The “before and after” pattern is coupled with the use of alliteration (three “συν-” words in 2:1-10 and three in 2:11-22) to create a parallel structure in the two passages. That parallel structure is used by Paul help his hearers grasp that Paul is describing the very same gracious activity two times, first more generally with grace in the foreground and second more specifically with peace in the foreground. The structure helps drive home the theology that grace and peace are inextricably intertwined (indeed, they are one and the same), with peace being the more robust concept and thus the more apt summary of the gospel. This is why Paul refers to the gospel in 6:15 as the gospel of peace and also describes Jesus in 2:17 as having proclaimed peace to those who were far off and those who were near.

Shalom already had a long history within Israel as the organizing principle and the shorthand way to describe those circumstances when everything in a particular time and place is good because it is ordered according to God's life-giving Word. More importantly here, Paul is helping the Gentiles understand they have, by the grace of God, been incorporated into the people of God, previously described as Israel but now described as a third race, a new people group who are headed by Christ. Thus, when the Gentiles were dead, they were separated from God and all of His blessings through Israel. But, God acted out of His grace to create shalom in Christ – that is, Christ ended the hostility between the two groups by creating a new group headed by Him and marked by shalom. The act of grace was to bring Gentiles near, to reconcile them to God and to God's people. The act of grace was to create peace, both with God and with others. Again we see that grace and peace are one and the same thing in Ephesians.

A new social reality has been created, a new body politic, whose members call Christ (rather than Caesar) their Lord and experience all of the blessings of heaven within His domain. In a word, that new body politic experiences shalom because of the grace of God. Yet, that grace includes not just their own rescue from the consequences of hostility but also the blessings which come from participating in creating shalom. Just as God united Gentiles and Jews by incorporating them into Christ and thereby creating peace, so too are those in Christ to seek that same unity and peace. The special role of the Church thus has social implications which stand at the very center of its identity and way of life. Seeking unity and peace within the Church constitutes the very core of the mission of the Church.

So, the Church is a new creation, created not simply for the blessings of its own members but also to participate in the ongoing work of God to renew all of creation and unify it with every part of heaven. God blesses those who formerly walked in darkness by incorporating them into

this new, social creation and thus giving them heaven's life and a mission to spread that life. God does this by creating a new social reality in which former identities and their boundary markers and hostilities are replaced by a new identity and way of life in Christ marked first and foremost by unity and the shalom which comes with it. The grace first described as rescue from death to life in Christ is more fully described in terms of shalom within a new body politic headed by Christ and marked by unity. That new body politic *is* the Body of Christ described in chapter 1, the re-incarnation of the Word and thus the locus of God's presence and the manifestation of God's glory.

Paul therefore ends chapter 2 by describing the new body politic created in Christ in terms of the very temple of God. He thus artfully ties all of his central themes together as he proceeds with his homily. He reminds his hearers of those central themes by painting a picture of how God has blessed us and tying that picture to concepts he will later use to flesh out our proper response. God has blessed us by graciously rescuing us from death and a life separated from God and marked by hostility. He did so by renewing us – literally, re-creating us – and giving us the life of heaven, marked by unity and peace with God and with one another. That new creation and new life was achieved by incorporating us into Christ's body politic, a kingdom of peace led by the King of Peace. Our new way of life is aimed at becoming the very temple of God so that we both experience the heavenly life more fully and radiate God's glory to the rest of creation more brightly. We do this by properly receiving God's Word and embodying it – literally, re-incarnating it – thus experiencing shalom and inviting others to it. The Church is thus blessed with a special role to play within God's own plan to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ.

Paul then turns to show the different parts that followers of Christ play within the Church and how those particular parts are coordinated when the Church properly functions to fulfill its special role within God's plan. Ending chapter 2 with a vision of the Church as God's temple, Paul takes care to show that the members of the Church not only constitute the stones of that temple but also have various roles to play within the temple. Thus, when Paul turns in chapter 3 to describe his own role within the Church, we are not surprised to hear about his prominent role since we know that apostles together with prophets are to serve as the foundation of the temple, with Christ as the cornerstone. As chapter 3 continues and we hear more about Paul's special role, we see he is not boasting but rather using himself as an example of how God's plan for the Church should be applied to each of its members. Paul shows his own role in the body politic is as a steward of the mystery of God (Ephesians 1:9-10 as well as Ephesians 3:6) and an apostle to the Gentiles, to make known the plan of God to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ as well as the special role the Church plays within that plan. As described above, that special role includes manifesting God's glory on the earth so that the Church both experiences the life of heaven (shalom) and shines forth God's glory for all to see.

Paul then explains in 3:1-14 that he prays for the Church the way he does because of his particular role as apostle to the Gentiles and steward of the mystery of God. Upon hearing this statement, Paul's hearers would no doubt recall his magnificent prayer in chapter 1. The second prayer in 3:14-21 echoes the first and thus brings the hearers back to the notion that they have been commanded to bless God (1:3) and that the way to do so is to understand our special role within God's plan more fully and live it out more faithfully. The result of doing so is that we are filled up with all the fullness of God (3:19); God's glory is made manifest in the Church and in Christ Jesus forever, the culmination of our special role (1:23).

A few additional points about the prayer are in order. First, Paul's prayer focuses on his hearers being able to *comprehend* certain things as a means to be able to be filled with God's glory. Understanding is required if the Church is to fulfill its special role. Second, the comprehension is corporate in nature and involves the entire Church. It is not that individuals themselves need more comprehension, nor is it enough that an entire church might attain the desired comprehension, but rather it is the whole Church attaining the desired comprehension. Third, comprehending *together* is necessary in order that the Church may be filled up with all of the fullness of God. All of this foreshadows what Paul will say later about the corporate nature of how the Church comes to understand God's Word and put it into practice, in order to be filled with God's glory and thus fulfill its special role within God's plan.

Paul thus holds himself out as an example of how one person fits within the whole, thereby also simultaneously fulfilling his own role as apostle to proclaim his fully mature understanding of the Gospel and make it understood by the Church. Having declared God's plan to unite all things in Christ, the Church's special role to manifest God's glory, how God has acted by His grace to bring the life of heaven to the earth in a way best described as shalom, the social implications of that grace and peace, and how he plays his own role within the Church, Paul's hearers are now primed and ready to hear how all of this applies to them and how they are to respond appropriately. Like Paul, they too are stones in the temple and are to seek to bless God by fulfilling their particular parts within the Church's role in God's plan. Paul's masterful homily has them ready to hear precisely how all of this applies to them and how they are to respond properly to God's gracious blessings and the call on their lives that accompanies those blessings.

Paul's shift in chapter 4 therefore comes at just the right time in his homily. They have heard what God has done to shower them with blessings and how those blessings involve a transformation in their thinking and identity so that they understand they have a role to play in God's plan to unite all things in Christ. They have seen that the Body of Christ is to manifest God's glory the same way Christ did in His own flesh when he walked the earth as the incarnate Word. They have seen that they are to be peacemakers and to take part in helping to build themselves into a temple. They have also seen how one individual, Paul himself, has fitted his own life's work into all of this ongoing activity of God in and through Christ and has counted that privilege as a blessing. They are finally ready to see how all of this relates to the command in 1:3 that they are to bless God, and thus Paul turns in chapter 4 to help them understand how they are fulfill that command in the light of and in response to all of the blessings God has bestowed on them.

Paul therefore urges them to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they have been called. Like Paul, they each have a part to play within the Church, and they are to work together under the leadership of Christ and the Spirit to fulfill the Church's special role in God's plan to unite all things. 4:1-16 is a rallying cry, reminding them of the unity of God and His Church and the virtues and ministry of the Church befitting such unity. Everyone has a gift of the Spirit, and if they follow the Spirit's lead and use their gifts appropriately, they will increasingly come to full maturity as the Body of Christ, will attain unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Christ, and will attain the fullness of Christ's glory within the Body.⁴² Eager to maintain and grow in unity, they are to use their diversity of gifts in a coordinated way to attain

⁴² Ephesians 4:13.

corporate maturity, the growth of the Body of Christ, until they fully manifest the Word and thus experience the full life of heaven and shine forth God's glory. All of this becomes real when and to the extent that the Church functions in the particular, coordinated way described by Paul as the Church's way of life.

The coordination of the diverse gifts of the Spirit constitutes the worthy life, and the rest of Ephesians consists of Paul's attempts both to set forth the set of practices that comprise that worthy life and to encourage his hearers to take them up. As described briefly above, that way of life with its specific set of practices can rightly be called a notion of dialogue among the members of Christ's Body. It consists of more than mere words and does not refer to formal discussions at appointed times for appointed purposes, though those are not ruled out. Instead, that dialogue consists of living life together in an intimate and trusting way, and it includes all of the words and speech acts that occur while doing so. As such, it is perhaps best described as a naturally occurring dialogue. I have called it Paul's notion of ecumenical dialogue precisely because the entire letter to the Ephesians is ecumenical in nature. Much more will be said in chapters 5 and 6 of this work about the nature of this naturally occurring dialogue, the set of practices that comprise it, and how the Church may better engage in it.

The summary outline in this section above is undoubtedly abbreviated and has the appearance of being too conclusory. While I do not have the luxury of space in this work to provide a detailed defense of each part of the summary outline, doing so is neither desirable nor necessary here. It is not desirable because I have instead attempted to paint the picture of the overall substance and flow of Paul's argument as it proceeds in Ephesians, the very thing he intended his audience to grasp. My goal above was to paint with the broad strokes Paul intended his scripted homily to paint, in order that his audience would be moved to action. Such was the

nature of the rhetoric he intentionally deployed in carefully crafting his magnum opus encyclical sermon. So, while more detail is needed to support the above summary, it would have defeated the purpose of this section to include it. Instead, in the chapters that follow, I will more fully flesh out the central themes of Ephesians. A recap of those central themes and their importance to ecumenism will set the stage for the next three chapters.

2.2 Central Themes and Their Relationship to Ecumenism

In Ephesians, Paul articulates the central themes of unity and reconciliation in Christ in terms of three main concepts, which may be referred to as (1) the glory of God in the Church, (2) Paul's vision of peace, and (3) Paul's notion of dialogue (i.e., the Church's proper response to the work of Christ). More specifically, the glory of God in the Church is the primary focus of Ephesians, and to the extent it is attained through the Church's proper response to the work of Christ, the Church will manifest peace. The Church's proper response to the work of Christ consists first in *understanding* the goal of attaining God's glory in the Church and the vision of peace central to that goal, and then *living out* a set of practices that comprise the way of life befitting such glory and peace.⁴³ Those practices themselves comprise what I am calling Paul's notion of dialogue. This section attempts to summarize how these central themes interact in Ephesians and why they are important to ecumenism.

2.2.1 Glory, Peace, and Dialogue in Ephesians

Through the gifts of the Spirit (i.e., the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers given to the Church⁴⁴), God pours the Word into the Body of Christ. This animates the

⁴³ This is precisely why Paul devotes chapters 1-3 of Ephesians primarily to truths about glory and peace in the Church through the work of Christ and chapters 4-6 primarily to practical living in light of those truths.

⁴⁴ See Ephesians 4:11f.

Body with life when the members of the Body properly receive and obediently follow the Word. The special ministers (as I shall call these gifts of the Spirit) diligently study, preserve, and teach God's Word to the people. The people diligently seek to understand and apply the Word to their lives. Working together in this way, the whole Body of Christ comes to understand and live out the Word of God in the world. It is primarily through this process of the Spirit administering the Word to the Body that God fills up the Church so that it comes to embody the fullness of God, thereby both serving as an accurate image of God and manifesting the glory of God. This is the very same thing as to say that it is through this process of receiving the Word that the special ministers and the people together understand, proclaim, and embody the Word.⁴⁵

This entire process of receiving the Word (of understanding, proclaiming, and embodying it) is best described today and for purposes of ecumenical thought as Paul's notion of dialogue. It is precisely how God communicates His Word to and through His people. God speaks to His people through the Scriptures as understood, taught, and (ideally) preserved in their meaning by and through the special ministers as they fulfill their roles as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The people must also play their part in this communication as they themselves diligently study the Scriptures and seek to understand them through inquisitive interaction with the special ministers and with one another.

All of this takes place not only and not even primarily through formal teaching but also and predominantly through the process of living together in community, necessarily resulting in

⁴⁵ The Word, Christ Himself, has taken on flesh again in this world; this is one of the primary meanings Paul intends to convey when he calls the Church the Body of Christ. It is another incarnation of the Word, in the Body of Christ. Christians follow their King, who reigns from His throne in heaven, when they serve as His hands and feet and mouth on the earth. Christ continues His ministry on the earth while seated on His heavenly throne, and He does so through the Church, His own Body, His physical presence on the earth until His second coming. Paul uses this concrete image to help his hearers keep their primary identity and corporate role in mind.

the social construction of a set of beliefs and practices that structure and govern their lives. I mean here specifically to reference all those natural and nuanced ways communities socially construct their ways of life, as described in modern times by sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and the like. This process of social construction is precisely what Paul has in mind⁴⁶ when he describes the process by which the Church receives the Word by understanding, proclaiming, and embodying it. This process of social construction consists of a complex set of interactions, the sum of which constitutes a kind of naturally occurring dialogue that produces a way of life, a culture, and a set of beliefs and practices that shape the lives of those in the community.

While the more typical notion of dialogue (and particularly of ecumenical dialogue) would suggest the exchange of ideas through verbal and written words primarily or alone, I am suggesting Paul had a more robust notion of dialogue⁴⁷ involving all of the social interactions in which a group of people engage and through which they consciously and subconsciously exchange ideas and mutually develop a way of life, culture, and set of beliefs and practices. In just this way, God speaks through His special ministers to His people, and the whole people of God take part in the dialogue as they seek to live their lives in faithful obedience, thereby contributing to the dialogue with God by what they both say and do.

⁴⁶ Certainly to claim Paul has the work of sociologists and cultural anthropologists in mind would be anachronistic. Instead, I am claiming Paul understood in at least a rudimentary way the same basic social phenomena studied by such later disciplines well before the birth of those disciplines. Paul's central point in Ephesians 4:11-16 is that the Body of Christ builds itself up in the Faith and the knowledge of Christ through a complex set of social practices built around the Gospel message left in the hands of the special ministers. Paul understood the Church would come to understand the Gospel more clearly through those social practices, leading to the social formulation of common beliefs and doctrines informed by and centered on the Word Himself.

⁴⁷ Even though Paul himself did not call the social process he describes in Ephesians a "dialogue", I am convinced he would not hesitate to use that term for his own idea in today's context. In any event, and more to the point here, I am suggesting that what Paul was describing in Ephesians is most fruitfully described *today* as a notion of dialogue, and more specifically as a robust notion of ecumenical dialogue.

Paul's notion of dialogue is not merely internally focused, however, because it also includes a notion of how the entire process results in a proclamation of the Word to the world at large. This proclamation is made through deeds as much as through words, as the people of God faithfully live out their understanding of the Word in the midst of the world. In other words, the Body of Christ embodies the Word of God, making God's Word manifest to the world through the life of the Church. When the people of God properly receive the Word, as each member plays his or her role within the Body of Christ so that the Word and the Spirit animate the life of the Body, then the whole Body is filled with and manifests the glory of God for the whole world to see. The light shines in the darkness, and the truth and love of Christ are made known to all. God speaks to the Church, and when the Church hears God's Word, it will, with the help and the power of the Spirit, naturally construct a way of life that embodies the glory of God and that produces what is described most simply as "peace". The Church thus embodies a true image of God and shines forth His glory, thereby producing peace and proclaiming God's Word to the world. Paul means to teach us in Ephesians that glory, peace and dialogue are connected in precisely this way.

2.2.2 The Worthy Life and the Practices of Mutual Submission

While I have attempted thus far to state briefly the connections among glory, peace, and dialogue in Ephesians, much more needs to be said about each idea. Only then can their interconnections be more fully understood and in turn yield fruit for Christian ecumenism. So, after discussing the prominent role God's glory plays in Ephesians in Chapter 3 of this work, I will attempt to unpack Paul's vision of peace in Chapter 4 and the deep connection he makes between that vision of peace and what I have called his notion of dialogue in Chapter 5. To tie all of this to what was said in Chapter 1, the deep connection between peace and dialogue can be

clearly seen in Ephesians 4:13, which explicitly links the proper social ordering of the Church to its progress towards the “unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God” (i.e., doctrinal unity). Specifically, a *causal* connection exists between the proper social ordering of Christians and their overall *ability* to develop and articulate the doctrines of the Christian faith in a way they can all agree upon.⁴⁸ Christian unity cannot be achieved any other way.

The proper social ordering called for in Ephesians is best summarized in Paul’s own words as mutual submission out of reverence for Christ.⁴⁹ Understanding that Paul is describing the “worthy life” as those particular practices comprising a life of mutual submission helps make clear the deep implications of Ephesians 4:13 for Christian ecumenism. The life of mutual submission includes each member of the Body of Christ playing its proper role under Christ the Head, exercising their respective spiritual gifts for the benefit of the Body, so that the Church might attain the full stature of Christ.⁵⁰ Paul’s point in Ephesians 4:13 is that as each member of the Body of Christ does its proper part to live the worthy life, one of the results will be that the Body of Christ will attain “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”

So, all of the ethical instruction following 4:1-16 describes the worthy way of life as a set of practices to ensure the Church properly receives God’s Word in the manner described in 4:1-16. Specifically, as the Word is poured into the Body through the special ministers, the Body

⁴⁸ The importance of this causal connection for ecumenical theology cannot be overstated. Doctrinal unity is the *result* of living together in practical, visible unity (i.e., putting on the practices of unity), and it only comes *after* visible unity is put into practice. Unfortunately, most churches have come to believe the exact opposite, holding that doctrinal unity is a prerequisite for visible unity, if not also a cause of it. This faulty presupposition has led to faulty notions of ecumenical dialogue. By contrast, Paul tells us to practice visible unity as a proper response to the work of Christ and promises that doctrinal unity will come as a result. The implications of this causal connection comprise one of the fundamental components of this work.

⁴⁹ Ephesians 5:21.

⁵⁰ Ephesians 4:15-16.

can grow and can properly manifest God's Word on the earth if and to the extent it takes up the set of practices described in the ethical instructions. It is precisely by living out these ethical instructions, these specific practices, that the Body is enabled to *hear* and properly receive the Word, thereby putting the Word into action so that God's glory shines forth on the earth and His Word is proclaimed to the world.⁵¹

2.2.3 Relevance to Ecumenism

Here we can see that Paul's deep insights contained in Ephesians 4:13 and the surrounding verses are important for ecumenism for three related reasons. First and foremost, doctrinal unity is a *result* of the practices comprising the life worthy of the Christian calling. This is a social insight – doctrinal unity results from a common life lived together engaged in certain practices, and not from anything else. This social insight leads to an important mandate for those serious about ecumenism and about following Paul's instruction: Christians are to engage in certain practices comprising the worthy life *even before* doctrinal unity is attained. These practices are not optional or even secondary to other concerns, and they cannot be set aside on the grounds that doctrinal unity must first be realized. These practices are our primary response of faith to the work of Christ. Second, the attainment of knowledge of Christ is also the result of the very same practices comprising the worthy life. Full knowledge of Christ is only attainable corporately – more specifically, it cannot be attained outside of the fully matured Body of Christ. This is to say it has not yet been attained by any one of the various churches and that

⁵¹ When phrased this way, we can see that the practices comprising the obedient and faithful life are fundamentally *epistemic* practices as well. Much more will be said regarding this insight later on. For my purposes here, the important point is that a proper response to Christ's work to reconcile us to Himself and to one another is to engage in a set of practices comprising the worthy life which constitutes our calling in Christ. As will be made clear, those practices include giving epistemic privilege to the ministry of the special ministers, even as the other members of the Body also play important epistemic roles.

each of the churches needs the others in order to achieve such knowledge. Third, the attainment of doctrinal unity and the attainment of knowledge of Christ are inextricably intertwined. Unity and truth are inextricably related; so too any ministry of unity must be tied to a ministry of truth, and vice versa, or else *both* will suffer.

So, Christians who desire doctrinal unity centered on the knowledge of Christ must engage in the practices comprising the worthy life. These practices, summarized by mutual submission under the Headship of Christ, lead to true and unified doctrines about the Faith and Christ precisely because they enable, among other things, a kind of naturally occurring dialogue among the saints, guided by the Holy Spirit under the careful teaching of special ministers. Though more than mere verbal dialogue, these practices of mutual submission nonetheless involve the kind of reasoning together that naturally occurs among those who live together and share a mutual trust. As I have already suggested, what Paul has in mind is perhaps best described as his notion of *ecumenical* dialogue.

2.3 Conclusions and Implications

Ephesians was written by Paul late in life as a mature expression of his theology of the Gospel and its implications. The unity of all things in heaven and earth in Christ stands at the center of the Gospel, and the Church has a special role to participate with God's continued work in and through Christ to bring about such unity. God has already worked to bring about unity in the Church, and Christians are to recognize that unity and strive to preserve and increase it.

Ephesians was written specifically for ecumenical purposes. It is an encyclical, proclaiming unity of all things as the goal of God's work. It was sent first to Asia Minor but intended to be circulated to all churches. Written as a sermon, it was given the minimum elements of an epistle in order that it could be circulated just as other apostolic writings were. Its

use of epideictic rhetoric was intended to make Paul himself present. Ephesians was Paul's magnum opus, intended to be circulated throughout the Church for generations so that Paul could fulfill his role as apostle to all of the Gentiles. It was intended to be Paul's final missionary journey.

Ephesians was, at its essence, a summary of the Christian life in response to the work of God in and through Christ. It is a blueprint for the Church, and its focus is unity in the Church. As such, it is a blueprint for ecumenism. This is precisely why the proposed approach to ecumenism is so compelling; it is tied to the heart of the Gospel itself and the proper response of the Church to the ongoing work of Christ on the earth. To live out the Christian life faithfully *is* to engage in Paul's model of ecumenism. Putting this statement in the negative, failing to engage in Paul's model of ecumenism is failure to live out the Christian life faithfully. It is not an overstatement to say that Paul's notion of the Church's proper response to the Gospel *is* a model for ecumenism.

The notion that living out the Christian life is to engage in Paul's model of ecumenism applies in a graduated way in two important senses. First, we ought not to judge our faithfulness in terms of yes or no but rather in terms of degrees of faithfulness. Second, it is not individuals alone who should measure themselves, nor churches alone, but also the Church as a whole. To restate the principle in light of these two observations, we may say that the Church, the churches, and individual Christians live out the Christian life faithfully if and only if they engage in Paul's model of ecumenism.

Seen through this lens, we can begin to see what types of questions we should ask ourselves, our churches, and the Church if we are to live a life worthy (and increasingly so) of our calling to unity in Christ. Yet, before we can formulate truly fruitful questions in this sense,

much less answer them, we must unpack each of the main themes in Paul's model more carefully. The next three chapters are focused on doing just that, in the hopes of developing Paul's themes of glory, peace, and dialogue more fully. Doing so will in turn make us better equipped to ask the right questions about our approaches to ecumenism as well as our existing theological commitments that might hinder our ecumenical efforts. More specifically in this work, it will better enable me to evaluate Dulles's proposal for moving ecumenism forward as well as to articulate my own proposals.

CHAPTER 3

CHRIST, THE CHURCH AND THE TEMPLE

In this chapter, I will explore the themes of God's glory as it is made manifest in Christ and in His Church, each of which is described throughout Ephesians in traditional temple terminology. I take an in depth look at two monumental but perhaps under-appreciated studies of the role of the temple in the Old and New Testaments, paying particular attention to how those studies help us understand the centrality of temple theology in the flow of Paul's argument in Ephesians. I then seek to summarize that argument in the light of those temple themes, supplementing my summary with key insights from some of the most well-respected commentators on Ephesians to show that they too have noted temple theology throughout Ephesians, even if they have not emphasized its centrality. The end result will be an understanding of Ephesians that propels the remainder of my argument in this work forward, setting the stage for the remaining insights to be offered. As will become clear, the temple is the focus and driving theme in Ephesians precisely because Paul sees it as central to *all* of God's work in salvation history, and if the Church can come to a proper understanding of its own nature and role as illuminated by Paul's mature temple theology, it will be propelled forward in its ecumenical efforts.

3.1 Beale on the Temple in the Old and New Testaments

In Beale's *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, we find an illuminating biblical theology approach to understanding the nature and

importance of the temple throughout the Old and New Testaments. His findings provide a foundation for understanding Paul's own usage of temple theology in Ephesians and help demonstrate how central the temple is to Paul's understanding of the Gospel and the continued work of God in and through the Church. While there is no substitute for reading his entire book,¹ an overview of his argument that also highlights some of the more important and illustrative examples he gives as evidence for his thesis will help the reader understand Paul's message in Ephesians.

I begin with a quotation from towards the end of Beale's book that aptly summarizes the bulk of his argument in his own words. Though quite long, it is so pregnant with themes and images underlying Ephesians that it merits quotation in full. We will then be able to break his argument down into its component parts and examine them further in order to understand the thrust and importance of his argument, particularly as it helps inform our understanding of Paul's argument in Ephesians.

We have investigated throughout this book the meaning and role of the temple in the Old Testament in order to discover its purpose, and then see how such a purpose relates to the New Testament conception of the temple. It has become evident in pursuing this task that the first tabernacle and temple existed long before Israel became a nation. Indeed, it is apparent that the first sanctuary is discernible from the very beginning of human history. Adam's purpose in that first garden-temple was to expand its boundaries until it circumscribed the earth, so that the earth would be completely filled with God's glorious presence. Adam's failure led, in time, to the re-establishment of the tabernacle and temple in Israel. Both were patterned after the model of Eden and were constructed to symbolize the entire cosmos in order to signify that Israel's purpose as a corporate Adam

¹ In his preface, Beale states "This book is the most exciting research project on which I have every worked. It has opened my eyes to themes that I had seen only dimly before. In particular, I have seen more clearly than ever that the themes of Eden, the temple, God's glorious presence, new creation and the mission of the church are ultimately facets of the same reality! It is my hope that the biblical-theological perspective of this book will provide greater fuel to fire the church's motivation to fulfil its mission to the world." Gregory Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press), 11. My own study of the subject matter treated in his book has led me to very similar conclusions, and finding his book was a breath of fresh air in my own efforts to grasp the centrality of temple theology to the Gospel and the Church's proper response to it. Beale's work is invaluable to understanding Paul's message in Ephesians as it relates to ecumenical theology.

was to extend its borders by faithfully obeying God and spreading his glorious presence throughout the earth.

The entire discussion of our study up to this point confirms the conclusion that the temple in Revelation 21 – 22 symbolically represents the entire new cosmos because that was the goal of God’s temple-building process throughout sacred history. Chapters 21 – 22 form the consummation of the prophetic hope of an end-time universal temple, which Revelation 11 (as well as Rev. 1 – 2, Eph. 2, 1 Pet. 2 and others) portrays as having begun fulfilment and as advancing to fill the entire earth during this age in Christ and his church ... Christ and the church are the realization of the end-time temple.”²

All of the central elements of Beale’s thesis are contained in this passage. As Beale states, he began his study with an investigation of the role and purpose of the temple in the Old Testament and then sought to relate it to the New Testament conception of the temple. That initial investigation revealed that the Garden of Eden was the first temple and that Adam was tasked with the purpose of maintaining and expanding the boundaries of that temple until the entire earth could be filled with God’s glorious presence. Because Adam failed in this task, God raised up an entire people, the nation of Israel, to serve as a corporate Adam who would take up Adam’s task. That tabernacle and temple throughout Israel’s history were patterned after the model of that first garden-temple and its cosmic symbolism and significance. Revelation 21–22 follows the same pattern and confirms that the goal of God’s work throughout salvation history revolves around the temple. More specifically, the end-goal of God’s work is the construction of the eschatological temple. As other New Testament verses make clear, the construction of the eschatological temple has already begun in Christ and His Church and is currently advancing. At the end of human history, Christ and the Church will *be* the completely built end-time temple.

Beale’s stated thesis is that “the Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolically designed to point to the cosmic eschatological reality that God’s tabernacling presence, formerly

² Beale, *Temple*, 369.

limited to the holy of holies, was to be extended throughout the whole earth ... the Revelation 21 vision is best understood as picturing the final end-time temple that will fill the entire cosmos.”³ If correct, he claims, his thesis provides crucial insight into the conception of the temple throughout the Old and New Testaments.⁴ He then goes on to present the evidence for his thesis, arguing later in the book that such evidence shows Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21–22 provide an interpretive key for understanding temple passages throughout scripture, with each passage’s focus on the image of God’s glorious presence in a garden-like temple serving as a sort of inclusion around the entire Christian canon.⁵ I believe the evidence does indeed prove his thesis and the centrality of the temple to salvation history. Likewise, his interpretive key unlocks the deep meaning underlying temple theology, in turn unlocking a powerful understanding of God’s work throughout salvation history. Moreover, we cannot rightly understand Paul’s ecumenical message in Ephesians unless we see it as being built upon long-standing temple theology, much in the way Beale lays it out.

In the Old Testament, the temple was conceived of as a microcosm of the entire heaven and earth, with the outer court representing the habitable world where humanity dwelt, the holy place being emblematic of the visible heavens, and the holy of holies symbolizing the invisible dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt.⁶ This understanding of the temple as a microcosm was widespread in the Ancient Near East which typically portrayed ancient temples as small

³ Beale, *Temple*, 25.

⁴ Beale, *Temple*, 26.

⁵ Beale, *Temple*, 385.

⁶ Beale, *Temple*, 31-33.

models of heavenly temples or of the universe conceived of as a temple.⁷ Evidence from ancient cultures surrounding Israel confirms this cosmic symbolism in ancient temples and even points to the notion that the cosmos itself is a massive temple or will become one someday.⁸ Israel's temple pointed to the goal at the end of history that God's presence would fill up the entire cosmos, not merely a single structure on the earth.⁹

Revelation 21 not only depicts the earthly temple as a reflection of the heavenly, cosmic temple but also depicts Eden in Genesis 2–3 as a sanctuary, helping to demonstrate that Eden was the first archetypal temple in which the first man worshipped God.¹⁰ Adam's role was to be a priest who would guard the temple and keep it pure by maintaining its proper order¹¹ and a king who served as God's vice-regent.¹² Adam was the first priest-king before his expulsion from Eden as a result of his failure to fulfill his role, and the later prophetic promise of a messianic priest-king is best seen as somehow fulfilling what Adam failed to do.¹³

⁷ Beale, *Temple*, 51.

⁸ Beale, *Temple*, 58.

⁹ Beale, *Temple*, 60.

¹⁰ Beale, *Temple*, 66. Beale discusses several reasons why Eden is best conceived as the first temple elsewhere in his book. (Beale 2004 72, 75-77, 76 FN110) are particularly insightful. At the end of his review of the evidence related to the nature of Eden, he concludes by saying: "The cumulative effect of the preceding parallels between the Garden of Genesis 2 and Israel's tabernacle and temple indicates that Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel's temples were based." (Beale 2004, 79-80). Beale also sees the same theme of Eden as the model for all temples carrying throughout the New Testament, including its many references to the eschatological temple, as discussed more fully below.

¹¹ This notion of the proper ordering of the temple, though not discussed in any detail here, must be noted and connected to the idea that *shalom* hinges on the notion of the proper ordering of things. This concept will be taken up in much more detail in chapter 4 of this work. Beale notes this notion of maintaining proper order at (Beale 2004, 69).

¹² Beale, *Temple*, 66-69, 81.

¹³ Beale, *Temple*, 70

As the first priest-king, Adam was commissioned by God to carry out a specific set of tasks. Beale sees the commands at Genesis 1:26–28 as commissioning Adam and Eve to reflect His own activities in Genesis 1 of subduing chaos,¹⁴ ruling over creation, and filling it with creatures. Thus, Adam and Eve were to subdue and rule over the entire earth and were to be fruitful and multiply.¹⁵ Beale sees this commission as being tied with a responsibility to expand the boundaries of the temple until those boundaries encompass the whole cosmos, thereby enabling God's glory to fill all of creation. The ultimate goal of humanity is thus to fill the whole earth with God's glory.¹⁶

Adam's temple-building commission described in Genesis 1:28 did not end with him but rather was passed down through the ages to his descendants, including Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the people of Israel.¹⁷ Whenever that commission has been reiterated to Adam's descendants, it is always in direct connection with the construction of what look like small sanctuaries, and in each case those sanctuaries are described using language only found elsewhere in describing Israel's tabernacle or temple.¹⁸ The patriarchs thus built worship areas as impermanent, miniature sanctuaries symbolically representing that they were to spread out

¹⁴ The same theme of bringing order out of chaos noted above is likewise noted here, enabling a more fruitful discussion of that theme in chapter 4.

¹⁵ Beale, *Temple*, 83

¹⁶ Beale, *Temple*, 81-93.

¹⁷ Beale, *Temple*, 93-5.

¹⁸ Beale, *Temple*, 96.

over the earth to subdue it in fulfillment of their Genesis 1:28 commission, thus leaving the terrain of Israel's future land dotted with shrines.¹⁹ As Beale elaborates,

[W]e can speak of Genesis 1:28 as the first 'Great Commission' that was repeatedly applied to humanity. The commission was to bless the earth, and part of the essence of this blessing was God's salvific presence. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were to produce progeny who would fill the earth with God's glory reflected from each of them in the image of God ... After the fall, a remnant, created by God in his restored image, were to go out and spread God's glorious presence among the rest of darkened humanity. This 'witness' was to continue until the entire world would be filled with divine glory.²⁰

This first great commission, given initially to Adam and passed on to his descendants at each key stage of salvation history, was focused on temple-building in order to fulfill God's plan to fill the cosmos with His glory. It was taken up by Israel as a corporate Adam who also had the role of "witnessing" to the nations by spreading God's glory throughout the earth. Like Adam and all of Adam's descendants, Israel also ultimately failed to fulfill that commission. Israel, as a corporate Adam, was tasked with doing what Adam had been commissioned to do, and when it failed as Adam had, it was cast out of its "garden land" just as Adam was cast out of Eden. The Adamic task therefore laid unfulfilled until the first century AD.²¹

The failings of Adam and each of his descendants given his commission to spread God's presence throughout the earth were ultimately moral failings, and the result was the removal of God's presence from their midst. "Just as Adam 'hid...from the presence of the Lord' (Gen. 3:8), thus ensuring failure to accomplish his mission, Israel, as representatives of God's true humanity, also separated themselves from the divine presence and failed to carry out the

¹⁹ Beale, *Temple*, 97, 99.

²⁰ Beale, *Temple*, 117-8.

²¹ Beale, *Temple*, 118-21.

commission.”²² Sin results in the removal of God’s presence, and statements about God’s inability to dwell in any structure on earth reflect the need for holiness in that structure before God’s *shekinah* presence can dwell there.²³ Here, we can see the intimate connection between ethics and the temple, a topic emphasized in several parts of this chapter below.

While the discussion above demonstrates that the notion of the expanding temple has a geographical sense, it is also important to see its expansion in terms of growth and new creation. Using language echoing new creation at the eschaton, Daniel 2, like Isaiah 2 and Micah 4, portrays the mountain on which God’s holy temple sits as itself growing. The emergence (i.e., growth) of mountains was a feature of the original creation and demonstrates a vision of an emerging, eschatological, new creation in the form of a holy mountain-temple.²⁴ Thus, “the building of Israel’s temple marked the beginning of a new creation” in which “Israel was to function as a kind of corporate Adam in their renewed Garden of Eden and spread out from there, reflecting God’s glory in obedience to the commission of Genesis 1:28.”²⁵ This sense of the construction of a temple as a growing mountain from a foundation stone was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East, and it was connected to the notion that the temple grows and fills the cosmos.²⁶

By the time Beale turns to the New Testament, most of the heavy lifting to make his case has already been accomplished. He sees Jesus and the Church as finally doing what Adam and

²² Beale, *Temple*, 120.

²³ Beale, *Temple*, 138.

²⁴ Beale, *Temple*, 147.

²⁵ Beale, *Temple*, 149-50.

²⁶ Beale, *Temple*, 150-51.

his progeny (including Israel) had failed to do, extending God's temple and presence throughout the world.²⁷ Jesus is appropriately called a temple given that he inaugurated the new creation (his resurrection was the first great act of the new creation) and is Himself the beginning of the new creation and carrying out Adam's commission.²⁸ He is also the temple because he assumes the role of the sacrificial system and because God's shekinah glory rests upon Him.²⁹ The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 is itself a renewal of the Genesis 1:26-28 commission given to Adam, and the Church's temple-building mandate is implicit in those verses.³⁰

The majority of the rest of his book is focused on showing just how Jesus and the Church are portrayed in the New Testament as being related to the end-time temple either as its beginning or as its fulfillment.³¹ While we need not trace out the rest of Beale's argument, a few additional specific details cited in his book will help further our understanding of his thesis as it relates to and enhances our treatment of Ephesians.

In John 1:51, Jesus claims to be the temple precisely because He claims to be the Son of Man upon whom the angels descend and ascend because the heavens have been opened up. The reference is to Jacob's ladder, which itself was a temple gateway allowing for such travel between heaven and the earth, thereby connecting the two. Jesus was therefore claiming that He, not the Jerusalem temple, was the primary link between heaven and earth.³² Furthermore, this

²⁷ Beale, *Temple*, 169.

²⁸ Beale, *Temple*, 170, 176.

²⁹ Beale, *Temple*, 178

³⁰ Beale, *Temple*, 175, 178.

³¹ Beale, *Temple*, 171.

³² Beale, *Temple*, 195; cf. 100, 102.

link with heaven is created by the Spirit wherever there is trust in Christ, and those so trusting Him come into the sphere of the true temple consisting of Christ and the Spirit. Jesus' self-identification as the Son of Man and the temple is a claim that He is fulfilling Adam's commission and building a permanent temple that has begun to link heaven and the earth.³³

The birth of the Church at Pentecost is also linked to the notion of Jesus as the gateway between heaven and earth and to Jacob's ladder. Genesis 28 depicts Jacob's ladder as a true gateway between heaven and earth in contrast to the human attempt in Genesis 11 to establish such a link by building the Tower of Babel.³⁴ While the builders of the Tower of Babel sought to build a gateway to heaven and force God to come down and be present among them to bless them, God instead judged them by confusing their language and scattering them. Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28 was a temporary gateway between heaven and earth. Acts 2 records the birth of the Church at Pentecost in language that demonstrates a reversal of Babel's judgment by uniting the Church and enabling its members to overcome language barriers.³⁵ Moreover, the tongues of fire at Pentecost indicated the Church was a theophany and a sanctuary, just as Mt. Sinai had been, and that the members of the Church had become part of the heavenly temple.³⁶

References to the building of the temple in the New Testament come into sharp focus when we combine the facts of Jesus' self-identification as the temple with the notion of the members of the Church being parts of the temple. Thus, in 1 Peter 2:4-6 and surrounding verses, we see Jesus depicted as the living cornerstone and Christians as living stones being built up into

³³ Beale, *Temple*, 195-6.

³⁴ Beale, *Temple*, 102.

³⁵ Beale, *Temple*, 201-03.

³⁶ Beale, *Temple*, 204, 208.

the holy temple.³⁷ The temple-building project inaugurated by Jesus continues today and will continue until the end-time temple is fully constructed.

A final feature of temple theology noted by Beale and requiring mention here is a connection between God's Word and the temple-building project. He notes that Colossians 1:6-10 and four passages in the Book of Acts refer to Adam's commission in Genesis 1:28 in a modified way in which the reception of God's Word is itself what increases and multiplies, rather than the progeny of Adam.³⁸ Believers are depicted in Colossians 3:10 as putting on the new man (i.e., Christ, who is said to be the image of the invisible God in Colossians 1:15) and thus being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of God. Beale finds this fact striking, but even more striking is the prayer in Colossians 1:9 that believers be filled with the knowledge of God's will "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," a reference to Exodus 31:3 in which the filing of a divine Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge describes the ability to build the tabernacle.³⁹ This connection between God's instruction and temple building is also to be found in Habakkuk 2:14 which declares that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Temple-building requires an increase in understanding of

³⁷ Beale, *Temple*, 332. Here, he also appropriately cites Ephesians 2 as "highlighting the same points." (Beale 2004, 260) says more about this very same temple-building image of Jesus setting himself as the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets as the foundation, upon which the Church has begun to be built into a holy temple.

³⁸ Beale, *Temple*, 266.

³⁹ Beale, *Temple*, 267. I must note here that Paul invokes the same idea in the two prayers in Ephesians 1:16f. and 3:14f. The Spirit increasing the Church's wisdom, revelation, knowledge, and comprehension is primary to what Paul asks for in both prayers. Beale helps us better understand the temple-building implications of these prayers.

God's Word, and Paul has much to say about this theme in Ephesians as I will discuss in chapter 5 of this work.⁴⁰

I conclude this section on Beale by quoting another passage summarizing his understanding of the new temple, this time in a more forward-looking manner:

The incarnate Christ was God's presence descending to the earth from heaven in a way as never before. Christ's resurrection was an even greater expression of this end-time temple that descended to earth to a greater degree than previously. After Christ, who is the expression of the true temple ascended to heaven, the heavenly temple again began to descend in the form of the Spirit and expanded by growing through incorporating people into it. The expansion is consummated at the end of the age by the heavenly temple fully covering the entire earth ... Christ came and did what Adam should have done, and in so doing he began to expand the temple even during his earthly ministry. When he ascended into the heavenly temple, he then sent his Spirit to create God's people as a part of that extending heavenly temple.⁴¹

3.2 Perrin on Jesus as the Temple

Having spent significant time on Beale's book, we now turn to an equally important and insightful book by Nicholas Perrin entitled *Jesus the Temple*, in which Perrin attempts to understand the historical Jesus. His conclusions themselves are certainly helpful to my own arguments in this chapter, but what is perhaps equally important is the fact that his historical approach largely agrees with and confirms Beale's biblical theology approach. That two vastly different approaches arrived at such similar understandings of temple themes and their importance to Christianity is striking and helps provide a greater degree of confidence in their findings. Perrin's book, like Beale's, is certainly worth a full reading to get a good sense of the full weight of his arguments, though an overview will suffice to make the relevant connections.

⁴⁰ In section 3.3 of this chapter, I also discuss the connection between the Word and the Church being enabled to manifest God's glory in my treatment of Ephesians 1:23 and later references to it in 4:13.

⁴¹ Beale, *Temple*, 387.

When combined with a careful reading of Ephesians, these two books help us see that Paul's mature understanding of the Gospel and the Church's proper response to it are deeply informed by traditional temple themes.

Perrin's main thesis is that Jesus understood Himself and His movement as the embodiment of God's eschatological temple that would replace the broken Jerusalem temple. In line with the reigning narrative of His day, Jesus believed that apostasy in the temple entailed that the temple had failed to function and is therefore useless. Jesus saw the Jerusalem temple of His day as fully apostate, a clear sign of its impending judgement and the immanent establishment of a new and everlasting temple. He also believed that He and His followers constituted the foundation of the new temple.⁴² Perrin claims this notion of the immanence of the eschatological temple in light of the apostasy in the Jerusalem temple provided the basic rationale for Jesus' most characteristic actions.⁴³ Borrowing Beale's language, we may refer to this claim by Perrin as his "interpretive key" for understanding Jesus as the temple.

Perrin thus sees much of Jesus' life and teachings as leading a counter-temple movement, not against the Jerusalem temple per se but rather against its corrupt administration by faithless leaders.⁴⁴ The temple had become irretrievably profaned by the very leaders appointed to maintain its sanctity. The only thing that could be done by the faithful was "to uphold Torah properly, endure the indignities inflicted by the wicked establishment, and await divine intervention."⁴⁵ Counter-temple movements saw themselves as the sole remaining sign of God's

⁴² Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 12.

⁴³ Perrin, *Jesus*, 15.

⁴⁴ Perrin, *Jesus*, 18.

⁴⁵ Perrin, *Jesus*, 19.

continued faithfulness to Israel and as a living and prophetic protest against the failure of the temple.⁴⁶ Perrin's claim is that Jesus saw Himself as the leader of precisely this kind of counter-temple movement.⁴⁷

Perrin goes on to document different counter-temple movements of Jesus' day in order to help the reader better understand Jesus' self-conception as the leader of one. His observations about the Qumran community in this light are particularly helpful. They sought to establish their own temple organization, not one requiring a building but rather only a faithful people who are "to work truth, righteousness, justice, loving-kindness, and humility, one with another."⁴⁸ When such a people is constituted, the Qumran literature states that they are established by God, an eternal planting and a holy and blameless true temple of Israel. Perrin notes the language of eternal planting "alludes to the eschatological hope of a renewed Eden, the pristine Adamic reality to which God was directing all of history and creation," and the temple language of course refers to the sacred space in which divine and earthly meet.⁴⁹ Perrin helpfully summarizes the significance as follows:

As ancient Judaism envisaged it, this renewed creation would break into earthly reality through the temple. More exactly, where the new temple stood there was new creation – and vice versa.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Perrin, *Jesus*, 19.

⁴⁷ Perrin, *Jesus*, 20.

⁴⁸ Perrin, *Jesus*, 32.

⁴⁹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 32-33.

⁵⁰ Perrin, *Jesus*, 33. All of this echoes Beale's findings, and so it is no surprise Perrin cites Beale here for the broad notion of the connection between Eden and the temple.

The Qumran community, in the long tradition of Jewish eschatological thought, saw a connection between the establishment of a holy, faithful community as the renewal of creation and the in-breaking of the eschatological temple. The Qumran community saw itself not merely as doing temple works the Jerusalem temple was failing to do but rather as the temple itself, and as a new start to creation. That new start required ushering out the corrupted temple and ushering in a restored Israel. The new community was the beginning of a larger and infinitely more glorious temple that could never be profaned.⁵¹

Perrin notes that John the Baptist and his followers, like the Qumran community, constituted another counter-temple movement. John belonged to a line of dissidents who insisted that the old temple order was corrupt and on its way out, with a new order, a new temple on its way in.⁵² He created a following in the desert, a move that harkened back to God forming Israel in the Exodus and suggested the belief that God was beginning again with a new Exodus and a new nation.⁵³ Israel's redemption during the Exodus was not primarily about freedom from slavery but rather about the opportunity to establish a proper temple with proper worship, a theme borne out by later Judaism which came to see the goal of God's redemptive work inaugurated in the Exodus as culminating in a divinely wrought eschatological temple. This eschatological temple was the heavenly temple come down to earth, the same temple Moses was instructed in Exodus 25:40 to use as a basis for the earthly temple. Israel's sanctuary instituted

⁵¹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 34.

⁵² Perrin, *Jesus*, 37.

⁵³ Perrin, *Jesus*, 39.

under Moses was merely a prelude to a final, more glorious temple, and Israel's overriding and everlasting destiny was to render worship *as* the temple.⁵⁴

This new Exodus theology, Perrin asserts, informed and motivated John the Baptist's counter-temple movement. Thus, baptism as repentance was a necessary ritual for re-entry into the covenant, in the same manner that ritual was required to enter Israel initially. Instead of this practice of forgiveness of sins taking place at the Jerusalem temple, John performed it himself outside of the temple apparatus, thus indicating the redundancy of the Jerusalem temple in light of the fact a new temple was already taking shape.⁵⁵ This understanding of John's temple thinking is confirmed by his statement recorded in Luke 3:8 that God is able to raise up children of Abraham from stones. When God is described as raising up something, the reference is frequently to His offspring or the temple. References to people as "stones" in the Old Testament is regularly a reference to citizens of Israel or temple members. Perrin thus sees John's statement as a declaration that God is raising up new children of Israel through John, children who will constitute a new temple.⁵⁶ The fact that Jesus launched His own ministry from within John's is surely significant and is itself suggestive that Jesus shared many of the same concerns, as Perrin of course later claims he does.⁵⁷

Early Christianity saw itself as the community in which the eschatological temple was taking shape. Early Christians believed the heavenly temple, the great hope of Judaism, had

⁵⁴ Perrin, *Jesus*, 10-11.

⁵⁵ Perrin, *Jesus*, 40-41.

⁵⁶ Perrin, *Jesus*, 41.

⁵⁷ Perrin, *Jesus*, 45.

broken forth in a preliminary fashion in the resurrection of Christ.⁵⁸ Jesus' crucified and risen body was the portal through which worshipers gained access to the heavenly temple, of which Israel's temples had only been a copy. The Church soon became identified with Christ's body and thus also was seen as an ingress through which the heavenly temple was taking shape in creation. God had established the heavenly temple on the earth as the presence of the Spirit showed, and possession of the Spirit by believers meant that they were the true temple of God.⁵⁹

Perrin surveys several of the relevant passages of the New Testament employing these temple themes, unlocking them with his own interpretive key and demonstrating the significance of the temple to Christianity.⁶⁰ While I cannot examine them all there, a brief recitation of some of the main passages he examines will show Perrin has uncovered an often overlooked theme central to Jesus' self-identification and to the beliefs of his earliest followers.⁶¹

John's gospel portrays Jesus as the glory-filled temple. To support this conclusion, Perrin notes the incarnation reference at John 1:14 is widely recognized as a recapitulation of God's glory pitching its tent at Mt. Sinai. He also cites John 1:51 and its allusion to Jacob's ladder as a temple being applied to Jesus and showing him to be the glory-filled temple.⁶² 1 Peter 2:4-9 depicts Jesus as the cornerstone and high priest and the Church as temple and

⁵⁸ Perrin, *Jesus*, 47-49.

⁵⁹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 49.

⁶⁰ Perrin's overview of the relevant New Testament passages is found at (Perrin 2010, 50-70). Several of the passages are familiar scriptures, often quoted without any recognition of the temple implications inherent in and intended by them. Perrin's interpretive key helps the reader see the importance of temple theology for understanding and faithfully responding to these passages.

⁶¹ It is noteworthy, and a bit sad, that Perrin intentionally omits an examination of Ephesians from his survey. Because of its disputed authorship, Perrin shies away from citing it as evidence of the historical Jesus and his earliest followers. See (Perrin 2010, 50FN7). My discussion at section 3.3 provides just such an examination.

⁶² Perrin, *Jesus*, 53.

priesthood.⁶³ Hebrews likewise gives prominence to the same temple themes, calling the Christian community “God’s house” in Hebrews 3:6 and calling Jesus a high priest in the heavenly temple with a ministry superior to prior high priests in the Jerusalem temple (which is a mere copy of the heavenly one) in Hebrews 8-9. Perrin states Hebrews shows Christians believed themselves not to be establishing a temple that imitated the Jerusalem temple but rather the heavenly temple that had broken into creation in Christ.⁶⁴

At the end of Matthew’s gospel, when Jesus promises always to be with his followers as part of the Great Commission, Perrin notes this promise “marks the climax of God’s temple purposes” which have always been to establish intimate fellowship between God and His people.⁶⁵ The birth of the Church at Pentecost depicted in Acts 2:1-40 is modeled on the Sinai event and its depiction of God’s glory descending so as to make Sinai itself a kind of temple. The tongues of fire are reminiscent of the heavenly sanctuary and are indicative of God’s shekinah glory coming to rest on the early Church. The entire passage signals a new era in salvation history and the end of the current temple order.⁶⁶

In Galatians, one of Paul’s earliest letters, Paul refers to Peter, James, and John as “pillars” at 2:9, most likely indicating their central place within the newly constituted temple since pillars were the gates to the inner court of the temple. Perrin indicates that this reference to Peter as a pillar in the new temple sets up Paul’s reproach of Peter in Galatians 2:18 where Paul

⁶³ Perrin, *Jesus*, 56.

⁶⁴ Perrin, *Jesus*, 58.

⁶⁵ Perrin, *Jesus*, 60-61. Perrin notes temple theology underlying the Great Commission in a different manner than Beale did, showing two independent reasons to see such theology at work in the verse.

⁶⁶ Perrin, *Jesus*, 63.

essentially accuses Peter of seeking to re-build the Mosaic temple Christ had torn down and replaced with the Church.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the contrast in Galatians 1-3 between faith and works of the law, and the corresponding contrast between spirit and flesh, are recast in terms of conflicting temple commitments to the heavenly temple on the one hand and the Jerusalem temple on the other. Galatians is thus best read as asking Christians to choose which temple deserves their allegiance.⁶⁸

Paul's reliance on temple theology is not constrained to Galatians. His repeated use of the notion that believers are to build up (“οἰκοδομέω”) one another is his shorthand way of encouraging them to work to build the eschatological temple.⁶⁹ In 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, Paul depicts the Church as the temple, alluding to temple imagery and language in Ezekiel to convey the idea that the eschatological temple is present today in the believing community.⁷⁰ Moreover, Perrin holds that a deeply rooted eschatological temple theology is also to be found in Romans.

⁶⁷ Perrin, *Jesus*, 65.

⁶⁸ Perrin, *Jesus*, 66. It is important to note here that this interpretation of Galatians demonstrates how it is possible to read undisputed Pauline letters without “imposing a nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism on Paul and then declaring that Ephesians doesn't fit.” (Wright, 2013, 1515), cited in chapter 2 of this work. In light of the work of Beale and Perrin on the prominence of temple theology, it is certainly possible to see a Pauline emphasis on temple in both the undisputed and disputed Pauline letters, further deflating the arguments of those who wish to deny Paul authored all of those letters. A similar statement could be made about each of the other undisputed Pauline letters for which Perrin provides such a temple-based interpretation, some of which are mentioned below.

⁶⁹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 67. He identifies the idiom οἰκοδομέω (to “build up”) as occurring in the undisputed Pauline letters at 1 Thes. 5:11; 1 Cor 8:1; 10:23; 14:4, 17; 2 Cor. 10:8; 12:9; 13:10. Notably, the term occurs in several other passages in the New Testament with the same temple connotations, suggesting Paul used the same language Jesus and the early Church used to describe what God was doing in and through them. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says that He will build His church on Peter, and in Matthew 26:61 He says He can build the temple of God in three days. In Acts 20:32, Paul is saying goodbye to the Ephesian church and commends them to God and to the message of grace which is able to build them up and give them the inheritance belonging to all who are sanctified. Variations of the same Greek word are found elsewhere in the New Testament with the same temple overtones, including 1 Cor. 3, 14; 2 Cor. 5, 10, 12; Eph. 4. I will of course discuss wider uses of the term in Ephesians later in this work.

⁷⁰ Perrin, *Jesus*, 69.

Thus, Paul describes his preaching of the gospel as building on a foundation in Romans 15:20, a term he frequently uses to denote the temple foundation. Relying on the same image, Paul says believers are likewise instructed to seek what leads to mutual upbuilding in Romans 14:19, and they are exhorted to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God in Romans 12:1.

Perrin concludes his discussion of Paul by saying that Paul clearly sees a new era in Christ, and those who are in Christ and filled with the Spirit corporately make up the new locus of God's presence as members of the eschatological temple.⁷¹ Similarly, Perrin ends his discussion of the New Testament passages demonstrating the importance of temple theology by concluding that the early Church believed the heavenly temple had begun to break into history through the resurrection of Christ and would continue to be built up until it is fully complete at the climax of history.⁷² His most forceful statement regarding Paul's use of temple theology comes on the very last page of his book when drawing his final conclusions about the centrality of the temple to early Christian thought. Speaking of Paul's use of the notion of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, Perrin says

...the apostle's temple imagery incorporates a whole world of meaning unto itself. It was a world which not only had its origins long before the time of Jesus and Paul, but also would climax at some indeterminate point after both had come and gone. The early Christian language about Jesus the temple was a way of speaking that drew together all that Israel hoped and longed for, all that God's people – so went the firm belief – would one day see.⁷³

Perrin ends his chapter on the nature of the early Church as a counter-temple movement in a way that sets up the rest of his book. His review of the importance of temple imagery in the

⁷¹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 70.

⁷² Perrin, *Jesus*, 75.

⁷³ Perrin, *Jesus*, 190.

early Church provides a reason to believe Jesus's own counter-temple theology provided the fundamental framework for His understanding of His own role and the role of His movement within Israel's history. He then suggests that all the practices Jesus enjoined on His followers should be seen essentially as temple practices, and that we can only fully understand the historical Jesus if we situate Jesus within this temple context.⁷⁴

In the remaining chapters of his book, Perrin provides the details to support this bold statement. While a cursory review of those details will be helpful, it is his thesis itself that is of most interest. I have already said that the proper response to the work of Christ according to Ephesians is to take up a set of practices constituting our calling, and the thrust of this chapter is to show the importance of the temple to Paul's argument in Ephesians. Perrin's statement essentially confirms my own thesis in two important ways. First, he labels the set of practices comprising the Christian life as *temple* practices, thus providing the all-important context and background by which to best understand the Christian life. Second, he traces this temple theme back to Jesus Himself. It is not Paul who introduces it, much less a student of Paul or an imposter who penned Ephesians in Paul's name in an attempt to give more weight to his own temple concerns. Jesus conceived of Himself and the movement He launched in these very terms. Add Beale's contributions to the mix, and we see that Jesus was simply situating Himself within the long tradition of temple theology underlying the entire Old Testament and pointing to the goal of salvation at the eschaton, the establishment of the heavenly temple.

⁷⁴ Perrin, *Jesus*, 79.

Understanding what Perrin says about Jesus' cleansing of the temple helps show the strong connection between ethics and the new temple.⁷⁵ When Jesus entered the temple that day, his two intentions were to issue a prophetic judgment against the temple authorities because of socio-economic injustices under their temple administration and to declare His own role as builder of the eschatological temple.⁷⁶ Continuing this twofold announcement, when Jesus went on to say that he would destroy the [Jerusalem] temple and rebuild it in three days, He could not have been making a more forcible messianic claim.⁷⁷ Jesus' claim to rebuild the temple in three days was of course a reference to His resurrection, and when He did rise from the dead, Jesus proved Himself to be "the true and everlasting cornerstone for the true and everlasting temple."⁷⁸

The cleansing of the temple and inauguration of the eschatological temple also indicated regime change in the form of the coming of God's kingdom. Indeed, Perrin claims the kingdom of God is one and the same as the eschatological temple being made present.⁷⁹ His point is that the coming of the kingdom of God is also the coming of the eschatological temple: "Where the now-present eschatological temple is, there one finds the kingdom of God – and vice versa."⁸⁰ Thus, Jesus sought not only to cleanse the temple but also the land itself in order to prepare for the coming of the new temple and kingdom to the land. The two cleansings are tied together,

⁷⁵ Perrin makes the stronger claim that grasping Jesus' cleansing of the temple is tantamount to grasping the historical Jesus Himself. Perrin, *Jesus*, 81.

⁷⁶ Perrin, *Jesus*, 92, 98-9, 109, 149.

⁷⁷ Perrin, *Jesus*, 102. There, he cites 2 Sam. 7, Is. 44-45, and Zechariah 6 (as well as some second temple literature) as being widely recognized for their descriptions of the coming messiah and for the notion that the rebuilding of the temple will occur when the messiah does come.

⁷⁸ Perrin, *Jesus*, 110.

⁷⁹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 152.

⁸⁰ Perrin, *Jesus*, 181.

since wherever there are false leaders, an unclean spirit and ensnaring idols are present. When Jesus performed exorcisms, He was performing an eschatological cleansing of the land by ridding it of spirits that bedeviled it.⁸¹

This same cleansing ministry necessarily brought with it a renewal of ethics. Wherever false leaders and unclean spirits were present, so too did that darkness produce false and unclean ethical practices in the land.⁸² In His role as Messiah and temple-builder, Jesus thus also sought to reform the ethical practices of God's people. These new "temple practices" included a properly functioning temple, reoriented around Jesus and His teachings and practices. Jesus was the new temple, and only by taking part in Him and His way of life could one take part in the life of heaven through the heavenly temple.⁸³

Jesus therefore established a new people, a temple society, an embodiment of righteous relationships with God and one another.⁸⁴ Jesus reconstituted Israel around Himself as High Priest, King, and builder of the new temple. This new temple demanded a new body politic with a new set of temple practices befitting it.⁸⁵

3.3 The Temple in Ephesians

If a skilled preacher were tasked with summarizing the Church's proper response to the work of God in and through Christ based solely on Beale's and Perrin's work regarding the importance of the temple to Christianity, the resulting outline for such a sermon would likely

⁸¹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 163, 168.

⁸² Perrin, *Jesus*, 163.

⁸³ Perrin, *Jesus*, 182.

⁸⁴ Perrin, *Jesus*, 116, 182.

⁸⁵ Perrin, *Jesus*, 148.

look remarkably similar to Ephesians. Perhaps not, but this is precisely what Paul did. Writing late in his life for just such an occasion, in light of all that he had previously seen, done, and said earlier in his ministry, Paul wrote Ephesians as an encyclical sermon addressed to the whole Church in the hopes the Church would understand its role as the eschatological temple tasked with cooperating with Christ in His ongoing work to build up that temple.

To support my claim here, I will supplement Beale's biblical theology approach and Perrin's historical Jesus approach with a summary of the temple themes as they are woven throughout Ephesians and undergird the flow of its argument. As this summary unfolds, I will add certain observations made by some of the major commentators on Ephesians to show they too have observed the same temple themes running throughout, even if they have not perceived just how central those themes are.⁸⁶ The summary in this section will help shed light on the nature and importance of the message of Ephesians for ecumenism by showing that Beale's and Perrin's interpretive keys help illuminate that message. I will then close this chapter by drawing some important conclusions regarding the implications of temple theology for ecumenism.

I begin the summary with Lincoln's observation that "Ephesians represents a further stage in the appropriation of temple imagery by the early Christians," due to its focus on God's

⁸⁶ While the major commentaries do not emphasize temple themes, they do in fact make many observations demonstrating the role of the temple in Ephesians. The major commentaries have largely failed to emphasize the pervasiveness of temple themes in Ephesians, but likely only because they, like most contemporary Christians, have been unduly influenced by developments in the interpretation of Scripture in later centuries driven largely by social and political concerns. As Perrin puts it, a somewhat gnostic vision of Christianity took hold within the history of interpretation of its texts primarily due to Platonizing and anti-priestly tendencies which have failed to understand Judaism on its own terms. Furthermore, emerging European nation-states had an interest in relegating Jesus' teachings to the realm of personal ethics, and Bible scholars and theologians at the time lent their support to those causes. The social and political implications of Jesus' teachings were relegated to a privatized piety. (Perrin, *Jesus*, 184-5). The result has been an obscuring of the importance of the temple and temple practices, though thankfully modern commentaries have not omitted observations about the role of the temple in Ephesians altogether. My aim is to help recapture the importance of the temple and temple practices, particularly as they relate to and inform the ecumenical efforts of the Church.

presence in the universal Church. He notes the development is not without precedent, citing Paul, other early Christians, the Qumran community and elements of Old Testament prophecy as containing references to the eschatological temple. The prior focus had been on the earthly temple as the counterpart to the heavenly dwelling place and as the gate from earth to heaven, but Ephesians marks a shift to seeing the new temple comprised of those in Christ as the eschatological temple.⁸⁷

Lincoln also sees Ephesians as incorporating an important development in the notion of fullness as it shifts from a reference to Christ in Colossians to an application to the Church.⁸⁸ Colossians 1:15, 19 and 2:9 are in view here, and I add John 1:14 to the list to drive home the point of those verses:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” Colossians 1:15, 19, ESV

“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” Colossians 2:9, ESV

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...” John 1:14, ESV

In these passages, we see that the whole fullness of God dwelled bodily in Christ. Paul takes these Christological truths and develops them further in Ephesians, focusing on their implications for the nature and life of the Church.

⁸⁷ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 156-57.

⁸⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 80. See also Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 246, where he claims Ephesians spells out the implications of Christology (particularly that of Colossians) for the life of the church. Scholars have long acknowledged the close link between Ephesians and Colossians, as described in chapter 2 of this work. Regardless of just how else the two documents are related, the central point here is that they are related in their temple themes. O’Brien cites Lincoln in agreement on this point, stating “In Colossians, the term ‘fullness’ was applied to Christ; here in Ephesians its referent is the church.” Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 152.

As the argument in Ephesians unfolds, we see both subtle and express references to temple themes throughout, a clear indication that temple theology holds a central and organizing role in Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:3, we see that every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places has been opened up, a clear reference to the heavenly temple's blessings being made available to believers. Ephesians 1:6, 12, and 14 all include references to the praise of God's glory. In Ephesians 1:10, God's now-revealed plan for the fullness of time is to gather up all things in heaven and earth into Christ, a clear reference to the theme of uniting heaven and the entire cosmos in Christ the temple. Ephesians 1:11, 14, and 18 all invoke the notion that those in Christ have or are an inheritance, and all three connect that inheritance to glory – the Church's inheritance is tied to it living to the praise of God's glory, and God's inheritance in the Church is described as “glorious.”⁸⁹ In Ephesians 1:13-14, believers are described as having been marked with the seal of the long-promised⁹⁰ Holy Spirit, a pledge or down payment of their inheritance and redemption as God's own people, and he connects the giving of the Spirit to glory in the Church. Paul thus foreshadows and builds towards his later emphasis on the Church as the temple and the place in which God's glory will dwell, strengthening the view that temple theology is driving Paul's argument.

⁸⁹ Thielman spells out the Old Testament passages referring to God's people as His inheritance. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 99FN13.

⁹⁰ Lincoln sees this as a generalized reference to the coming of the Spirit as fulfilling the promise to Abraham and the promise in Joel 2:28-32. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 40. Thielman likewise sees a reference to the promise of the prophets. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 82. Hoehner says it could refer to the promise of the prophets (as exemplified by Joel 2:28-29) when the new covenant was to be initiated (Ezekiel 36 – 37) or Christ's promise to his disciples recorded throughout the New Testament that we would send the Spirit. Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 240. Even if Paul is referring to Christ's promise, certainly that promise was a way of explaining that He was the messiah ushering in the realities promised by the prophets, including the coming of the Spirit. O'Brien perhaps summarizes it best by referring to the Holy Spirit promised in the Old Testament and poured out by the exalted Jesus at Pentecost. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 119-20. In any case, the presence of the Spirit among believers is a reference to the Church as a dwelling place for God's glory.

When he gets to Ephesians 1:23, Paul's emphasis on the Church as the dwelling place of God is in full view. Paul's use of the word "head" (κεφαλήν) in 1:22 to refer to Christ's position as ruler over all of the cosmos reflected two widespread notions: the universe as a giant cosmic body and the body as the group of persons ruled by a king.⁹¹ This cosmic lordship is anticipated and reflected in 1:10 by the reference to God "gathering up" all things into Christ since that verb (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) contains the root word for "head." Though that verb is typically best translated as "to recapitulate" or "to summarize" and may not automatically be taken as a reference to Christ as head, Paul no doubt intended just such a reference as he worked his way rhetorically towards the climax of chapter 1 in verses 1:22-23.⁹² Thus, when he refers to the Church as Christ's Body in 1:23, we are primed to hear his teachings regarding the role of Christ and the Church as the temple and the manifestation of God's glory throughout the cosmos.

In Ephesians 1:23, the concluding verse of Paul's introductory chapter, we see all the main themes of Ephesians spelled out in summary form. The verse serves as a pithy statement of the whole vision of Ephesians, which Paul then carefully unpacks more fully in the remainder of the document. Paul has in view in 1:23 the idea that the fullness of God, which once dwelt on the earth in Christ's physical body,⁹³ is to be made manifest again in the Church, Christ's current

⁹¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 70.

⁹² Lincoln notes the root word for head in the word for recapitulation or summary but rightly observes the more common meaning is the better translation, not the etymologically derived one. He notes Paul may have had this connection in mind and that it is both illuminating and legitimate to view this word in 1:10 in the context of the letter as a whole and to link it to other passages discussing Christ's relationship to the cosmos. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 32-33. If it is acknowledged that Ephesians is masterfully written and effectively uses such rhetorical devices as alliteration to emphasize certain themes and connections, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion he intended the connection between 1:10 and 1:23 advocated here.

⁹³ As the references above to Colossians and John 1 make clear. See George Caird, *Paul's Letters From Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 70.

Body on the earth.⁹⁴ As John 1:14 tells us, we beheld God's glory because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us in Jesus the temple. In light of John 14, Ephesians 1:23 appears to say that the Church, like Jesus Himself, is to manifest God's glory on the earth by embodying the Word.⁹⁵ This idea would naturally lead to a prescription of certain ethical practices that enable the Church to embody the Word and thereby enable it to manifest God's glory, the very topic Paul is driving towards in chapter 4. So, by the time Paul reaches our key verse of 4:13, we should expect and in fact do find that he has spelled out enough details about the nature of Christ and His work in and through the Church to be able to restate the themes of 1:23 and unpack them more fully in a practical way. As discussed below, Ephesians 4:11-16 describes how the Church is to embody the Word, thereby attaining to the full stature of Christ and manifesting the fullness of God's glory.

⁹⁴ Hoehner says "filling" here refers to God's essence, presence, power, or glory. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 304. Lincoln says the Church is the focus of God's presence and rule, and is filled with Christ's Spirit, grace, and gifts. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 80-81. O'Brien states fullness indicates God's presence, the shekinah glory, power, and essence. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 149, 152. Barth says fullness refers to God's presence and manifestation and may be considered a synonym of the name, the glory, the Spirit, or the shekinah of God. What is meant is the gift of God's self-revelation, salvation, and self-presentation. Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation And Commentary on Chapters 1-3 and 4-6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 204-05. Caird is perhaps most helpful in making this point. Commenting separately on 1:23, 3:19, and 4:13, he notes each time that God fills Christ with His own fullness so that God's fullness has already dwelt in Jesus, in order that Christ, as the representative of God's total being, may fill the Church with the same fullness and subsequently extend that fullness throughout the whole cosmos. Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 49, 70, 77.

⁹⁵ Ephesians 5:26-27 includes this same concept connecting the manifestation of the Word with glory. Christ washes the Church with the Word so that He might present her ἐνδοξον (in splendor, brilliance, or glory). Thielman comments that the result is the Church's holiness and ability to live in a way consistent with its status. He also notes Paul's return to the notion of the Church as Christ's Body in 5:29-30, thereby invoking 1:20-23 and 4:7-16. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 385-88. Though some have seen washing with the word as referring to baptism, Lincoln notes that even if baptism is in view, the referent of the "word" in the phrase is to the baptismal confession of faith. If the referent is more general, he sees it as the purifying word of the gospel. He also notes the glory resulting in the Church has a moral connotation, and that 5:30 connects the discussion back to other references to the Church as Christ's Body in 1:23, 3:6, 4:16, and 4:25. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 376-77, 79. In light of what Paul teaches in 4:11-16, I believe Paul's underlying thought in Ephesians is that Christ fills the Church with God's glory precisely by means of washing her with the Word.

Ephesians 2:6 says that Christians have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places,⁹⁶ a clear reference to enjoying the presence of God in God's own dwelling place. 2:10 depicts believers as a new creation, and new creation accompanies the coming of the eschatological temple as Beale and Perrin have helped us see. 2:14-18 refers to Christ having broken down the Jerusalem temple and its regulations which separated Jews and Gentiles in order to create in Himself a new people who have access to the Father through the Spirit – all of these are associated with the inauguration of the eschatological temple by the messiah. Thus, in 2:19-22, we see where Paul had been heading in this passage, to a robust description of the work of God in and through Christ to establish the eschatological temple precisely by creating the one new humanity,⁹⁷ the Church, and building it up stone by stone until the temple is complete. The apostles and prophets are the foundation of that temple, with the Messiah as the cornerstone. The process of building up the temple is ongoing and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, as 2:22 makes clear.

Another indication of Paul's masterfully crafted sermon comes from his repeated use of words based on the root "οἶκ-" (meaning generally building or house) throughout the passage: *πάροικοι* (a foreigner, one who lives outside the house) and *οἰκεῖτοι* (*οἶκος*, household, house, or temple) in 2:19, *ἐποικοδομηθέντες* (having been built) in 2:20, *οικοδομή* (structure) in 2:21, *συνοικοδομεῖσθε* (being built together) and *κατοικητήριον* (dwelling place) in 2:22.⁹⁸ Caird

⁹⁶ Ephesians 1:20 says Christ was raised from the dead and seated in at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

⁹⁷ Barth, *Ephesians*, 308-09; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 170-71.

⁹⁸ He also uses *ναὸν* (temple) in 2:21 to ensure his hearers understood that the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple, where God dwells, is clearly in view (See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 410), not merely a house or a household (the other two main meanings of *οἰκεῖτοι* or *οἶκος*). Notably, the same root word "οἶκ" is used in 4:12, 16, and 29 to refer to the building up (*οικοδομήν*) of the Body. Paul thus draws on the use of the word (and its repeated sound) in chapter 2 to harken his hearers back to those same temple themes when he reaches chapter 4 and his

notes Paul's use of this root word in this way enables him to connect the notions of commonwealth and family to building and temple because of the triple meaning of the word οἶκος (household, house, or temple), referencing a similar use of the word house in 2 Samuel 7:5-11 to refer to both temple and dynasty.⁹⁹ Barth likewise comments on this use of "οἶκ-" words and notes that Ephesians is using terminology derived from other temple passages, including the tower of Babel, construction of the first and second Jerusalem temples, prophetic visions and warnings related to building the temple, and others.¹⁰⁰ At the end of his discussion on 2:19-22, Thielman notes Paul transitions from the Church as the household of God in 2:19 to the house of God in 2:21-22.¹⁰¹

Paul thus ends chapters 1 and 2 in the very same way, by describing the Church as the place where God's glory will dwell. In chapter 1, the emphasis was on the glory of God first manifest in Christ being applied to the Church as His Body, which is being perfected and filled up with that same glory. In chapter 2, Paul makes another pass at the same glory theme, this time describing more clearly *how* Christ has been perfecting and filling up the temple by graciously creating a new humanity – that is, by creating peace – in order to unify Jews and non-Jews as part of God's plan to unify all things. Chapter 1 lays out the big picture view, that God is working in and through Christ to manifest His glory in the Church. Chapter 2 is more granular and shows that such glory in the Church comes about when the members of the Church are

discussion there about building up the Body. This connection makes clear references to the Body throughout Ephesians are indeed references to the temple.

⁹⁹ Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 60-61.

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *Ephesians*, 270.

¹⁰¹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 185.

properly ordered and fitted into place in the new edifice, the temple. This proper ordering, best described in terms of shalom, is how Paul describes the Church as the fitting dwelling place for God. As will be discussed in my next chapter, this connection between proper ordering and shalom goes back to Genesis 1 and permeates all of scripture in the same manner that temple theology does. The proper ordering of creation according to God's Word is how creation is made ready to be the dwelling place of God and thus experiences the blessings of heaven when God's glory is made manifest there. Here, it is important to see that the theme of glory in Ephesians 1 is reiterated in Ephesians 2 in a more granular way in terms of the theme of peace. Ephesians 3 connects both themes to the importance of believers properly receiving the Word in a manner that enables the building up of the temple so it experiences peace and manifests God's glory. I have called that proper receipt of God's Word Paul's notion of dialogue, and it is the subject of Ephesians 4–6, brilliantly set up by and derived from Ephesians 1-3.

Temple themes also play a prominent role in Paul's prayer in 3:14-19 and the doxology in 3:20-21. The prayer is that "according to the riches of God's glory," the power of the Spirit may strengthen the Church in order to enable it to take part in God's plan to fill the Church with the fullness of His presence. That strengthening enables them to carry out the good works God prepared for them to be their way of life (2:10),¹⁰² and Ephesians 4:1-16 makes clear those good works are aimed at helping to build up the Church.¹⁰³ The prayer is also that Christ will dwell in them (in their hearts) and that they may come to comprehend and know certain things

¹⁰² Commenting on Ephesians 2:10 and the notion that Christians have been created for good works, Barth notes Ephesians 4:7, 11-13, 15-16 will show that "completion of the work done in Christ includes not only the activity of God, Christ, and the Spirit but also the mission, conduct and action of the saints." Barth, *Ephesians*, 226-27.

¹⁰³ See especially Ephesians 4:12.

that will enable them to be filled with all of the fullness of God (3:17-20). The doxology ends chapter 3 in a climactic and suitable way, describing the power of the Spirit at work in the Church and referencing the goal of God's plan (1:9-10) to manifest His glory in the Church and in Christ forever (3:20-21). Caird summarizes it well when he comments on the doxology's inclusion of the Church as a fitting climax to the "doctrinal" section of the letter (i.e., Ephesians 1-3) "...which has declared that the glory of God, fully revealed in Jesus, must be appropriated by the whole church and displayed in its life and character for all the cosmos to see and in the end to share."¹⁰⁴

Like chapters 1 and 2, chapter 3 thus ends with a reference to God's glory being manifest in Christ and the Church, showing the importance of the temple to the entire first half of the letter. Temple themes summarize how God has blessed us, describing all that He has done in and through Christ to unite all things in heaven and earth in order to bring about the eschatological temple and fill up the Church and the cosmos with His glory. The command in Ephesians 1:3 to bless God as a response to how He has so richly blessed us is now ripe for understanding, and we are ready to see *how* we are to bless God. When Paul turns in chapter 4 to the proper response of the Church to God's temple-building activities, it would be extremely surprising if that response did *not* somehow revolve around the same temple themes. Of course, it does.

Ephesians 4:1-16 lays the groundwork for the rest of the letter, and temple themes are clearly central to that passage. Paul urges believers in 4:1 to live a life worthy of the Church's calling, and Lincoln helpfully contextualizes this admonition:

¹⁰⁴ Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 70.

They have been called into the new humanity out of Jews and Gentiles, into the new temple, the one body ... of the Church, and thus called to be part of God's purposes for cosmic unity. In exhorting to a way of life that corresponds to such a calling, this first verse provides a framework designed to ensure that what follows will not be seen as mere moral advice but as an appeal to the readers' experience of the theological heart of the gospel.¹⁰⁵

The Church's calling revolves around God's work to unify humanity and indeed all of creation to make the cosmos a suitable temple for God, and Paul signals that the exhortations to live a certain way of life that follow are premised on and framed by this theological reality standing at the heart of the Gospel itself.

Caird observes that the reference to Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8-10 was used at the Jewish feast of Pentecost which celebrated the giving of the law at Sinai. The reference in the liturgy was to Moses ascending up the mountain into God's presence to receive the law.¹⁰⁶ Thielman comments that the descent and ascent described in these verses is a way of emphasizing the reach of Christ to every corner of the universe in order to defeat the powers, subject them to His rule and order, and fill every corner of the universe with His glory.¹⁰⁷ O'Brien sees the emphasis of the passage on Christ's ascent and giving of gifts, and echoes Thielman on the notion that the goal of Christ's ascent to the highest places was so that He might fill all things.¹⁰⁸ The temple

¹⁰⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 235.

¹⁰⁶ Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 73-74.

¹⁰⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 272-73. He also cites Ephesians 1:23, showing the cosmic filling in that verse is in view in these, demonstrating cosmic salvation by means of defeating chaos and instilling proper order so that God may dwell throughout the universe.

¹⁰⁸ O'Brien sides with Thielman in seeing the reference to descent as referring to Christ's descent in the incarnation rather than the Spirit's descent at Pentecost, though he holds Christ's ascent and consequent giving of gifts is the main focus of the passage. O'Brien also sees the connection to Ephesians 1:23, which he cites as the goal of Christ's ascent to fill all things. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 296-97. Hoehner argues the merits of both sides, and while he sees much to be commended in Caird's view, he ultimately sides with Thielman and O'Brien, especially on the emphasis on the ascension and resulting giving of gifts. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 531-33. Even if the descent Paul had in view was the incarnation as seems most likely, the gifts He gave upon His ascent were clearly gifts of the Spirit, which itself refers to Pentecost and the presence of God among His people. Paul is setting up Ephesians 4:11-16

themes of chapters 1 – 3 are thus in clear view, and the emphasis on Christ’s ascent and the giving of gifts for the purpose of filling the cosmos with God’s glory aptly sets up Ephesians 4:11-16 where Paul elaborates on the details of those gifts and the nature of that filling process.

In Ephesians 4:11-16. O’Brien thus sees Christ setting out to accomplish the goal of filling all things by supplying the Church with the resources it needs to grow and perfect the Body.¹⁰⁹ Christ ascends to fill all things, and he does so by giving gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church in order that it may play its role in that work to fill the cosmos. After ascending, the Messiah is in a position to send the resources of heaven to His people on the earth, and He continues His ministry on the earth from His heavenly throne by involving the Church as His Body on the earth. Just as Christ manifested God’s glory as the incarnation of the Word, so too is the Church called to properly receive and incarnate the Word in order to manifest God’s glory on the earth.

In this light, we see that Ephesians 4:8-10, leading into 4:11-16, is not a mere aside but rather an important part of Paul’s temple-themed argument. In order to accomplish His temple-building work, Christ ascends to heaven and continues to provide heaven’s resources to the Church in order that it might take part in the temple-building project, building up the Body and manifesting God’s glory. Our calling to the worthy life is a calling to participate in Christ’s continuing earthly ministry as His Body, through which the Word and thus God’s glory may be manifested on the earth.

where he describes precisely how the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was likewise a temple moment connected to the giving of God’s Word to His people, all for the purpose of filling up the Church, and ultimately the cosmos, with God’s glory. On this point, see also Caird *Paul’s Letters*, 75.

¹⁰⁹ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 297.

Thus, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 4:11-16 are ministers of the Word who, when properly heeded by believers in a well-ordered dialogue, enable the Church to receive and embody the Word and thereby to manifest glory.¹¹⁰ It is in 4:13 where Paul makes clear that the individual members of the Church comprising Christ's Body are to be joined together in such a way that the Body manifests the fullness of God's glory, thus echoing 1:23.¹¹¹ It is not the individual members of the Body that are to grow into mature manhood, into the full stature of Christ. Instead, as 4:15-16 make clear, the "mature manhood" and the "stature of the fullness of Christ" mentioned in 4:13 refer to the *whole* Body's growth.¹¹² Individually, we grow in Christ so that together we can co-operate with Christ in building up the whole Body. As the whole Body grows, it is better able to manifest the glory of God, just as Christ did fully in his physical body when he walked the earth.

Christ's incarnation manifested God's fullness on the earth, making His glory evident to humanity. Paul is connecting Christ's incarnation to the life of the Church, teaching us that the Church is to serve as the image of God, manifesting the fullness and glory of God through a unified Body of Christ. What is also clear in Ephesians 4:13, 15-16 is that the sojourning Church does not *fully* manifest God's glory but is nonetheless to *strive* to do so under the direction and empowerment of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Much more will be said about this striving later, but

¹¹⁰ As O'Brien puts it, divine fullness will be experienced as each Christian utilizes his or her gifts. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 316.

¹¹¹ Several commentators note the connection between 1:23 and 4:13, with the latter being a reference to the former's notion of God's glory filling up the Church Body. Many also see the connections to 2:20-22, 3:19, and 4:10. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 297, 555-59; Caird, *Paul's Letters*, 49, 70, 76-77; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 149, 217, 296-7, 307, 313; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 116, 183, 238, 243-44, 273, 280; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 72-75, 77, 155, 214-15, 231, 248, 257, 261; Barth, *Ephesians*, 205, 209-10, 272-73, 316, 373-76, 490-91.

¹¹² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 74-75, 77, 256-57; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 317; Barth, *Ephesians*, 490-94.

the key point here is that the Church properly functions as the image of God manifesting God's fullness and glory on the earth *only to the extent* it properly responds to the teaching and leadership of the triune God.¹¹³

In line with Perrin's notion that the Messiah established the temple in a new people, a new body politic, to be governed according to a new set of temple practices, we may say that the practical, ethical instruction 4:17-6:20 is best described as Paul expounding upon the practices which are fitting for the new temple. I will discuss this topic briefly below and then say much more about it in chapter 5 of this work. Here, I will only make a few brief comments about a few of the verses in this ethical section, to complete the task of showing how temple themes run throughout Ephesians and drive its argument.

In Ephesians 4:17-24, Paul emphasizes a life lived according to the glorious light of God rather than in darkness. Having a darkened understanding comes from being alienated from the life of God. It is God's presence, the manifestation of His glory and its shining light, that reveals truth and enlightens humanity.¹¹⁴ Those who are alienated from God, who do not live in proximity to God's presence because they are not part of His household (Ephesians 2:12, 19), cannot see His glory, much less receive His Word and walk according to it. Temple practices require believers to put off their old selves, their old identities, their old way of life shaped by distance from God's presence and the darkness which comes from being distant from God's glory. Instead, they are to put on the new self, the new body politic created by the Messiah who

¹¹³ The Father speaks through the Word, the Son, and the Church is empowered and equipped to receive the Word by the Spirit.

¹¹⁴ Allen Verhey and Joseph Harvard, *Ephesians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 201. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 200, 202

was Himself a temple and the true image of God manifesting God's glory when He walked the earth and who has now created the Church, His Body, according to the true image of God so that it may likewise manifest God's glory.

Ephesians 4:25-32 consists entirely of ethical instruction which is *social* in nature, indicating it is aimed at building up the Body to maturity.¹¹⁵ The instruction not to grieve the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4:30 is best seen as a generalized summary statement encapsulating the prior instructions, casting the entire section in terms of the Spirit's presence and work within the Church.¹¹⁶ As Ephesians 5:1-5 tells us, we are to imitate God and His love for us, making our lives living sacrifices as we work on behalf of the Body rather than live for gratification of our own mortal bodies. Ephesians 5:8-14 says we have been brought out of darkness and therefore must live as children of light, manifesting God's glory as Christ shines on us, a reference to filling us with God's glory.¹¹⁷ Ephesians 5:15-17 says we are to live as wise people who understand what the will of the Lord is, which is a reference to the formerly hidden mystery of God's will now made known to us, God's plan to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ in order to fill the Church and ultimately the cosmos with glory.¹¹⁸

Ephesians 5:18-21 provide a series of related commands that serve to summarize the temple practices. Ephesians 5:18 is the overarching command,¹¹⁹ summarizing our calling by

¹¹⁵ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 334-36; Barth, *Ephesians*, 548.

¹¹⁶ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 345-47; Barth, *Ephesians*, 548-50

¹¹⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 367; Barth, *Ephesians*, 585-89; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 386-87

¹¹⁸ Ephesians 1:9-10, 23.

¹¹⁹ Hoehner states that the five participles in 5:19-21 are dependent on the command to be filled by the Spirit in 5:18 and are best seen as participles of result indicating the visible manifestation of being filled by the Spirit, perhaps even in progression. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 706. Lincoln says the command to be filled by the Spirit "determines the rest of the passage" consisting of the five following participles. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 338, 345.

telling us to be filled by the Holy Spirit and thus to *be* the temple.¹²⁰ The commands that follow fill out the meaning of this command by showing just how we are to accomplish it, and they lead to the final command in Ephesians 5:21 which summarizes them all.¹²¹ The command to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ is a summary of *how* to be the temple, capturing all of the temple practices in a single, pithy statement. We mature the Body and build up the temple precisely by mutually submitting to one another as our act of reverence and ultimate service and submission to Christ, thereby taking part in His ongoing ministry to unite all things in order to build the eschatological temple. In other words, we take up the practices befitting¹²² our calling to be the temple. These fitting practices, which are best summarized as mutual submission out of reverence for Christ, comprise Paul's notion of ecumenical dialogue as I have claimed earlier. The connection is mentioned here and will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter 5 of this work.

O'Brien notes the same dependence of the participles in 5:19-21 on the command in 5:18, but he makes clear that 5:18 plays a key role in chapters 4-6. It brings to a conclusion the long series of exhortations that began in 4:17 and leads into the participles in 5:19-21 and the more specific instructions in 5:22-6:9. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 386-88.

¹²⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 702-05. In light of everything Paul has said before in Ephesians regarding the manifestation of God's glory in the Church being central to its calling and the role the Spirit plays in guiding and empowering the Church to fulfill its calling, it is obvious that the command here to be filled by the Spirit serves as a summary command of that calling. Simply put, because we will one day be a completed heavenly temple, Paul calls us to strive to be that temple today.

¹²¹ Hoehner states it is a fitting conclusion to the series of participles (commands) flowing from the initial command to be filled by the Spirit. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 716. Lincoln likewise recognizes that the command in 5:18 produces the results in the following participles and that the command in 5:21 completes the thought of 5:18-20, noting that if believers are filled with the Spirit, this should manifest in mutual submission. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 345, 352, 365. O'Brien agrees that all five participles following the command in 5:18 modify that command and cites Snodgrass for the notion that the household code in 5:22-6:9 contains specific instances of submission within the Body. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 388. I have gone further and argued in earlier chapters that mutual submission is a summary of all of the practices of the worthy life.

¹²² What I am calling temple practices in this chapter (following Perrin's lead) I have also called fitting practices in prior chapters. They are one and the same, and the characterization here as temple practices is appropriate and best whenever temple theology is being emphasized, as here.

Ephesians 5:21 also serves as a pivot and introduction to the household code contained in Ephesians 5:22-6:9.¹²³ Paul's instruction in these verses is aimed at showing how temple practices are not merely for the public sphere when the Church gathers together in worship or conducts its ministry. Instead, the entirety of believers' lives must be transformed. Our calling to be the temple also has implications for life in the home.

Ephesians 6:10-20 makes clear that the forces of darkness and chaos at work in the cosmos must still be subdued by the ongoing ministry of Christ to properly order the world in such a way that God may dwell fully in every part of it. The Church will continue to be attacked during the ongoing temple-building project. The promise in this section is that the full armor of God is available to believers in order that they may remain standing despite the ongoing attacks. As Ephesians 1:3 tells us, God has blessed those in Christ with every spiritual blessing of heaven. The ascended Christ sitting on His throne in heaven has given us access to heaven,¹²⁴ reconciled us to God and to one another and made us to enjoy heaven's own peace,¹²⁵ made us a new creation,¹²⁶ made us living stones in the new temple and members of His Body,¹²⁷ organized us into a functioning Body with a noble calling and all of the necessary gifts of the Spirit to enable us to take part in His ongoing ministry,¹²⁸ and given us ongoing instruction in the form of

¹²³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 719-20; Barth, *Ephesians*, 608-09; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 352.

¹²⁴ Ephesians 2:6

¹²⁵ Ephesians 2:5, 14-16.

¹²⁶ Ephesians 2:10, 15.

¹²⁷ Ephesians 1:23, 2:20-22, 3:19-21, 4:15-16.

¹²⁸ Ephesians 4:1-16.

new temple practices to guide us as we walk the worthy walk.¹²⁹ In this final section of instruction, Paul is now rousing the Church to stand strong as the Body of Christ and as the temple by encouraging us with yet another blessing from heaven, the full armor of God as we seek to build up the temple and manifest God's glory. Though we are a mobile Body, the imagery here is to remain standing and to withstand all attacks while building our temple. The temple can move, and its members may suffer greatly, but it will not be knocked over. With all of these heavenly blessings, we are fully equipped to stand firm. The eschatological temple will never be destroyed.

3.4 Temple Theology and Ecumenism

Beale's own concluding remarks on the very last page of his book regarding the main point of his book display the ecumenical importance of a proper understanding of temple theology:

[O]ur task as the covenant community, the church is to be God's temple, so filled with his glorious presence that we expand and fill the earth with that presence until God finally accomplishes the goal completely at the end of time! This is our common mission. May the church of the twenty-first century unite in order to attain this goal.¹³⁰

A proper understanding of the importance of the temple to God's work in salvation history leaves one incapable of any other conclusion. As I have attempted to show in this chapter, Ephesians is primarily about the nature and importance of the temple to the Church's own understanding and *how* to respond to God's continued temple-building work in order that we might be filled with God's glory. Whether members of the Church recognize it or not, the

¹²⁹ Ephesians 4:17-6:9.

¹³⁰ Beale, *Temple*, 402.

Church is the temple of God. Paul urges Christians to understand this, make it central to our identities, and then act accordingly.

3.4.1 Temple Practices

The temple and ethics are inseparable, with the latter flowing out of the nature and mission of the former. Perrin has shown Jesus' own ethical teachings are best understood this way. It was central to His identity as the temple, and He made it central to the ethic He established in the temple society, the body politic, the Church which He established. Paul understood this when he wrote Ephesians – the entire structure of the letter follows this very logic.

When Jesus took on flesh and walked the earth, He was the true image of God, manifesting God's glory in its fullness in His physical body wherever he walked. In Ephesians, Paul unpacks these Christological truths to show how they apply to the Church and inform its faithful response to Christ. Specifically, because of the work of Christ, the Church is His Body and therefore the true image of God, manifesting God's glory wherever it exists. Paul is clear however that this application of Christology to the life of the Church is true now only in an incomplete way. The sojourning Church is on the path to perfection, a perfection that consists in manifesting the glory of God fully and perfectly.¹³¹ This truth is the very essence of the Church's calling, "the calling to which it has been called."¹³² Yet, the Church currently manifests God's glory only in an imperfect way.

¹³¹ Barth, *Ephesians*, 490-94.

¹³² Paraphrasing Ephesians 4:1.

Understanding these central truths about the nature and destiny of the sojourning Church, especially in terms of the true nature and ministry of Christ during His earthly life, is crucial to the Church's self-understanding if it is to live a life worthy of its calling. Though currently in a state of imperfection, the Church nonetheless strives to manifest God's glory as perfectly as possible, to be a true image of God in the Church Body just as Christ was in His own body. So, the Church must understand its own eschatological nature and destiny, in light of Christ's own nature and earthly ministry, in order that the Church may more worthily sojourn today in a manner fitting its eschatological reality.¹³³

While it is only by God's own power at work in the Church that it might manifest God's glory, the Church must nonetheless respond properly to God in order for that power to operate in the Church. The Church must *cooperate* with God, yielding to the guidance and participating in the work of Christ and the Spirit within its members, or else God will not act to manifest glory.¹³⁴ Paul therefore makes it clear that, while it is a foregone conclusion that the Church will be fully unified and perfected at the eschaton, the *sojourning* Church will only be unified and perfected *to the extent* it properly responds to the work of Christ. The proper response of the

¹³³ This current imperfection is not disheartening because it is coupled with the certainty that the Church will one day be made perfect when Christ completes His work in the Church and brings it to its eternal calling at the eschaton. This is one of the three things Paul prays the Ephesians would come to understand in 1:18 (and again in 3:18) – it is the hope to which God has called the church.

¹³⁴ As an example of how this cooperative effort plays out in Ephesians, Barth emphasizes Christ's work in the cooperative effort when he states at (Barth 1974, 464) that the term "body" in Ephesians refers to the church as Christ's own self-manifestation even as he emphasizes the actions we are to take in that effort throughout his commentary. In a particularly telling passage, Barth sees the nature, mission, and destiny of the Body of Christ as so closely related in this cooperative effort that he can say at (Barth 1974, 452) "Ethics, ecclesiology, and eschatology, these seemingly so diverse and unrelated theological disciplines, are here so intimately combined and melted into one whole that it is practically impossible to discern where one begins and the other ends." Perhaps Barth's most instructive comments on the matter can be found in his treatment of the notion that we are a new creation created to do good works in Ephesians 2:10: "The Spirit of God...does not take control over man in such a fashion that men are manipulated like puppets on strings, but he activates man and makes him a responsive partner of God's covenant." Barth, *Ephesians*, 251.

Church is critical – we, the Body of Christ, are co-agents with Christ in seeking to manifest God’s glory in human flesh on the earth. God has seen fit to involve those who are in Christ in this project and His ongoing work.

The Church’s proper response to live the worthy life therefore involves taking up a certain set of practices befitting the Church’s heavenly calling, a set of practices that revolve around utilizing the gifts of the Spirit in the manner instructed by Christ in order to properly receive the Word and thereby to manifest the glory of God. This is precisely how we cooperate with God in His temple-building activity, by taking up the practices of the Spirit and the Word as our way of life. We do not seek to build the temple by our own power or by our own rational thoughts; instead, it is by the power of the Spirit according to the Word of God. Because God has graciously invited us into that work, we have the privilege of working hard to build the temple, but it is still God who does the heavy lifting. We are menial laborers and unrefined stones, while He is the architect, the foreman, the power, the purifier.

The Church’s problem today is that it is so fractured and so unaware of the centrality of its calling to take part in temple-building that a faithful response to its calling seems almost unimaginable. Our separately constructed traditions so deeply entrench us in separate identities that we fail to see our one true identity is as a single Church, a single Body of Christ, a heavenly temple tasked with only one thing – to take part in building itself up until it is fully mature and thus able to fully manifest God’s glory. If any of our doctrines and practices run counter to this goal, they are at best mistaken, no matter how dear they are to us, no matter how true they may seem. They should be abandoned and replaced with those doctrines and practices which help mobilize and equip the members of the Church to live out their calling to build the temple and manifest the fullness of God’s glory.

We are the temple, but we are a work in progress. Paul's message in Ephesians is best understood as instructing us to *be* the temple precisely by putting the temple practices into play, the renewed way of life inaugurated by the Messiah and comprised of those practices befitting of our calling. As will become clear in chapter 5 of this work, those practices revolve around properly receiving and manifesting the Word by the help of the Spirit, resulting increasingly and ultimately in full in true doctrines and practices formed and held by the unified Church. The Church, guided by Christ the Head, is supposed to continue God's work of manifesting the Word in fullness. The embodiment of God's Word which first took place in Jesus' own flesh happens again in the Body of Christ, not in each member individually but in the Body as a whole. At the eschaton, the Church will manifest God's Word fully and perfectly in what it does and says, but during history, it will do so only to a lesser extent, and that extent depends upon our response to God's calling on our lives. When and to the extent we properly hear and receive the Word by means of a proper response consisting of a particular set of practices, we thereby embody the Word.

The Church's proper response is therefore not simply to cling to precious doctrines or practices, no matter how dear they are nor how true they may seem. Instead, we are to focus on temple-building. Our proper response to the work of God is to receive the Word through a certain set of practices, so that we come to embody the Word and thereby manifest God's glory. If we are faithful to this calling, the result is that we will operate as one Body, thereby manifesting God's Word and reflect God's glory in all the earth.

3.4.2 That They May Be One

The sojourning Church's proper response to the blessings of God is a *corporate*¹³⁵ way of life worthy of the calling of the Church, thereby becoming more like the eschatological Church in its perfect unity in Christ, perfect maturity of the one new man, the perfect image of God. We are to become unified in Christ *concretely* and *visibly* to a greater and greater extent, knowing that this task will be fully realized at the eschaton.

As will be made clear in chapter 5 of this work, *to the extent* we are submitted to Christ and to one another out of reverence for Christ,¹³⁶ the Church gains strength and moves towards maturity (i.e., concrete unity in Christ), thereby manifesting God's glory more fully, and thus proclaiming God's wisdom, power, and love to the world. Whenever such unity is lacking, the Church's witness to the world is compromised, and nothing else the Church does can overcome its failure in this realm.¹³⁷

It is precisely here that the wisdom of the ecumenical movement's focus on John 17 is apparent. I see in Paul's teaching in Ephesians a full expression of Jesus's prayer in John 17.

¹³⁵ While some do think Paul is referring to individual Christians maturing, Hoehner is compelling in his argument that it is the maturation of the corporate body of believers in view in 4:13 and the surrounding context. See Hoener, *Ephesians*, 555-57. There he argues disunity is a sign of immaturity of the Body, and that even individual growth not shared with the Body leaves the Body lacking in maturity. See also (Hoehner 2002, 561) where Hoehner cites Ernest Best for the notion that individualism may be a sign of childishness and unity a sign of maturity. When the Body grows to the point of maturity, it is a single unit comprised of many persons who are so unified that they are able to function in a coordinated way. So obedient to Christ are each of the members of the Church Body that it functions to manifest God's glory just as Christ's own flesh did when He walked the earth.

¹³⁶ Eph 5:21, 1:15.

¹³⁷ Those who proclaim a Gospel that does not include this notion of unity at the very center of it, proclaim a deficient and unbiblical Gospel and fool themselves into thinking they are proclaiming light to the world. It is only by the manifestation of God's glory that God's light shines in the world, and such manifestation of God's glory only occurs when and to the extent the Church is unified.

The parts of Jesus's prayer to the Father having to do with glory are illuminating in this regard and an apt summary and application of the themes of this chapter:

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world ... All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one...I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me." John 17:4-6, 10-11, 20-23 ESV

In John 17, we see the same themes as in John 1 and the other passages from Colossians and Ephesians quoted above. John 1 says Jesus is the light of men, the true light which gives light to everyone and which has come into the world.¹³⁸ So, when John says in 1:14 that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and that we have seen His glory, which is the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, John is expressly tying the notion of true light with the notion of glory. When Jesus the Word took on flesh, He was the *visible* manifestation in this world of God's *glory*, enabling humanity to see the true light. Jesus's prayer in John 17 is that the Church, Jesus's second embodiment on the earth, would continue to shine forth the glory of God to the world. The Church is Jesus's Body not merely in some sort of mystical, invisible way but rather in the very mundane and concrete sense that we are visible flesh on the earth meant to manifest God's glory to humanity just as Jesus did when we walked the earth.

Our calling, according to Paul in Ephesians 4, is simple and clear – strive to attain greater and greater corporate maturity in Christ so that we function more and more as a single Body able

¹³⁸ John 1:5, 9-10.

to clearly manifest God's glory, just as Christ did when He walked the earth. We should not be surprised, then, when Paul ends Ephesians with a similar concrete expression of this calling. In Ephesians 6:10-17, Paul expresses the sojourning Church's mission with an analogy to soldiers preparing for battle. This is a tangible, memorable way to end the epistle and stir those in Christ to action, giving us a mental image by which to remember the central lessons of Ephesians. We stand *together*, equipped and taught by God, organized by Christ our King, in a disciplined, orderly manner. We are united, functioning as a single, coordinated Body under the direction of Christ, to fulfill our mission to manifest God's glory to the world.

3.4.3 Forcing Temple Allegiances

As Perrin tells us, part of Jesus' counter-temple efforts were aimed at calling his hearers to decision by forcing a crisis of temple allegiance. Would they remain allegiant to the Jerusalem temple, a perishable temple tainted by sin and thus profaned? Or, would they be allegiant to the heavenly, eschatological temple, a permanent temple being constructed by God and holy in every way?¹³⁹ When Jesus taught against the abuses perpetrated by the corrupted temple authorities, when he cleansed the Jerusalem temple, when he claimed it would be destroyed and replaced by another, Jesus was seeking to convince his hearers that the heavenly temple was being inaugurated in Him and His work. Would they be so committed to the Jerusalem temple that they might very well miss the coming of the heavenly temple and actively work against it?

A very similar question must be asked today of the leaders and laity of our contemporary churches. Are they so committed to their own churches that they might very well be blind to the

¹³⁹ Perrin, *Jesus*, 125

presence of the heavenly temple and be actively working against its continued construction? Those who would seek to rationalize the preservation of the separately constructed traditions, doctrines, and practices of their churches rather than seeking what may come out of simply obeying the command to *be* the temple and take part in Christ's continued ministry to build up the Church are no different than the first century temple elites who rejected the cornerstone of the new heavenly temple in order to preserve the existing earthly one.

Those who come to understand the centrality of the temple and Christ's ongoing temple building project in salvation history will not settle for anything less. This is precisely why Paul's prayers in chapters 1 and 3 of Ephesians focus on increased understanding of those things which are necessary to spur us on and empower us to take part in the upbuilding of the Body. Christ was the temple, and after He ascended, He incorporated His believers into Himself in order that they might become the temple. Allegiance to anything other than the heavenly temple and its ongoing construction is misplaced. Our allegiance must be to living a life worthy of our calling to *be* the temple by taking up practices befitting that temple. Paul's temple theology in Ephesians, when properly understood, forces a crisis of temple allegiances that should lead every faithful believer to long for a unified Church and commit to pursuing it faithfully until the day we all attain unity in Christ as a fully mature Body able to manifest God's glory in full.

Those who love and protect their denominational churches without regard to or even at the expense of building up the eschatological Church prove themselves to be corporate Adams who fail at the ultimate goal of building up the temple. They are choosing earthly temples over the heavenly one.

CHAPTER 4

GOSPEL OF PEACE

As I argued in the last chapter, God's design for the Church is that it would function as the true image of God, as the heavenly temple being filled up with the Holy Spirit so that it manifests God's glory on the earth. The Church is only able to do so when it is properly ordered according to the blueprint God has for it. When Paul talks about the Church as the body being built up, the bride being purified, the temple being constructed, all of these metaphors refer to the idea of the Church being formed into a properly ordered entity capable of carrying out its goal.

Paul refers to this proper ordering as peace and has much to say about it. While it is not possible here to discuss in a comprehensive way Paul's notion of peace in Ephesians, much less in all of his writings, neither is it necessary to do so. Instead a broad overview of the content of his notion of peace and its centrality to Ephesians will suffice. As will become clear, Paul has in view the notion that peace among the members of the Church is the focus of Christ's ministry, it is *how* he makes us the temple, the means by which the Church is able to fulfill its mission to manifest God's glory on the earth, and the content of our salvation.

In this chapter, I will attempt to unpack Paul's vision of peace in Ephesians and, in the end, demonstrate the deep connection he makes between that vision of peace and what I have called Paul's notion of (ecumenical) dialogue. As I stated in chapter 1, that connection between peace and dialogue can be clearly seen in Ephesians 4:13, which explicitly links the proper social ordering of the Church to its progress towards the "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the

Son of God.” The verse shows a causal connection between the proper social ordering of Christians and their ability to develop and articulate the doctrines of the Christian faith in a way they can all agree upon.

Paul elaborates on the nature of that proper social ordering in terms of certain practices comprising a life worthy of the calling to which all Christians have been called (Eph. 4:1). In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul lays out his vision of peace as the proper ordering of all created things under the Headship of Christ. Paul then turns in the next three chapters to describe the way of life worthy of that vision of peace. That way of life consists of certain practices that, together, are best summarized as a life of mutual submission under the headship of Christ (Eph. 5:21), in order that the Church might be the temple (Ephesians 5:18) and thereby manifest God’s glory to the earth.

Understanding that Paul is describing the “worthy life” as those particular practices comprising a life of mutual submission helps make clear the deep implications of Ephesians 4:13 for Christian ecumenism. The life of mutual submission includes each member of the Body of Christ playing its proper role under Christ the Head so that the universal church might attain the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:15-16). Paul’s argument in Ephesians 4:13 is that as each member of the Body of Christ does its proper part to live the worthy life, one of the results will be that the Body of Christ will attain “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”

After a brief look at the concept of peace in the Old Testament, I will turn to Paul’s use and development of the concept of peace in Ephesians in light of his use of temple theology and his driving concern that the Church walk worthily of its calling. This in turn will enable us to see that temple and peace themes are deeply connected to and rooted in creation theology, thereby showing them to be central to God’s purpose for creation itself. We are thus able to perceive

Paul's claim in Ephesians 1:9-10 that God's plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ is not merely a forward-looking claim but rather a claim about all of salvation history going back to the first chapters of Genesis. In other words, we are able to see that Paul's message in Ephesians is intended to unpack salvation history in terms of the trajectory set forth from the beginning for all of creation and humanity's role within it.

Because Ephesians unpacks all of salvation history in terms of the temple, peace, and dialogue, we cannot deny the centrality of those themes to the Christian faith. I will close the chapter by showing the Church's call to peacemaking describes the worthy life and fills in the details of what that life looks like in terms of the temple and peace, thus setting the stage for the next chapter on Paul's notion of dialogue.

4.1 Conceptions of Peace in the Old Testament

To understand the nature and role of peace in Ephesians, it is helpful first to get a sense of the usage of the word in the Old Testament. As I made clear in the last chapter, Paul drew heavily on temple theology in the Old Testament, and we should expect the same for his conception of peace. The evidence bears this expectation out. This section will briefly examine peace in the Old Testament in its varied uses in order to discern the richness of that term and the likely themes Paul incorporates into his own use of peace in Ephesians.

Underlying the notion of peace in the Old Testament is a concept that was widespread in the Ancient Near Eastern world, the notion of order versus chaos at work in the universe. When chaos reigns, death and destruction follow, but when things are properly ordered, life can flourish. While these ideas may be somewhat foreign to most modern ears, they comprised the basic metaphysical assumptions that reigned throughout the period the Old Testament was

written.¹ As Blenkinsopp observes, “The continual re-emergence and re-assertion of forces antithetic to the good creation is without a doubt the major theme of Genesis 1-11, and no theology of creation can afford to leave it out of account.”² Commenting on Genesis 1, he says creation is conceived of as “the production out of chaos of an ordered, livable environment for the human race” and “the holding in check of life-threatening forces – chaos, darkness, the storm wind.”³ The passage describes the created world as “the fragility of order” endangered by “the persistent threat of disorder and chaos, physical and moral.”⁴ The Creator therefore both originates and maintains the created order, and creation is an ongoing event not merely an initial act bringing the cosmos into existence.⁵

God’s creative activity continues until the eschaton when His ultimate purpose for the created world is realized. I already mentioned this idea in the last chapter, where I sought to show that all of creation is being perfected so that it might be the dwelling place of God in His fullness. Here the point is to make the connection between the temple and the idea that God’s creative activity is best conceived of as bringing the creation into proper order, which will in turn enable a clear demonstration of the eschatological temple’s connection to the concept of peace. In this vein, Anderson tells us the eschatological orientation of God’s creative activity is already

¹ Bernhard Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1998), 171. The study notes for Genesis 1:2 contained in the Jewish Study Bible lend support to this idea. In the Ancient Near East, they observe, the opposite of the created order was not ‘nothing’ as modern people tend to hold but rather “an active, malevolent force we can best term ‘chaos’”. Moreover, the highest praise one could ascribe to a deity was to claim the deity had subdued chaos. *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin, Marc Brettler, and Michael Fishbane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 13.

² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Recreation* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 18.

³ Blenkinsopp, *Creation*, 31.

⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Creation*, 32.

⁵ Anderson, *Creation*, 189-90.

implicit in the first chapter of Genesis and that the Bible portrays the consummation of history as the new creation.⁶ Likewise, “As God put down the powers of chaos at the beginning, so he will conquer the powers opposed to his reign at the end.”⁷

As will become clear later in this chapter, the concept of creation as God bringing order out of chaos also undergirds the concept of peace as used throughout the Bible, and both concepts are tied to the idea that God instills such order by means of His Word. Peace is a rich concept with a variety of meanings, all of which are tied to a sense of wholeness or perfection. More than the mere absence of war or an internal state of calm, it denotes general well-being in the widest sense, and it is tied to salvation and eschatological expectations that all things will ultimately be made right in creation. It is also primarily a relational concept and presupposes the overcoming of alienation, resulting in unity and the benefits of a harmonious society, including good health, prosperity, calm, and enjoyment of the goods of this earth and communion with God.⁸

Ultimately, the presence of God and His active participation in the well-being and prosperity of His people came to be the distinctive elements of the peace given by God.⁹ God’s work to makes things new – a creative activity – is *how* God brings peace to His people. Creation is tied to peace in the sense that the former produces the latter.

⁶ Anderson, *Creation*, 110-11, 114.

⁷ Anderson, *Creation*, 137.

⁸ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 193; Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 140; Gerardo Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 186.

⁹ Zampaglione, *Idea*, 186.

Peace also came to be seen as the highest good to which humans could aspire and the reward for all wise action. This connection to humanity's wise action is not simply an afterthought or an implication of God's peace but rather directly tied to the fact that God's Wisdom is at the center of His creative activity. As Anderson notes, Proverbs 8 shows that Wisdom was older than the primeval waters of chaos and participated in the successive works of creation, including assigning boundaries to the chaotic waters.¹⁰ Barth is particularly helpful on this point, telling us Wisdom is very often identified with or mentioned in conjunction with the power of the Holy Spirit, became a synonym for God's law, was the architect of God in original creation, and is the only trustworthy teacher and savior of humanity.¹¹ It is not surprising then to see Wisdom and God's Word often being connected, particularly when both are ascribed to Christ. John's use of *λόγος* and its many connotations in the opening chapter of his gospel captures the close connection between God's Word and Wisdom at work ordering creation.¹²

We should not be surprised then when we see God's Word at work to order His people in such a way that they experience the flourishing of life. In Genesis 1, God produced life-giving order out of the formless and void earth by simply speaking it into existence. He formed Israel as a nation and a people by giving His Torah, His Word, at Sinai. When Jesus, the incarnate Word, created one new humanity out of Jews and Gentiles in Christ and established peace by

¹⁰ Anderson, *Creation*, 73.

¹¹ Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 1-3 and 4-6*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 119.

¹² Blenkinsopp tells us the earliest Christian writings demonstrate the Jewish concept of the pre-existent Wisdom and her role in creation, therefore preparing the way for the Christ to be identified as the pre-existent Word and Wisdom. He also states that Christ is the full expression of God's Wisdom. Blenkinsopp, *Creation*, 51, 185.

means of His blood,¹³ we should see the same creative activity. God graciously gives us the life of heaven by ordering us according to His Word. The rest of this chapter fleshes this concept out in terms of Paul's use of peace in Ephesians, showing his message is directly in line with this rich tradition.

4.2 Gospel of Peace

The concept of peace is so central to the theology of Ephesians that Paul refers to the Gospel itself as the Gospel of Peace in 6:15 and states that Christ came preaching peace in 2:17. He also says that Christ is our peace in 2:14, clearly identifying the concept of peace directly with Christ and His mission. I have already noted the giant chiasmus created by Paul's juxtaposition of grace and peace at the beginning of the letter and peace and grace at the end. A brief look at what prominent commentators have said about peace in Ephesians reveals why it is so central to the letter's message.

According to Barth, Ephesians holds the view that "one new social order called 'peace' ... is the content of the gospel" and states further that the work of God to save us consists not in the salvation of individual souls but in the union of two formerly divided enemies through the creation of one new humanity out of the two.¹⁴ He argues further that grace and peace are both

¹³ Ephesians 2:13-17.

¹⁴ Barth, *Ephesians*, 44f. Barth notes that many believe this notion of the Gospel sets Ephesians apart as non-Pauline. He contrasts this notion with the long-standing understanding of Romans as describing the Gospel in terms of the revelation of God's righteousness, not peace. However, the two articulations of the Gospel are not necessarily incompatible, and a better understanding of each enables us to see the same content is being described differently in different contexts for different purposes. Thus, we conceive of God's righteousness as God being faithful to humanity and the covenant, and at the same time see the creation of peace as precisely *how* God acted faithfully. In other words, God is said to have acted faithfully because He created peace. In this sense, we can see that Ephesians brings out the social aspect of righteousness, and only the narrowest understandings of the nature of righteousness in Romans and the other Pauline letters would preclude us from saying otherwise. Indeed, Barth cites the need to rework Paul's notion of justification in a more social way given that Galatians and Romans, among other Pauline letters, have been interpreted in terms of a tradition of individual salvation harkening back to Augustine,

corporate in nature in Paul's thinking, stating that grace involves God unilaterally incorporating Gentiles into His people and that peace is an emphatically social concept.¹⁵ Salvation is not merely the rescue of individual souls but rather has a corporate dimension – those in Christ are saved by their incorporation together into the Messiah and His one new Body.¹⁶

Commenting on 1:9-10, O'Brien says it is the climax of 1:3-15 and summarizes the whole message of Ephesians as "cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ" and "bringing all things together in unity."¹⁷ Christ's reconciliation is of individuals to God and to one another, along with reconciliation of heaven and earth. Lincoln observes that salvation is described in terms of reconciliation in 2:14-18 and leads to ecclesiology in 2:19-22, with the entire passage being filled with a rich variety of images of the Church. Moreover, the Church is the new creation, which replaces the older order and its divided humanity with a new community in which reconciliation and unity exist among humanity, with God, and between heaven and earth.¹⁸ Peace is the word used to summarize Christ's work to accomplish this reconciliation and resulting unity, and it is said to have both vertical and social or horizontal dimensions.¹⁹ O'Brien helpfully summarizes the point:

The peace which Yahweh's messenger brings deals with both vertical and horizontal relationships. This is precisely the focus of Ephesians 2:14-18, where God's Messiah by

despite the fact that Paul's primary concerns in those two letters, as elsewhere, is the inclusion of the Gentiles in the one new social group under Christ. See (Barth 1974, 45-49).

¹⁵ Barth, *Ephesians*, 74-75. Cf. Barth, *Ephesians*, 90-92, 266; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xci,

¹⁶ Barth, *Ephesians*, 311.

¹⁷ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 58f.

¹⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 162. Barth states that the pacification accomplished by Christ in the forming of one new humanity out of the two is an act of creation, and that Christ, who was the mediator of the first creation likewise performs and completes this second creation. Barth, *Ephesians*, 308. God's peacemaking is an act of creation.

¹⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xcii, 161; Barth, *Ephesians*, 176, 267, 275, 278.

his death makes peace: he destroys the alienation between Jew and Gentile, creates in himself one new humanity out of the two, and in this body reconciles them both to God (vv. 15-16).²⁰

These observations enable us to begin to see Paul's vision of peace as a creative work of God by which He restores these vertical and horizontal relationships to their proper, life-giving order.

The heavenly life is available on earth when and to the extent such peace exists.

The peace extant in the new social entity was created by Christ by his blood (2:13) and in His flesh (2:14, 16), undoubtedly contributing to Paul's statement that Christ *is* our peace (2:14). O'Brien notes this identification of Christ with peace is surprising at first blush, though the well-known Old Testament messianic title "Prince of Peace" is likely in Paul's mind and provides a precedent for describing peace in personal terms.²¹ Barth likewise notes Old Testament precedents for the notion that the Messiah is identified in his person with peace, citing Isaiah 9:5-6, Zechariah 9:10 and Micah 5:4-5.²² He observes that Christ is being praised in Ephesians 2 not because of the peace He brings to individual souls but rather because of the social and political implications of creating the one new humanity in Himself, the "Messianic peace" which is a bond of unity.²³ He goes on to conclude that 2:14-18 is a hymn praising "the eternal, personal union of Christ and peace" and "To say Christ—that is to say peace."²⁴ Lincoln likewise observes that Christ is not only a peacemaker or a mere bringer of peace but rather peace in His

²⁰ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 478.

²¹ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 194. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 140.

²² Barth, *Ephesians*, 261.

²³ Barth, *Ephesians*, 262.

²⁴ Barth, *Ephesians*, 298.

person, noting that His whole ministry climaxing in His sacrificial death amounts to a proclamation of the Gospel of Peace.²⁵

We must also note that the cosmic salvation in view in Ephesians is thoroughly political in nature. Barth tells us that the language used in Ephesians 2:14-16 is taken from the world of politics.²⁶ Likewise, Verhey and Harvard observe the language used in Ephesians demonstrates its insistence that the Gospel is politically relevant.²⁷ They also summarize the context and occasion of Ephesians in terms of the new humanity and peace created in Christ, stating Ephesians proclaims the good news of the *Pax Christi* as against the *Pax Romana* declared by Caesar.²⁸ Though many Christians are not accustomed to speaking of Christ's work as having political implications, the very titles we use for Him (including Lord, Messiah, Christ, King, and in our context Prince of Peace) themselves cry out for attention to those political implications.

If we take our cue from Paul and see Christ *as* peace, we will perhaps be better attuned to the social and political implications of the Gospel of Peace proclaimed by Christ. If so, we will see that pursuit of visible unity is not optional, nor is it an afterthought. It is not wishful thinking or a mere future hope we wait for Christ to achieve at the eschaton. It is not unrelated to the content of the Gospel or to its proclamation. Instead, the pursuit of visible unity, of reconciliation with others in Christ, of peace, is so central to the Gospel and to the Church's calling that Paul calls Christ Himself peace and the good news of Christ the Gospel of Peace, and then he tells us to live a life worthy of that calling.

²⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 161.

²⁶ Barth, *Ephesians*, 278.

²⁷ Allen Verhey and Joseph Harvard, *Ephesians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 71.

²⁸ Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 30, 89-90, 191.

4.3 Ephesians As A Development of the Doctrine of Creation

As I stated above, Paul's claim in Ephesians 1:9-10 about God's plan for the fullness of time is a claim about all of salvation history going back to the first chapters of Genesis. His claim there is a sweeping statement about salvation history being focused on the unity of all things in Christ. Gunton makes a similar sweeping statement about salvation history stating that it is the way God maintains and restores creation's directedness to perfection.²⁹ Gunton also observes that creation theology can serve as a framework for cosmic, political and social order, as well as for ideas regarding the nature of salvation. Furthermore, he notes that Ephesians 1:10 places the mission of Christ in eschatological perspective and thus links creation to redemption, thereby showing that doctrines of creation are central to the outworking of other doctrines. More specifically, "theologies of the cosmic Christ ... are designed to bring out the meaning of Christ for the completion of that which was in the beginning."³⁰ Paul's message in Ephesians is intended to unpack salvation history in terms of the trajectory set forth for creation from the beginning.

Thus, when we understand that the perfection of creation at the eschaton is tied together with the unity of all things in heaven and earth in Christ, we see that Paul's statement is a claim about God's creative activity. Paul masterfully weaves together temple themes and peace themes in a way that brings the rich concepts together within the overall structure of creation theology.

²⁹ Collin Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 78.

³⁰ Gunton, *Christ*, 20, 23-24. In *The Triune Creator*, Gunton goes even further to state that "Christianity ... is a doctrine of creation whose ultimate perfecting is secured and guaranteed by the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the one who became part of the created order for the sake of its redemption." Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 40. One cannot help but see Ephesians is exemplifying this statement, and understanding the centrality of the doctrine of creation in this way is vital to understanding Paul's message in Ephesians.

The purpose of God's work in the cosmos is to bring it to perfection so that all things in heaven and earth can be joined together and properly ordered according to His Word, His Wisdom, such that the resulting unity is capable of manifesting the fullness of God's glory.

Temple and peace themes come together in the doctrine of creation precisely because they are part of that overarching concept. As this section will reveal, the theme of dialogue is also embedded in the doctrine of creation and likewise stems back to the early chapters of Genesis. Part of the proper ordering instilled in God's people when He created them is the formation of a well-ordered community in which they are to engage in a certain kind of dialogue in order to receive God's instruction. Thus, the Old Testament depicts salvation history through the recurring themes of God instilling peace as the proper ordering of all created things and of the proper response of God's people to the work God has done to create such life-giving order. That proper response includes certain epistemic practices that enable them to hear God's instruction and thereby maintain and increase the life-giving order God instilled in them.

A main goal of this section is to help show the same causal connection in the Old Testament between the worthy life and the intellectual life of God's people that I have asserted exists in Ephesians. The discussion here will ultimately help deepen and broaden our understanding of Paul's vision in Ephesians and help demonstrate the centrality of its themes of glory, peace, and dialogue to all of salvation history. Those themes have a long history in the Old Testament, and our understanding of the worthy life is greatly enhanced by a look back at the Old Testament with an eye towards them. We have already seen that temple and peace themes are embedded in creation theology and pervade the Old Testament. If we can also see Paul's dialogue themes there, we will be able to understand why Paul made all three themes so central to his message of Ephesians.

4.3.1 Torah, Peace, and Dialogue

I have already argued that the central themes of glory and peace figure prominently in the Old Testament, beginning in the opening chapters of Genesis. God is depicted there in His creative activity as bringing about life-giving order out of chaos. In this section, I will assert in a conclusory way that human beings were placed in a well-ordered community with each other and with God, a gift enabling them to grow in maturity and fulfill their duties as stewards of creation. All that can be accomplished here, and all that is needed, is to paint the picture of the well-ordered community in its horizontal and vertical relationships and how those relationships affect the community's ability to hear God's Word and respond appropriately. While the passages cited in this section certainly have more to teach us than what I assert here, they do help show the pattern and theme I wish to highlight. Namely, as a central part of God's creative work, God establishes His people in a well-ordered community and continues to instruct them through His Word, intending that they receive His Word together, His Torah or instruction, according to the type of communal dialogue He ordains for them.³¹

Describing the well-ordered community God created in the beginning, Genesis 2 depicts Adam and Eve existing in perfect communion with each other and with God. Though they are not fully mature, God has seen fit to respect the dignity of human beings and allow them to participate willingly in their maturation to full perfection, a yet-to-be-completed task in God's creative activity.³² Thus, while created in the image of God, in full communion with each other

³¹ I have already made this claim about the message of Ephesians. I am now making the claim that the same dynamic can be seen throughout salvation history and seeking to bolster it by showing how the texts cited can be interpreted as showing that dynamic. While much more would be necessary to establish this dynamic definitively, it is sufficient for my purposes here simply to show the plausibility of the claim in order to show how peace and dialogue are both connected to God's Word through the overarching structure of creation theology.

³² As Gunton notes, the Christian tradition has a range of views about the relationship between original creation, the Fall, and redemption. The first main view, held by the likes of Origen and Augustine, holds that

and God, and without sin, humanity is nonetheless created in an incomplete state in which they have the freedom and ability to participate in God's plan that they both help steward the earth and grow in maturity. Of course, they are also free not to participate in God's plan. If they do choose to participate, they are only able to do so with God's help, through receipt of His instruction. Thus, God's plan involves humanity being daily turned towards Him in perfect community in order to receive His instruction and thereby be moved towards maturity and perfection.³³

Being turned towards God as a well-knit community seeking to receive God's instruction was the initial design for humanity's proper response and relationship to their Creator. However, given the freedom to follow this plan or to create their own plan, Adam and Eve conspired to seek maturity by their own efforts. God's plan, based on His Wisdom and part of the life-giving order He originally created, is thus replaced with a humanly designed plan to acquire wisdom by their own reasoning, discerning good and evil for themselves (i.e., what is well ordered and life-giving and what is chaotic and leads to death).³⁴ The result of replacing God's ordering of affairs

redemption restores us to original perfection, and it assumes humanity was initially created as perfect. The second main idea, shaped by Hegelian and Darwinian influences, is that creation was not perfect in the beginning but, as a plant emerges from a seed, will one day emerge as perfect. The third view sees creation as that which God enables to exist in time and which is intended from the beginning to be perfected over time as God moves it to its eschatological end. In the third view, creation is not perfect in the beginning but rather a work of God designed to be completed at the end of time. In that view, sin derails the project by misdirecting it towards a different end, and redemption is putting it back on track so that it can, with God's help, be moved towards its eschatological perfection. The third view has support from the likes of Irenaeus and Gunton himself. Gunton, *Triune*, 11-12. I have adopted the third view based primarily on the message of Ephesians and the arguments set forth above in this chapter and the prior chapter on temple theology.

³³ Torah is, simply put, the process of God giving His Word, His law, His instruction to humanity when they are turned to face Him and seek to hear His instruction. The assertion I am making is that God gives His instruction not to individuals but rather to and through His people in community.

³⁴ Perhaps conspire is too strong of a word for the subtle dynamics, both social and psychological, that occur in Genesis 3. While much more could be said about the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" as it relates to this topic, it is here important to note the symbolism which the tree provides in the story – Adam and Eve chose to discern wisdom for themselves rather than to rely on God to provide it by His instruction.

with a humanly-constructed ordering is that chaos is allowed to surge, thereby threatening all of life itself.

Turning to the discernment of good and evil for themselves, Adam and Eve inaugurated an alternative way of life diametrically opposed to the divinely created way of life in which humanity is daily instructed by God and actively receives that instruction in community, what might be called a set of divinely ordained epistemic practices. The move was a turning from God to their own discernment, from God's path towards true maturity and perfection to their own, humanly-constructed path towards a humanly-constructed vision of maturity and perfection. The divine, life-giving ordering God daily offered to humanity was eschewed for a misguided and deleterious ordering constructed by immature beings, and humanity has continued down this path ever since. The consequences of substituting our own attempts to order the world in place of God's divinely authored way of ordering the world is that chaos is allowed to surge and life diminishes. While God's creative activity is life-giving, our creative activity is always something less than life-giving, unless of course it is fully instructed by and participates with God's continued creative activity.

Several important ideas are embedded in this analysis and stand in the background of Ephesians. First is the notion of order versus chaos as a way to understand God's creative activity, as described earlier in this chapter. God creates precisely by placing boundaries on the forces of chaos, thereby establishing spheres in which life can survive and flourish. When human beings reorder things according to faulty reasoning apart from God's instruction, the boundaries on those forces of chaos are changed and thus enabled to run amok.

Second is a more thorough understanding of sin, particularly as it relates to God's instruction and the proper use of reason to receive it. Sin is the opposite of Torah, as I have

described that concept above. Thus, sin is the act of *turning away from*³⁵ God and God's instruction and *turning to* humanity (i.e., to self or to one's own group) and to a humanly-constructed way of ordering our lives and practices. It is the act of substituting our own judgment for God's revealed Word. Sin is therefore best understood as an abuse of reason by means of overreliance on it.³⁶ The proper use of reason, always exercised in community, is to receive God's instruction and to determine how to implement it into our lives. We sin when we seek wisdom by our own efforts rather than relying on God daily to provide wisdom to us.

Third is the notion that human beings are created without flaw though not yet fully mature. Created in God's image and in perfect communion with each other and with God, Adam and Eve were placed in the perfect environment where they were to be matured through God's daily instruction. In preservation of their dignity as created in the image of God, Adam and Eve were to *freely* cooperate with God in their own maturation.

Fourth is the notion that the maturation of humanity is not an individual matter but rather a corporate one. God created humanity in communion not simply so that each person could benefit individually but rather so that the whole community could be perfected. The Triune God exists in perfect communion; humanity is invited into that communion by the pure love of God that pervades the essence of that communion and constitutes the very essence of God. That

³⁵ It is instructive to note that the literal meaning in the Old Testament of the verb שׁוּב, typically translated as "to repent," is to turn back or to return, in the sense of turning back or returning to God. It is the opposite of Torah, of being turned towards God for instruction.

³⁶ Gunton notes that the error of conceiving of the image of God as consisting in reason, though deeply rooted in every era of the Christian tradition, can be seen most clearly in the results of the Enlightenment and its current aftermath. To view the image of God in that manner amounts to an idolatrous worship of human capacity. Instead, when we see the image of God as consisting in right relationships with God, with one another, and with creation (i.e., properly ordered vertical and horizontal relationships), we are freed from the idolatrous view of reason and freed for patterns of relatedness that are towards life and not death. Gunton, *Christ*, 105-08.

invitation is not an addition of individuals into the communion but rather a perfected, unified humanity joining as a unit.

Fifth and finally, salvation involves turning humanity back to God, not merely as individuals but as a coordinated body politic, a well-ordered community, capable of hearing and receiving God's instruction (i.e., Torah) and thereby growing to maturity. Christ's saving activity is to turn us away from sin and back to God so that we can receive His life-giving instruction, instruction that, when followed, brings about a proper ordering that enables life to flourish – in a word, peace. Christ therefore restores human beings by incorporating them into His own Body where His Word dwells and is followed, thereby giving life to those in the Body and bringing life to all of creation. When the Church follows the instruction of Christ the Word, it functions as a well-ordered Body and thus exhibits peace. It is how the Church is filled up with the glory of the Creator and manifests God's glory.

Ephesians can be seen as an outworking of these ideas. God's life-giving order is established in the new humanity created in Christ Jesus, including the proper social ordering of those in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:1-10 tells us that God intervened to save us from the doomed, chaotic life apart from God (i.e., the life of sin and death) by incorporating us into Christ and the life of heaven under His reign as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:11-19 tells us this is the life of the one new Man, created by God as a means of giving life and saving us from chaos and death, the one new Man that signals the dawning of a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, Paul says we are a new creation, created in Christ Jesus for the good works God has prepared for our way of life, a way of life that helps breathe life and order back into the created

world.³⁷ These verses encapsulate the theological background upon which Paul draws in the second half of the letter when he fleshes out those good works and way of life and when he tells us how we are to order ourselves in order to receive God's instruction. Thus, Ephesians 4:11 tells us God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the one new humanity in order to instruct us in God's life-giving Word and turn us from reliance on our own reasoning and humanly constructed wisdom. The one new humanity, the Church, will become increasingly mature until it reaches the full stature of Christ, by the power of Christ at work in the members of His Body as they engage in the practices befitting the worthy life. This is a corporate endeavor and a corporate goal, that the whole Body of Christ would reach maturity by being formed into the image of Christ.

4.3.2 Gathering and Scattering

If we trace the themes from the prior section through key passages of scripture, we see another important feature of God's creative activity in salvation history: God gathers and scatters His people according to whether they choose to participate in His plan for them. This gathering and scattering theme figures prominently in the grand story of God's continued, creative activity in history to create a holy people under the lordship of the Messiah, manifesting glory, characterized by peace, and turned to God for instruction. The understanding of Ephesians offered in this work will then come into clearer view and will be seen as standing atop the long tradition for understanding God's relationship to humanity in the Old Testament.

³⁷ Ephesians 2:10 says that we should walk in the good works God prepared for us. Paul is clearly playing on the words for works and workmanship, cleverly telling us in a memorable rhetorical flourish that we are a new creation in the one new Man (Christ Himself), a workmanship of the Creator who created us to participate in the good works that re-create the heavens and the earth. Our whole way of life, if we are in Christ, is to cooperate with Him as he brings about a renewed heavens and earth, a heavens and earth marked by the tranquility of God's life-giving order.

The groundwork will thus be laid for the remaining chapters of this dissertation where I will discuss some of the many implications of this vision in Ephesians as it relates to current ecumenical efforts. As mentioned above, the worthy life should be understood, in part, in terms of the epistemic practices befitting those who are in Christ. The grand narrative of the Old Testament is, on the one hand, about the repetition of the mistake of Adam and Eve (i.e., reliance on human reason rather than on God's instruction) by various people in various contexts and, on the other hand, about how God is working through human history to create, in the corporate Body of the Messiah, the same life-giving peace Adam and Eve experienced in the garden before the Fall.

I have already mentioned Genesis 2 and 3 as depicting Adam and Eve in the first well-ordered community, turned to each other and to God for instruction and dwelling in the temple garden. When they doubted God and turned to their own reason to discern good and evil, they were expelled from the garden, and their community was marked by distrust both horizontally and vertically. Having been created by God as a holy gathering at the beginning, they were scattered, expelled from the garden temple and left with imperfect unity. The Temple of Babel story in Genesis 11:1-9 depicts humanity coming together in unity and building a temple for their own glory ("make a name for ourselves"). Their intentions were in direct defiance of God's command to spread out over the earth (Genesis 9:7), as further evidenced by their stated concern that they wanted to avoid being scattered over the earth (Genesis 11:4). They were attempting to gather themselves and build a temple by their own design, rather than following God's instruction. So, God scattered them over the face of the earth (Genesis 11:8), expelling them from their city and temple and confusing their language so they could not build up unity without Him and His instruction.

The rest of the Pentateuch tells the story of God creating His people, forming them by giving them His law at Sinai and providing detailed instructions for God's dwelling place (the tabernacle) and for holy living. They had been in captivity in Egypt, and God redeemed them by bringing them out of Egypt and creating a nation out of them, a nation to be governed by His Word. Jumping forward to the Babylonian captivity, after Israel ultimately failed to live according to His Word after many attempts by God to harken them back to faithfulness, God scattered them. He allowed them to be carried off into captivity and the temple to be destroyed. Of course, a second temple was built, but only during Roman captivity, and it was destroyed soon after it was built. When we get to the New Testament, God created a new people at Pentecost, overcoming their language and cultural barriers and making them the new temple. In stark contrast to the human attempt at unity at Babel, God's creation of the Church was the inauguration of the eschatological gathering of His people around the Messiah.

We have already seen that Ephesians 2 depicts both grace and peace in thoroughly social terms and as an act of creation by Christ. We have also seen that peace is the more robust description of that creative work, as it fleshes out God's gracious activity in light of the rich tradition of peace in the Old Testament. I have attempted in this chapter to show that rich tradition of peace conceives of it as the ordering of things according to God's Word and as an act of creation. Now, we are able to see that God's work to create peace is an act of gathering. Two groups who were formerly bitterly divided have become one new group, but this has only been accomplished by Christ gathering them up into His own Body and serving as Head of both. The Word became flesh for the purpose of bringing humanity to its proper ordering, vertically and horizontally. Looking again at Ephesians 1:9-10, we see Paul had this gathering in mind from

the beginning of his message when he described God's eternal plan as "gathering up all things" in Christ.³⁸

All of salvation history is aimed at this grand story of God gathering up all things in Christ. The story of salvation history, from beginning to end, needs to be seen from the viewpoint of this corporate dynamic. God gathers His people into a holy nation when they are turned to Him and to each other, properly ordered so as to receive his life-giving order through His instruction, thereby manifesting His glory. Ephesians must be seen in terms of this gathering and scattering theme if we are to understand its message. The unity given to the Church, its peace and its honor of being the temple, are all part of God's creative work to gather His people around Christ. The proper response of the Church is to take part in this corporate gathering by being turned to God and to one another, thereby living out the peace of Christ in its vertical and horizontal dimensions.

This notion of being turned to God and to one another is in many ways a description of the epistemic practices that are part of the Church's proper response to God's work in and through Christ, as will be made clear in the next chapter. Seeing this corporate turning to God in terms of certain epistemic practices is fruitful when juxtaposed with the alternative corporate dynamic of God scattering His people when they are turned away from Him and His instruction and turned instead to their own reasoning. God and His instruction lead to life-giving ordering

³⁸ Barth and Thielman have both observed this gathering theme as important to the traditional notion of peace in the Old Testament and to Paul's argument in Ephesians. Commenting on Ephesians 2:11-22, Barth notes that bringing together those who are far and those who are near is a reference to an assembly for worship and that the effect of Christ creating peace as described in 2:18 is that the nations come together with Jews to worship God. Barth, *Ephesians*, 312. Thielman likewise comments on Ephesians 2:17-18 as well as on Ephesians 3:1-7, noting that they echo Isaiah's concept of the proclamation of peace to those far and near as referring to the unification of Israel with all peoples in the worship of God. Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 158, 197.

of social relationships, otherwise known as peace. Reliance on human reasoning as a basis for ordering our lives leads to social fragmentation. The former is the way of Christ; the latter is the way of Adam.

This gathering and scattering dynamic is precisely why Ephesians is of paramount importance to the ecumenical life of the Church. When the Church fails to respond properly to God's instruction to be the temple, to manifest peace, to take part in the prescribed practices (including epistemic practices) which constitute our way of life, we can expect the Church to be divided. Whether this a judgement by God as Ephraim Radner claims³⁹ or simply a failure to take hold of and maintain the blessing of peace God has given the Church I will leave for others to decide. What is clear is that the Church can realize its intended, eschatological unity if and to the extent it properly responds to the Gospel. Rather than functioning in a manner that leads to scattering, the Church in every age must realize and take part in God's work to gather the Church around Christ as He works to bring about the creation's eschatological purpose.

4.3.3 Glory and Peace As Creation Themes

We are now in a position to see Ephesians as a development of the doctrine of creation. When the temple themes discussed in the last chapter are viewed together with the peace themes discussed in this chapter, this conclusion becomes apparent. Paul developed both temple and peace themes in Ephesians because both are central components of the creation theology he was working to develop in light of the mystery revealed in Christ. Paul understood creation as moving towards its eschatological goal of being put in perfect order so that God could dwell in it as His temple, and he understood Christ as moving all of creation towards that telos. To

³⁹ See Ephraim Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998).

articulate that mystery as revealed through Christ, Paul had to show how the whole story of salvation history could now be told in full, a story best told in terms of creation. Christianity is fundamentally about cosmic redemption by the Creator, with Christ and His Church playing prominent roles.

Thus, when Paul crafted his sermon in Ephesians, he began in chapter 1 with the broadest creation narrative about the cosmos being redeemed by Christ. He also described the Church's participation in that redemption in broad terms, describing its experience of the blessings of heaven and its role as Christ's Body, a second incarnation of the Word intended to manifest God's glory on the earth and ultimately the entire cosmos. Paul develops the doctrine of creation further in chapters 2 and 3 by describing how the Church came to be Christ's Body and then tying the temple and peace themes together. By binding Christians to Christ and one another, God created the Church for good works, created them as a new humanity, and organized them into a well-ordered community that would serve as the temple. Just as Christ's own flesh is depicted as the temple in chapter 1 and as peace in chapter 2, so too is the Church as Christ's new Body, the one new Man, because of its properly ordered vertical and horizontal bonds of peace and orderly placement as stones in the temple. Cosmic re-creation began when Christ became incarnate, and it continues to progress through His Body, the Church.

Paul thus develops his argument in Ephesians by recasting the temple theme from chapter 1 in a more granular way in chapters 2 and 3 in order to move towards application in chapters 4 through 6. As Paul moves towards application, he moves from more abstract theological statements to more concrete descriptions, from asserting that the Church is the temple to showing us *how* it has been made into the temple through Christ's work to create peace in the new body politic. Having gathered His people together in the one new humanity and properly ordered

them vertically and horizontally, Christ also gives them gifts of the Spirit to enable them to function as a single Body capable of manifesting the Word of God in all of its glory. Thus, peace is tied to social ordering under Christ, which in turn enables a coordinated Body to receive and manifest God's Word on the earth as the temple.

Paul's practical instruction in Ephesians 4-6 builds on this concept of peace by setting forth what I have called Paul's notion of naturally occurring dialogue. Paul thus describes certain practices and patterns of thought, particularly in contrast with certain worldly patterns of thought, that constitute a corporate way of life worthy of the peace Christ has already created within His own Body, a way of life that will effectively manifest the Word on the earth and thus embody God's glory on the earth. This corporate way of life is itself a naturally occurring dialogue, "spoken" in both word and deed, among those who live together in mutual trust and mutual submission under the rule of Christ because of the proper ordering of vertical and horizontal relationships that shape the Body.⁴⁰

4.4 Creation and Peacemaking

To enable a fuller discussion of the practices we are to take up to fulfill our calling to manifest glory and peace, we must understand a little more about the nature of peacemaking, particularly in the light of God's creative work in salvation history. If we understand the relationship between God's creative activity and our participation in it in terms of peacemaking,

⁴⁰ Guided by His Word and the gifts of the Holy Spirit under the Headship of Christ, this naturally occurring dialogue results in a holy and unified Body, thereby manifesting God's glory and peace to the world in a manner that reveals God's nature and plan for creation. My claim here is that Paul understood the natural sociological processes modern scholars have recently articulated in more detail. Moreover, Paul expressly intended to describe what would result among a body politic ruled by the Messiah according to God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than by merely human principles. He merely needed to observe God's gathering and scattering dynamic as it is related to hearing God and manifesting His Word in order to understand this blueprint for the Church.

we will then be in a better position to understand the practices constitutive of the worthy life. A very brief look at two scholars on the nature of peacemaking as it relates to creation will help drive home this point and enable us to connect peacemaking with mutual submission.

Gunton tells us that Christ's incarnation and passion are an expression of the love of the triune God "worked out in the structures of fallen time and space" by which God overcomes the creation's orientation to dissolution.⁴¹ The effect of this expression of love is a reordering of creation, and it requires "the One through whom all things were made entering the structures of fallen space and time in order to *recreate* – to reorder teleology, to direct again to perfection."⁴² Christ's work is aimed at new creation – the reordering of the cosmos so that it may progress towards its intended telos. Simply put, God's creative work is peacemaking, the reordering of things so that they are redirected and moved towards the perfection they were always intended to reach.

Yoder adds to this notion of the incarnation as new creation and peacemaking, saying Christ's life and death incarnated a message – a new state of things called "peace."⁴³ Concern for peace is part of God's purpose for all of eternity because God is by nature a reconciler and a maker of *shalom*.⁴⁴ Moreover, the creation of a new kind of community, of one new humanity, was the goal of God from all eternity.⁴⁵ The cross was how God overcame evil with good,⁴⁶ and

⁴¹ Gunton, *Christ*, 88.

⁴² Gunton, *Christ*, 90-91 (emphasis in original).

⁴³ John Yoder, *He Came Preaching Peace* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1985), 11.

⁴⁴ Yoder, *He Came*, 34.

⁴⁵ Yoder, *He Came*, 114.

⁴⁶ Yoder, *He Came*, 19.

it calls us to share with Jesus the path of incarnate love in the same manner.⁴⁷ Thus, we are to take part in God's ongoing peacemaking as a matter of ethics, politics, worship, doxology, and praise.⁴⁸ Though Yoder does not discuss creation per se in these passages, his language echoes the creation themes Gunton discusses by tying God's work through Christ to new creation, to peace, to God's activity to overcome evil with good. Moreover, we are to mimic God's incarnational love by taking part in His ongoing peacemaking project.

A brief summary of how the pieces fit together will serve as a fitting conclusion to this chapter and be helpful as a transition to the next. The purpose behind God's creative activity since the beginning is to bring all of creation to perfect order according to God's Word and Wisdom, thereby uniting heaven and earth and enabling God to dwell in creation in all of His fullness. Temple building is His purpose, and He accomplishes it the same way He creates everything, by ordering things according to His Word. In this way, peacemaking describes what God's temple-building project looks like. God is not only putting each created thing in proper order but also putting all relationships in proper order. Peacemaking is therefore central to God's plan to build the temple and the Church's role in that plan – peacemaking is *how* we build the temple. Paul's message in Ephesians is driven by this train of thought, moving from a general description of God's plan to unite all things in Christ as part of His temple-building project to a description of how God accomplishes this process through peacemaking. He then moves to the ethical portion of His sermon to describe how the Church is to participate in that peacemaking process. We are to implement certain practices worthy of our calling to be the Church. Those

⁴⁷ Yoder, *He Came*, 44.

⁴⁸ Yoder, *He Came*, 34.

practices are best summarized as mutual submission and what I have called Paul's notion of dialogue, the topic of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DIALOGUE AS A FITTING RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

I have previously cited Ephesians 4:13 as a focal point for many of my claims thus far, precisely because I believe Paul drives his argument towards that verse. Paul intends the verse to serve as a climactic moment in the rhetorical flow of his argument, and then moves to reinforce its themes as central to the epistle when he restates and reemphasizes them in 4:15-16. It is the climax of 4:1-16 where Paul summarizes the proper response to all of Ephesians 1-3 in broadest terms before pivoting to describe that response in more detail. In so doing, Paul fulfills his role as apostle to try to equip the saints by training them how to live out that proper response.

The document's central themes of glory, peace, and dialogue are echoed and woven together in these verses. My argument has been structured with this in mind, seeking first to understand those central themes in order to understand just how they are combined in these verses. As I am attempting to demonstrate, when we do understand these verses in this way, Paul's vision and instruction comes to life for us and rouses us to appropriate action.

Paul's message in Ephesians centers on a notion of the glory of God made manifest through Christ and his Body, the Church. In response to the work of Christ, the Church is to receive the Word of God by implementing certain practices, the result of which is that the Word dwells again in created flesh in the corporate Body of Christ and thereby manifests the glory of God again to all of humanity. Just as the incarnation of the Word in Christ manifested that Word and the fullness of God's glory to humanity, so too the reemodiment of the Word in the Church

manifests the Word of God and the fullness of God's glory. That reembodiment occurs in lesser or greater degrees depending on what kind of response the Church makes to the Gospel through the practices in which it engages.

So, Paul urges the Church to take up certain practices befitting its eschatological glory, to live a life worthy of that heavenly calling to which those in Christ have been called. Those practices are corporate practices, not individual ones, and it is the Church that will be full of God's glory, not individuals per se. Each Christian must come to understand the corporate nature of the Gospel if each Christian and each church, and thus the Church, are to properly respond to that Gospel and thereby manifest the fullness of God's glory. God's whole purpose in salvation history is aimed at this goal of glory in the Church and ultimately the whole cosmos. Indeed, God's purpose in His creation activity, from beginning to end, is aimed at the same goal of making all of creation His dwelling place.

Paul helps us understand this temple-building project by describing it more concretely in terms of peacemaking. Thus, Paul lays out his vision of peace as the proper ordering of all created things under the Headship of Christ through His work of reconciliation, tying such proper ordering to the goal of God's glory in the Church. That reconciliation includes reunifying humanity with God and with one another, but it also includes the restoration of all of creation to its proper ordering. Our response to the Gospel is to participate in this peacemaking as the means by which God completes His temple-building project.

Paul then turns in Ephesians 4-6 to describe that peacemaking process in terms of a life worthy of our calling to be the temple and live according to the Gospel of peace. This "ethical" section, as it is commonly described, provides the details for the way of life comprising the proper response to the Gospel of peace and God's glory in the Church. That worthy way of life

consists of certain practices that, together, are best summarized as a life of mutual submission under the headship of Christ, as I will discuss at some length in this chapter.

This chapter will help bring everything together so that we can finally see the full impact of what Paul intends in Ephesians 4:13 and understand its implications for ecumenism. To preview that understanding, Christians who desire doctrinal unity centered on the knowledge of Christ must engage in the practices comprising the worthy life. These practices, summarized by mutual submission under the Headship of the Messiah, cause true and unified doctrines about the faith and Christ precisely because they enable, among other things, a kind of naturally occurring dialogue among the saints, guided by the Holy Spirit under the careful teaching of special ministers. More than just dialogue, these practices of mutual submission nonetheless involve the kind of reasoning together that naturally occurs among those who live together and share a mutual trust and concern for one another. This social dynamic is best described as Paul's notion of ecumenical dialogue.

5.1 Nature of Mutual Submission

In order to understand that notion of dialogue, we must therefore understand this naturally occurring social dynamic and its core features of mutual faith and love. Thus, after describing the nature of mutual submission in terms of such faith and love, I will then turn to examine the practices constituting mutual submission in more detail. As will become clear, mutual submission involves a mutual faith and mutual love that are informed by and result from God's gracious work to create peace among His people. That resulting faith and love, together with gifts of the Spirit and the Word, empower us to participate in God's temple-building project. Faith and love both describe what social unity looks like, and they both provide the

underlying logic for all of life in the Body politic under Christ the Head.¹ After an overview of certain passages that highlight the nature of mutual submission, I will then turn to a discussion of the practices that comprise mutual submission as Paul fleshes them out in Ephesians 4-6.

5.1.1 Creation of Peace Instills Faith and Love

I begin the discussion on the nature of mutual submission with an examination of Ephesians 3:16-17. The passage is difficult to interpret due to Paul's complex sentence structure, and commentators have therefore often made key interpretive decisions based on theological considerations. As I will argue, the glory and peace themes developed in prior chapters of this work will help unpack these two verses more definitively, leading to insight into the nature of mutual submission. To speak of mutual submission in Ephesians is to invoke specific notions of faith and love, notions that are both inseparable and mutually interpreting. The two verses at issue are part of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19 and ask that the Father may grant two things according to the riches of his glory. Both requests are for increases in power that will in turn enable believers to manifest glory (3:18-19). I will say more about those two latter verses below but must first focus attention on the power Paul wishes the Church to have.

Paul's twofold request for empowerment invokes glory and peace as well as faith and love. The prayer functions as a climax for Ephesians 1-3 and transition to Ephesians 4-6, connecting the emphasis on glory and peace in the first part to the emphasis on faith and love in the second. The prayer thus sets the stage for Paul's description of the Church's proper response

¹ I have only mentioned faith and love in passing thus far, and for good reason. Both of these concepts are so prevalent in the Bible, and thus in Christian theology and popular thought, that people can rarely see new angles for fresh insight and understanding regarding those concepts. My comments here will not be comprehensive on either concept, nor are they meant to alter our understandings of either concept radically. Instead, my goal is to demonstrate how Paul employs those terms in service of his message in Ephesians, connecting them to the temple-building project and its chief strategy of peacemaking by using them to flesh out the concept of mutual submission.

to God's work in terms of his notion of dialogue as summarized by the concept of mutual submission.

The two-fold request for power focuses on the roles of the Spirit and Christ² in grammatically parallel sentences. Most commentators have noted the significance of this parallel and have sought to interpret the passage in light of it. Seeing the parallel in the Greek text is crucial for any fruitful discussion of the two verses and indeed the prayer as a whole. I cite the entirety of 3:16-17 in Greek, formatted in such a way as to make the parallel clear:

ἵνα δὲ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει
κραταιωθῆναι
διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ
εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον
κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν
διὰ τῆς πίστεως
ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν,
ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι...³

As an example of how commentators have translated and interpreted the verses in light of this parallel structure and according to theological considerations, I cite Hoehner's translation:

in order that he may grant you according to the wealth of his glory
to be strengthened
with power through his Spirit
in the inner person
so that Christ may dwell
in your hearts
through faith
in order that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ...⁴

² Ephesians 3:14 says the prayer is made with bended knee before the Father, showing the thoroughly Trinitarian nature of Paul's concept of the Church. The Trinitarian reference in the prayer also serves Paul's message in Ephesians rhetorically since, soon after this climactic prayer, he mentions the unity of the Trinity as a basis for all that comprises the worthy life. See Ephesians 4:1-6.

³ Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. (1997). *The Greek New Testament Nestle-Aland 26th*, (Eph 3:16-17). Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies.

⁴ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 477, 482.

Any student of Greek will be able to see that Hoehner switches lines 6 and 7 and adds certain glosses to the text in order to make it more readable, all of which is common practice in translation. Before examining arguments for the proper interpretation of the two verses, I must spell out my translation:

in order that the Father may give you, according to the wealth of his glory, power
so that you may be built up
by means of His Spirit
in the inner person
and so that Christ may dwell (among you)
by means of the faith
in your hearts –
In love, you have been rooted and grounded!

A close reading of the Greek shows that the instrumentality of the Spirit in the first part of the structure is parallel to the instrumentality of faith in the second. Moreover, the location of the activity in the first part is in the inner person, and in the second part it is in believers' hearts. There are two ways to render this parallel. Hoehner's translation depicts the Spirit as strengthening believers inwardly, and it depicts Christ's role as dwelling in believers' hearts. This rendering sees the Spirit's and Christ's activity as taking place in believers' hearts. I suggest that preconceived notions of spiritual formation drive Hoehner to this view, since a more literal reading of the Greek text does not support his view.

If instead we have Paul's notions of temple and peace in mind, we will be comfortable with a more literal rendering of the parallel in the Greek text. That rendering depicts the Spirit as building up the Body of Christ by means of activity in the inner man and Christ as dwelling among believers by means of the faith in their hearts. The two verbs (κραταιωθῆναι and κατοικῆσαι) are aorist infinitives and are governed by the opening of the prayer that God may give (δῶ) believers power. The difference between the two verbs is that the first (κραταιωθῆναι)

is passive and the second (κατοικῆσαι) is active. In both cases, the prayer is that believers would be empowered, so the first verb (passive) does not need a subject to complete the thought, only a description of the empowerment. However, because the second verb is active, it needs a subject, and that subject comes in the form of an accusative – so, it is Christ who dwells. In both cases, the request is that God may give *believers* power: (1) they are to be empowered to be strengthened or built-up and (2) they are to be empowered to be indwelt (by Christ). Following through with the rest of the parallel, the first empowerment is by means of the Spirit at work in the inner man, and the second empowerment is by means of the faith at work in their hearts. So, believers are empowered to be built up by the Spirit at work in the inner man⁵ and are empowered to be indwelt by Christ by the faith at work in their hearts.

Three important features of this interpretation are obscured by typical translations such as Hoehner's. The first is that the Spirit and faith are both instruments of empowerment. Faith is not how Christ dwells in our hearts, as if Paul is praying for Christ to dwell there or faith is somehow how Christ dwells there. Instead, faith in our hearts is what empowers the Church in such a way that Christ will dwell in the Church. We can see this if we see that Paul is referencing the temple themes so central to his argument throughout Ephesians; indeed, those themes are central to the prayer and doxology in 3:14-21 (especially, 3:19-21). We know that faith itself is part of God's salvific grace, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8; in 3:17, Paul is telling us *how* faith operates in our hearts to save us by empowering us to be indwelt by Christ as the

⁵ As Ephesians 4-6 makes clear, the Spirit's work in the inner man refers to the transformation of believers' minds by empowering the Body to function properly so as to receive the Word. When the Body of Christ functions properly, a naturally occurring dialogue empowered by the Spirit under the guidance of the special teaching ministers (i.e., the gifts of the Spirit) occurs. That dialogue involves believers reasoning together to understand and apply God's Word to their lives, which in turn transforms their minds and enables them to build up the Body. Paul outlines this idea in 4:1-16 and then turns in 4:17f. to train us how to reason together in a manner consistent with this idea. I will describe that training process below.

heavenly temple. So, Paul prays that the Spirit would build us up through its activity in the inner being and that the faith at work in our hearts would enable us to be indwelt corporately by Christ. In both cases, God's work to build up the Body in order that the Word might dwell are in view.

The second key feature obscured by typical translations is that the indwelling of Christ is not in individual hearts but rather corporately, in the one Body. It is the Spirit and faith at work inwardly that enable Christ to dwell corporately. This distinction sees the temple theme playing prominently in 3:17, but its importance is not merely about a technically correct rendering of that verse. As will be made clear below, failure to see 3:17 as primarily about believers being empowered by faith to be indwelt by Christ as a fully formed temple is a failure to understand the importance of that concept for living a life worthy of our calling to be the temple and manifest the Word in the Body. The indwelling by Christ which Paul prays for in this verse is a prayer that the Word would be fully enfleshed again in the Body politic, the Church, thereby manifesting God's glory on the earth.⁶

The third feature obscured by typical translations is that the connection between faith and love is lost, in one way or another. Interpreters simply do not know what to do with the phrase describing the rooting and grounding of the Church in love. Thus, in Hoehner's translation above, he moves that phrase so that it works together with the following verses. However, the

⁶ O'Brien tells us the verb referring to Christ's dwelling in 3:17 describes a permanent dwelling, not a temporary one. Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 259. Given the importance of the concept of God's presence dwelling fully in the Church in 1:23 and throughout Ephesians, and its connection to the very purpose of God to unite all things in Christ, we should not be surprised to see Paul praying in 3:17 that Christ may dwell, with the meaning of such dwelling being the same as in 1:23. Translations that find a way to make the reference to some sort of individual dwelling of Christ in our hearts serve only to distract us from the real aim of God's work in and through Christ to manifest glory and peace in the Church and throughout the cosmos. A second, full incarnation of the Word on the earth in Christ's Body is in view here as elsewhere in Ephesians. Having done the heavy theological lifting in earlier passages of Ephesians, Paul simply prays here that Christ may be able to dwell, and his hearers are ready to hear the reference.

phrase is more properly seen as an exclamation by Paul, one he cannot help but make because of the inseparable connection between faith and love he has in mind. This connection will be further fleshed out below, but here it is important to see it clearly in 3:16-17.

When Paul prays that faith will work in our hearts to empower us to be indwelt corporately by Christ, he cannot help but mention love as well. Faith was placed in our hearts by the work of God, and when that faith is operative in our hearts, it is always an expression of love. The rooting and grounding in love thus has a twofold meaning: (1) God's love worked in us to give us a sure rooting and grounding, so that we may realize our calling to be the temple, and (2) that rooting and grounding involves instilling in us something that can only be described as faith and love. Both elements of this rooting and grounding in love cause Paul to make this exclamatory remark about love on the heels of describing the faith at work in our hearts. I need to flesh out both elements of this twofold meaning, and doing so in reverse order will help illumine each of them and drive home the content of Paul's prayer.

By creating peace, Christ made us trusting of one another and trustworthy. That is, he gave us horizontal faith (trust one another) and made us loving (trustworthy) because he made us part of one Body politic.⁷ This is no overly-spiritualized conception of faith and love; instead, it is a boots-on-the-ground understanding that sees people who share an identity and common cause, who are socially ordered so that they are able to experience peace, as naturally trusting of one another and naturally seeking the good of one another. Returning to 3:16-17, we can

⁷ It is worth noting here that Ephesians 6:23 connects peace with love and faith, consistent with my treatment of the three themes here, though not a proof of it. I suggest 6:23 is an exclamatory remark summarizing the effect of peace as resulting in faith and love: "Peace to the whole community, and love with faith!" Regardless of how that verse is taken, it is undeniable that Paul sees peace on the one hand as somehow tied to faith and love on the other, and thinks they are so important that he mentions them at the end of his letter along with grace.

therefore see why Paul is compelled to make an exclamation about love immediately after describing the faith at work in believers' hearts. When Christ created peace – vertically with God and horizontally among His people – He instilled in God's people natural bonds of mutual faith and mutual love. To be at one corporately means nothing else.

The Body is able to function as one (thereby realizing its calling) when and to the extent these natural bonds of mutual faith and mutual love are put to work. Mutual faith and mutual love literally empower us to mature corporately and thereby to manifest the Word. It is precisely because Christ has created peace that His people have faith and love at work in their hearts. Instead of mutual distrust and hostility, mutual trust and mutual care structure our relationships. Believers are rooted and grounded in such a way as to be able to realize their calling and respond properly to the Gospel. Because of these properly ordered social relationships, shared identity in Christ, and shared calling with its common set of goals – all of which are features of the peace Christ has created – we have mutual love and mutual faith. The elements for understanding mutual submission as consisting of mutual faith and mutual love come into view in the light of peace and begin to take shape.

Seeing that the establishment of peace is what makes us naturally faithful and loving in turn enables us to see that God's rooting and grounding of us in love also refers to God's love for us. He exclaims that it is in love that we are rooted and grounded to help us see God's love and love of neighbor are at work together in the prayer, and in God's plan to unite all things in Christ. Faith is a gift that empowers us to trust God and trust others who are in Christ. It is precisely how we are rooted and grounded in love. The two are mutually interpreting concepts in Ephesians.

As the rest of the prayer in Ephesians 3 makes clear, all of this is aimed at the goal of temple-building, and peacemaking is the means to attain that goal. In light of the peace Christ instilled in us, by properly ordering us so that we love and trust one another, we are enabled to build up the temple with the help of the Holy Spirit, so that Christ may dwell among us and God's glory will be manifest in the Church.

5.1.2 The Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Faith and Love

No doubt the concept of mutual faith described above sounds odd to many readers, not least of all because of the importance the concept of faith played in the Reformation and afterwards. The above description hopefully shows a less theologically charged, more natural notion of faith as what exists among those who are part of a social group marked by peace and thus by love and trust for one another. Yet, even though this notion is more palatable, many will nonetheless still be hesitant to accept it. My interpretation of 3:16-17 above fits with the syntax and context of the prayer, but we would also expect Paul to give us other indications elsewhere in Ephesians that such a concept is at work. Those indications are present, but they have often been missed or obscured by interpreters attempting to understand Ephesians without a proper understanding of the centrality of its temple and peace themes. With those themes in mind, the concept of faith having the horizontal dimension described here can be clearly seen. It turns out that dimension is hiding in plain sight in the scholarly commentaries.

Ephesians 1:15 likely contains this concept of faith, though the concept has been routinely explained away primarily for theological reasons. The discussion centers on a widely noted text criticism issue there. Scholars have generally noted that the best manuscript evidence

strongly suggests the phrase “τὴν ἀγάπην” (usually translated as “your love”) should be omitted⁸ so that the verse would read “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints.” Lincoln notes the shorter reading is certainly harder and, if the correct reading, would indicate that faith or faithfulness is either in the sphere of the Lord or is placed in Him and simultaneously directed toward all the saints. He notes that most commentators have concluded those meanings are simply too difficult to accept. While some have cited Philemon 5 and Romans 1:12 as other examples of the shorter reading, Lincoln only mentions the former and rejects it on the basis that it contains a chiasmic structure and therefore is not relevant to the textual issue in Ephesians 1:15. Consequently, Lincoln states there are no other examples of the shorter reading in the New Testament. He therefore concludes that an early scribal error tainted the best manuscripts we have today is the most likely explanation for the omission of τὴν ἀγάπην.⁹

Following the same pattern of analysis, Best sees the shorter reading as best supported by the manuscript evidence and as the harder reading which should thus be accepted if a satisfactory meaning can be found. Noting that πίστις can mean loyalty or faithfulness, he hesitantly suggests the meaning that loyalty based in the Lord and directed towards all the saints is

⁸ Lincoln says the omission of τὴν ἀγάπην is “clearly the best attested.” Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 46; cf. Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 1-3 and 4-6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 146; Ernest Best, “Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians,” *New Testament Studies* 43, 1 (January 1997): 160; O’Brien, *Letter*, 127. Among the major commentaries, Hoehner’s assessment of the manuscript evidence stands alone in suggesting the evidence is more balanced, but his conclusion in favor of that result is largely based on theological considerations. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 249 at footnote 5.

⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 46-47.

satisfactory and should be accepted.¹⁰ Clearly, Best does not think the shorter reading is too difficult.

Barth takes a different approach to the problem, virtually treating the text criticism issue as moot because of his understanding of the relationship between faith and love. He mentions the manuscript evidence only briefly and concludes the most likely explanation for the variation is that some translators and copyists inserted τὴν ἀγάπην because they expected it to be there based on parallel Pauline passages where Paul pairs faith and love (e.g., Colossians 1:4, Romans 1:8, Philemon 5, and 2 Thessalonians 1:3). What is most interesting about Barth's analysis is that he cites Romans 1:12 for the concept of faith "among one another" and observes that because such mutual faith is usually called love, the copyists did no wrong to insert τὴν ἀγάπην to make the meaning clear. Moreover, the word faith more often than not means faithfulness in a sense similar to love. He also cites Philemon 5 as stating that both love and faith are directed to both Christ and the saints, thereby interpreting the chiasmic structure Lincoln rejected as irrelevant as instead having a bearing on Ephesians 1:15.¹¹

In the end, Barth's analysis elegantly suggests the confusion found in the manuscript evidence is best explained by the conceptual overlap between faith and love. He even suggests the meaning of the verse would be the same whether or not τὴν ἀγάπην was present in the original text, stating that the verse should therefore be taken as saying that faith in Christ is simultaneously "indissolubly connected with, and distinguished from, the mutual love of the

¹⁰ Best, "Who Used Whom," 160.

¹¹ Barth, *Ephesians*, 146-47.

saints.”¹² Though faith and love are not equivalent terms, they are so closely related that Paul’s mention of faith in 1:15 necessarily invokes the concept of love, and this is true even if the original text does not expressly mention love.

Lincoln’s and Best’s assertion that the harder reading is to be preferred if a satisfactory reading can be found is a standard principle of text criticism. While Lincoln thinks there is no such reading, Best provides one. Though Barth sidesteps the text criticism discussion based on his understanding of the close connection between faith and love, Barth’s comments on that connection also lend support to Best’s reading. My own view combines all of these observations and sees the temple and peace themes so central to Ephesians as supporting the notion of mutual faith among the saints as part of their faith in Christ. This notion closely parallels the exhortation in Ephesians 5:21 that believers be mutually submitted out of reverence for Christ.¹³

So, despite Lincoln’s assertion to the contrary, the shorter reading is far from being too difficult to accept – the concept of faith having a horizontal dimension runs through Ephesians. Those who would be built into a temple are part of a single identity group marked by peace with one another because Christ has placed mutual trust and love in their hearts. Paul’s praise of his hearers in Ephesians 1:15 revolves around their demonstrated faith both vertically and horizontally. He will talk about love later as it relates to this notion of mutual faith, and Barth’s observation that horizontal faith more often than not means faithfulness in a sense similar to love

¹² Barth, *Ephesians*, 146.

¹³ The close connection between faith and love can also be seen when we consider the parallel in Jesus’s own teaching about the greatest commandment being to love God and neighbor. When He is asked for the single greatest commandment in the Law, He gives two that are inextricably connected. See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31. One aspect of this teaching is that we love God by loving our neighbors. The parallel teaching in Ephesians 1:15 is that we are to show faith in God by placing faith in others. The rest of Ephesians can be seen as an outworking of that principle, and it is summarized in the concept of mutual submission.

shows that the concept of mutual love is at least implicit in 1:15 (if not also explicit in the original text). However, mutual faith out of reverence for Christ is in view in 1:15. It is particularly noteworthy that Paul's prayer in 1:15-23 begins with mutual faith out of reverence for Christ and ends with a description of the fully mature Body filled with the fullness of God. Such mutual faith leads to the building up of the Body so it can function as the temple. This is the very same theme Paul emphasizes in his prayer in Ephesians 3 and throughout Ephesians 4-6, particularly in 5:18-21 as I argue in the next section.

5.1.3 Mutual Submission as the Means to Fill the Temple

The exhortation to mutual submission found in Ephesians 5:21 cannot rightly be understood without seeing the crucial role that verse plays within Paul's argument. The exhortation provides the overarching principle for the household code in 5:22-6:9 (discussed in more detail below). However, 5:21 plays a larger role than just that. O'Brien cites Snodgrass in agreement for the idea that Ephesians 5:15-21 is a summary and climax of Ephesians 4-6.¹⁴ Within those verses, 5:18-21 are structured as a unit syntactically, with the passive imperative exhorting believers to be filled by the Spirit in 5:18 governing the following five participles in 5:19-21 which are subordinate to it.¹⁵ The primary issue shaping how scholars interpret these verses is how the five participles following the imperative in 5:18 are related to that imperative.

¹⁴ O'Brien, *Letter*, 379; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 286.

¹⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 706; O'Brien, *Letter*, 379; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 358; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 338, 343. Commentators are split on whether 5:21, which is the fifth participle governed by the imperative in 5:18, belongs with 5:15-20 or with the household code in 5:22-6-9. Most rightly see it as a bridge verse and then give reasons why it belongs with one section or the other. As I will argue below, the underlying role of 5:21 in both the material before and after it, coupled with its function as a summary and hinge within Ephesians 4-6, is precisely why commentators have trouble deciding which section it belongs to. 5:21 is vitally important to the structure of Paul's argument in Ephesians 4-6 and to a correct understanding of the Church's proper response to the Gospel.

Most scholars have said the five participles are participles of result describing the consequences of being filled with God's fullness, rather than imperative participles. This leaves the impression that there is very little for the believer to do in each of those participles, including the final participle calling for mutual submission among believers. If mutual submission is merely a *result* of the filling process, then what role is there for believers? Understanding the nature of mutual submission requires a closer look at this issue.¹⁶

Hoehner states that the five participles are best seen as participles of result, showing what being filled by the Spirit looks like. He sees the command to be filled as one of yielding to the Spirit's control, which in turn produces the resultant characteristics described in the five participles.¹⁷ Lincoln likewise sees 5:18 as exhorting believers to allow the Spirit to have the fullest control and open themselves up to the Spirit, with the five participles best interpreted as resulting from such yielding to the Spirit.¹⁸ Thielman and O'Brien also speak of the five participles as describing the results of being filled but expressly discuss the role of believers in *cooperating* with the Spirit in the filling process.¹⁹ This notion of cooperation is crucial for

¹⁶ Scholars also differ over whether the command in 5:18 is to be filled *by*, *with*, or *in* the Spirit, though with minimal consequence for the interpretation of the passage. Thus, Lincoln holds that believers are filled *with* the Spirit without much discussion other than mentioning it is the Spirit that mediates the fullness of God and of Christ to believers who are being filled up with the fullness of God (3:19) and the fullness of Christ (1:23 and 4:13). Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 344. O'Brien and Hoehner both argue that the command is to be filled *by* the Spirit but then come to the same application as Lincoln that the reference is to believers being filled with the fullness of God. O'Brien, *Letter*, 391-92; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 703-04. Thielman argues that the command is to be filled *in* the Spirit; yet, he too agrees the content of such filling is the fullness of God. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 359-60. In all cases, the important points of agreement are (1) that the content is the fullness of God, (2) that the command is for believers to be filled, and (3) that the Spirit plays a role in that filling process. The first point fits squarely with my argument that temple themes dominate Ephesians. The latter two points show that both believers and the Spirit have some agency in the filling process. The remaining issue is just how active the role of believers is in the filling process.

¹⁷ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 706.

¹⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 345, 347, 365, 385.

¹⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 360-61. O'Brien, *Letter*, 387-88, 393.

understanding Ephesians, for it is central to its message. Believers are to understand God's activity in and through Christ and the Church, and then, with the help of God's power and gifts, we are to participate in that activity by living the worthy life. So, even if the five participles following the imperative in 5:18 are participles of result and not imperative participles, this conclusion should not obscure the idea that they nonetheless have an imperative force.

The characterization as participles of result has the effect of muting the responsibility of believers to cooperate with the Spirit in bringing about the results described in 5:19–6:9.²⁰ The better view would seem to be that the five participles take on the imperative force of the command in 5:18. Hoehner's only argument against this notion is that it "seems odd" that Paul did not use five more imperatives (instead of participles) if that is what he intended and that, if we take the participles as having imperative force, then the instruction would seem to suggest we can accomplish those results by our own sheer will.²¹

In response to Hoehner, I suggest Paul does not use five more imperatives because his intention was to show that the five following exhortations were not distinct commands but rather part of the single command in 5:18, serving to give a more descriptive picture of what being filled with God's fullness looks like. The five participles therefore take on the same force as

²⁰ Despite characterizing mutual submission simply as a result of being filled with God's fullness, Hoehner, Lincoln, Thielman, and O'Brien all go on to describe the teachings in the household in a manner that includes exhortations to specific actions. They thus implicitly show there is some effort believers must exert in these actions. Cooperation is implicit in these descriptions; it should be made explicit as Thielman and O'Brien argue.

²¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 706. O'Brien states the same conclusion and merely cites other scholars, including Lincoln at 345 and Snodgrass at 287. O'Brien, *Letter*, 387-88. However, Lincoln and Snodgrass give no argument for the conclusion but merely assert it in passing. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 344-5, 347. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 287. The discussion is entirely absent from Barth's commentary. Hoehner's argument assumes an "all or nothing" account of responsibility for the results and then concludes the participles must be describing results of being filled by God (i.e., divine activity) or else Paul would be teaching they come from human activity. Seeing the participles and the command in 5:18 as involving cooperation between God and believers rids us of this false dichotomy and allows us to analyze the five participles based on other considerations more likely driving Paul's argument.

5:18 simply because they are part of that same command. Thus, the five participles help summarize what being filled with God's fullness looks like, describing it in greater detail. Moreover, seeing the five participles as having imperative force does not lead to the conclusion that believers can accomplish the results on their own any more than the command to be filled with God's fullness does. That command is a passive imperative, and if the following five participles take on its characteristics, they too should be interpreted as passive imperatives. Thielman's and O'Brien's suggestion that we are to cooperate with the Spirit in our own filling process (5:18), if applied to the participles in 5:19-21, would avoid Hoehner's criticism by giving a role to both the Spirit and to believers. Their only mistake was not carrying that same sense they applied to the passive imperative in 5:18 to the five following participles. We are thus able to see the five participles as helping to summarize the overall command to be filled with God's fullness, exhorting us to participate with God in His temple-building project.

In turn, this detailed analysis of 5:18-21 helps us see that the exhortation to mutual submission in 5:21 is part of Paul's overall urging stemming back to 4:1 that we act in a way worthy of our calling, in order to bless God (the command of 1:3). We are the new temple, and the command in 5:18 amounts to exhorting us to act like it. We are to do those things which enable us to be filled with God's glory, and 5:19-21 serve as a climactic summary for Ephesians 4-6. The five participles, like the command in 5:18, are high-level summaries of the prior exhortations in 4:1-5:17, generalizing those exhortations in a memorable way. As I will show below, the summary also serves as a springboard for the following instructions in the household code, which is best understood as an application of that summary to life in the home.

On this view, Paul's command in 5:18 to be filled with God's fullness serves as a memorable summary of the notion *that* everything we do should be aimed at this goal of

participating with God's temple-building project; his command of mutual submission in 5:21 serves as a memorable summary of *how* we are to participate in that process. The command in 5:18 reminds Paul's hearers that they are the temple and that all of their practices should fit that identity as they participate with God to build up the temple. The participles are likewise general summaries, but they are summaries of *how* we are to participate with God so that we may be filled up with His fullness. They describe what our participation will look like if we respond to our calling properly. The exhortation to mutual submission out of reverence for Christ in 5:21 plays a special role in these verses as the other participles are best understood as driving towards it as the overarching principles of *how* to be filled.

We thus see that 5:18-21 describes the same connection between faith (with its vertical and horizontal dimensions) and the filling of the temple with God's glory that we saw in 1:15-23. Ephesians is primarily about how to be filled with the fullness of God, and mutual submission out of reverence for Christ plays a critical role in that plan. Mutual submission describes the social ordering and way of life that comes about when believers cooperate with the Spirit's guidance. It is a general principle summarizing the way of life and the set of practices that are worthy of the Christian calling marked by peace and aimed at temple building. As I argue below, if we see faith and love in 3:16-17 as references to mutual submission, then the prayer in 3:14-21 should be seen as describing the very same dynamic.

5.1.4 The Transformation of our Minds

So far, I have argued that mutual submission is marked by faith and love and summarizes how we participate with God to be filled with His fullness. Before turning to a discussion of the more detailed instructions which are summarized by mutual submission, I must return briefly to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 to show one more aspect of the nature of mutual submission that

will be important for the rest of this discussion; namely, its deep connection to the transformation of our minds. Seeing this connection is the key to understanding mutual submission as constituting Paul's notion of dialogue, and for seeing how important it is to ecumenism.

According to Barth, Ephesians is filled with references to wisdom and places a great emphasis on knowledge.²² My discussion of the practices of mutual submission below will show this clearly enough. Here, I only wish to make a few observations about the connection between filling and the imparting of wisdom and knowledge. The command to be filled by the Spirit with God's fullness (5:18) relates back to other "filling" passages (i.e., 1:23, 3:19, and 4:13) and ties them all to the command to be mutually submitted (5:21) as the way to be filled. Thus, it also ties "filling" to maturity and to the unity of faith and knowledge of Christ (both in 4:13). We are meant to see that filling, maturity, and unified, true belief all come about when we are properly ordered socially according to God's Wisdom (i.e., manifest peace) and cooperate with the Spirit to live out the practices of mutual submission. Moreover, 5:15-21 contains a contrast between being filled with the fullness of God as constituting wise living on the one hand and being drunk with wine as constituting foolishness and ἀσωτία (usually translated as debauchery). According to Hoehner, ἀσωτία marks a disorderly life resulting from lack of self-control and is the opposite of being wise.²³ On the other hand, being filled by the Spirit with God's fullness by means of mutual submission is connected to wise living.

The connection helps us see that the prayer in Ephesians 3 may likewise be asking for wisdom and knowledge as the means to fill us up with God's fullness, and that is indeed the case.

²² Barth, *Ephesians*, 120

²³ Hoehner provides a good word study on ἀσωτία, including an examination of its use by Plato and Aristotle who likewise saw it as foolishness and a vice-filled way of life. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 700-01.

In 3:18-19 we see why Paul prays that believers would be empowered by the Spirit and faith in their heart in 3:16-17; namely, so that they may be able together to *comprehend* wisdom (3:18)²⁴ and to *know* the love of Christ (3:19), all so that they may be filled with the fullness of God (3:19). In Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1, he prayed the God would give believers wisdom and revelation so that by the enlightenment in their hearts they would know the hope of their calling, the riches of God's inheritance in His people, and the greatness of the power at work among them, all so that they would be filled up with the fullness of God. Both prayers take the same basic form of seeking an enlightenment in believers' hearts that enables increased comprehension and knowledge that will lead to the Church being filled up.²⁵

²⁴ Barth observes that the four dimensions mentioned in 3:18 have been interpreted in innumerable ways (including most prominently Wisdom, the love of Christ, the entire cosmos, and the eschatological temple) but he ultimately settles on Wisdom as the referent. He notes that the Wisdom tradition commonly references four dimensions when describing Wisdom, that Ephesians is replete with borrowings from the Wisdom tradition, and that the interpretation is the least fantastic and the one best supported by the context. Barth, *Ephesians*, 395-97. Lincoln provides a lengthy discussion of the numerous interpretations but says only two are credible – Wisdom and the love of Christ. He notes that the choice between the two is difficult and ultimately depends on whether more weight is placed on “likely associations from the Wisdom background or on immediate contextual factors.” Because he notes the love of Christ in the following verse as part of the context but fails to see Wisdom in the immediate context, he ultimately opts for the love of Christ. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 208-13. Thielman's solution to Lincoln's dilemma is to see the four measurements as primarily a reference to the vastness of divine love but that the language of the four dimensions also tell us that Wisdom (in the sense of God's mystery revealed in 1:9-10), is in the background. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 234-37. Given the overall emphasis in Ephesians on temple and peace themes as the proper ordering of the entire cosmos according to Wisdom so that all of creation might realize its eschatological purpose of being God's temple, it is easy to see why scholars have seen elements of all of them and had difficulty choosing one as the referent of the four dimensions. Those temple and peace themes, coupled with the connection to the prayer in chapter 1 for wisdom and knowledge, would strongly suggest Wisdom is the referent of the four dimensions, with all of the other alleged referents in the background because of their relationship to Wisdom.

²⁵ Verhey and Harvard actually see the two prayers as a single prayer, stating that Paul paused his prayer after chapter 1 in order to call attention to important theology in chapter 2 before resuming his prayer in chapter 3. Allen Verhey and Joseph Harvard, *Ephesians* (Louisville: John Knox 2011), 114-15. Taking a cue from Verhey and Harvard, I suggest Paul is restating his prayer from chapter 1 in chapter 3 in light of what he says in chapter 2. Chapter 1 provides the broadest picture theologically, showing that the Church's calling is connected to Christ and His activity to usher in the eschatological temple in the Church and ultimately to fill all things. After additional details in chapter 2 showing the nature of grace and peace and how they relate to God's temple-building project, Paul is able to pray the same prayer again in chapter 3 with more granularity. Whether or not it is one prayer or two, the parallel structure of the two instances of Paul praying should tell us that they are describing the same process and are mutually interpreting, with the latter prayer providing more details about the process Paul is praying would become a reality.

The whole process Paul prays for in the two prayers only becomes a reality if the members of the Church cooperate with God at every stage of it. Thus, immediately after completing his climactic prayer in chapter 3 and ending with a doxology tying all of the first half of Ephesians together, Paul begins the final three chapters by urging the Church to respond in a manner worth of their calling to be the temple, to be peacemakers, to participate with God and allow God's power to work through them by means of this process of filling them up. That process revolves around a transformation of their hearts best described as enlightenment (1:15, 4:18, 5:8-14) and a renewal of believers' minds (4:23) that enables increased wisdom and knowledge that will lead to the Church being filled up.

That enlightenment and transformation of their innermost being is initially the result of Christ's peacemaking by which he instilled in them a mutual faith and love. That faith and love in turn enable them to cooperate with God so that they are further enlightened and transformed by the instilling of wisdom and knowledge as they take part in the process of comprehending *together*²⁶ that wisdom and knowledge. The result of that social process, properly ordered by the gifts of the Spirit (4:11-12) is that they are able to take hold of the Word, to manifest it on the earth again, and thereby to be filled up with God's fullness. We see here that the commands in 5:18 and 5:21 to be filled with God's fullness by means of mutual submission are connected to and flesh out the prayer in Ephesians 3, telling us *how* to realize the process of comprehending together with all the saints and being filled.²⁷

²⁶ In a section entitled "Ecumenical Theology," Barth comments on this notion of grasping together with all the saints, stating that God's work "cannot be understood in separate from one's fellow man" and that this social grasping of knowledge reflects the social nature of the Gospel to be grasped. Barth, *Ephesians*, 394-95.

²⁷ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 214-15. Commenting on the prayer, Lincoln notes the connection to 5:18 stating that a proper response to the imperative of 5:18 to be filled will also be part of the realization of this filling process. The connection to 5:21 is mine.

In sum, Paul's prayer is that believers would be empowered by the Spirit and by faith (tied to love) within their hearts in order that together they may grasp wisdom and knowledge and thereby participate in building the temple and being filled with God's glory. The Spirit's empowerment comes primarily from Christ sending us the special teaching ministers as gifts (4:7-11) and from its continued activity to coordinate the proper order of the Body, animate those gifts, and bring their intended results to fruition when we cooperate with the Spirit. The empowerment by faith also comes from Christ's creation of peace within His Body. It is marked by mutual love, mutual trust, and appropriate action to realize the good of one another, all because we are part of one Body politic, one new humanity in Christ. The creation of peace instilled this type of faith in our hearts – we have been rooted and grounded in love. The commands in 5:18 and 5:21 to be filled by the Spirit and to be mutually submitted summarize this twofold empowerment quite aptly.

5.2 Practices of Mutual Submission

With a good understanding of the nature of mutual submission, we are now in a position to fill out that understanding further by an examination of the practices which comprise it. The best way to do this is to survey key features of those practices as described by Paul in 4:1-6:9, tracing out the theme of how they relate to the social process by which the Church comes to be filled with wisdom and knowledge. While much more could be said about these verses, tracing the theme will enable us to understand how the practices of mutual submission comprise the life worthy of our calling and why they are best described in the ecumenical context as Paul's notion of dialogue.

5.2.1 Dialogue Led By The Teaching Ministers

The worthy way of life consists of a set of practices befitting the Christian calling, and that set of practices involves the kind of dialogue that naturally takes place among those who trust one another as they navigate life together towards common goals. Dialogue itself is not enough to lead to agreement. Instead, dialogue among those who trust one another is necessary for the development of commonly held beliefs and doctrines. Yet, it is still not enough to guarantee truth. Only dialogue centered on the Faith given to the apostles by Christ, a dialogue among those who are in Christ who are properly ordered and guided by the Spirit, can lead to fullness of truth about the Faith, and this only when those in Christ are submitted to one another as their proper response in cooperation with the Spirit.

Thus, vertical and horizontal relationships must be right. The Holy Spirit orders us socially by giving us gifts and helping us be mutually submitted. Yet, we must cooperate with the Spirit, and we do so by understanding our calling and then putting it into practice. The practices of mutual submission constitute that calling, and Paul's instruction in 4:1-6:9 is designed to inform us of those practices and train us how to implement them. As will be made clear below, part of that training is to give us some specific guidance, but a large part is also to train us how to discern proper practices *together*.

As we saw above in the discussion on the nature of mutual submission, Paul's emphasis is on imparting wisdom and knowledge, and this comes to the Body through the training led by the ministers of the Gospel as they proclaim the Word they received from Christ, the Gospel of peace. Paul refers to the teaching and ministry of Christ the Word as the cornerstone and the

apostolic teaching as the foundation for the temple.²⁸ This foundation is proclaimed by the special teaching ministers, and it is the saving word of truth, a proclamation of peace with wisdom and understanding.²⁹ It is the deposit of the Faith given them by Christ the cornerstone, and it is best summarized as the Gospel of peace as I argued in the last chapter.³⁰ The special teaching ministers administer the Gospel of peace and fulfill their roles within the Body by training the saints to build up the Body. The teaching ministers have a special role to play within the Body, but all members of the Body are to take part in the work of ministry that builds up the Body (4:12).

The ultimate result is maturation of the Body until it attains the full stature of Christ and thus bears the true image of God to the world. The giving of gifts of the Holy Spirit is part of God's overall plan to fill up all things with His glory.³¹ Paul's use of the concept of glory

²⁸ Paul says in Ephesians 1:22 that Christ's Headship over the Church was a gift, just as 4:11 says the teaching ministers were gifts. His description of the temple in Ephesians 2:20-22 depicts Christ the Word as the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets (who proclaimed the Word as revealed to them) as the foundation, with the rest of the Church being the remaining building blocks. Combining 1:22, 2:20-22, and 4:11-16, we see a deep connection between the construction of the temple and the roles various members of the Church are to play in building up the temple. Specifically, the temple is built up when each of the members of the Church (including, Christ, the special teaching ministers, and the remaining members of the Church) properly responds to God's Word in their various proclamations and actions. Of course, Christ was and continues to be faithful in His role. Paul too has been faithful in his role as apostle, not least by summarizing the Gospel of peace in Ephesians and circulating it to all the Church so we too may play our roles.

²⁹ Barth, *Ephesians*, 315-16, commenting on Ephesians 2:20 and citing Ephesians 1:13, 17-18; 4:7-13; 6:19-20.

³⁰ The faith and knowledge Paul refers to in 4:13 consist of objective content; they are not some sort of subjective trust or personal knowledge. The subjective elements are no doubt in play in Ephesians, as I have argued above, though it is objective content which comprises the foundation for the temple project and transforms the hearts and minds of believers so that they may take part in that project. For the notion of the reference being to objective content and a single faith which the Church is to attain together, see O'Brien, *Letter*, 283, 306; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255-6; Best, "Who Used Whom," 400-01; George Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 76; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 258, 281. The best way to refer to this objective content in summary fashion, in conjunction with the long tradition of the Church and with Paul's summary in Ephesians 2, is to see it as the deposit of the Faith and the Gospel of peace.

³¹ As Witherington states, the giving of gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:7-10 occurs after Christ's descent to the earth in his incarnation and ascension back to heaven, all of which is necessary for the filling of all things. Ben

throughout Ephesians is thus tied to his vision of the maturation of the Body and the gracious gifts given by Christ to His people, in order that they might attain that fully mature stature. It is through the practices of mutual submission guided by the Spirit and focused on the Word that the Body matures. These practices constitute a dialogue led by the teaching ministers, and the whole process ultimately leads to unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ. God thus graciously guides His people into unity and truth as they faithfully carry out their mission to proclaim and teach God's Word given in the deposit of the Faith through the divinely authored and guided dialogue.

5.2.2 Flawed Dialogues

Paul contrasts the image of maturity in 4:13 with an image of immaturity in 4:14, helping us to understand the nature of true dialogue within the Church. The contrasting image in 4:14 is no mere speculative concern but rather a polemic against the very real threat of the various kinds of false dialogues of Paul's day. While scholars discuss whether Paul's reference is to philosophers or heretical teachers in the church, Witherington is probably right when he says Paul likely is speaking in general terms about anyone who uses rhetoric and fine sounding arguments to impress an audience with false teachings.³² The teaching ministers have an important role in the education and training of the saints, to preserve and transmit the apostolic tradition handed down from Christ, to provide doctrinal stability, and to ensure movement

Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007), 288-90.

³² Witherington, *The Letters*, 292-93. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 258; O'Brien, *Letter*, 309; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283; Barth, *Ephesians*, 442.

towards “the full appropriation of the one faith and of the one knowledge of Christ.”³³ They are to protect the Church from flawed dialogues that deviate from the divinely authored one.

Paul’s polemic is against *man-made* doctrines propagated by *heretical thinkers* in *cleverness* in order to *deceive others for their own gain*. In the Church, Christ’s own *divine* teaching is to be proclaimed by *His ordained teaching ministers* who are *guided by the Spirit* in order to show *love for the saints* so that they are *equipped*.³⁴ The result of taking part in the false dialogues is not only ignorance and immaturity but also individualism, as compared to the knowledge that comes to the one mature man who is a corporate unity. As the Body matures, it thus leaves behind instability, division, and individualism, which are all markers of an immature Church.³⁵ Being filled up with wisdom and knowledge under the true dialogue headed by Christ and empowered by the Spirit and mutual faith is what Paul intends us to see by this contrast with the division and disunity that mark false dialogues. Immaturity consists in a failure to perceive the truth and, as a result, disunity.³⁶

Unfortunately, the Church today looks more like Ephesians 4:14 than 4:13. Every church no doubt believes its doctrines and practices, including epistemic practices, are true and properly interpret the Word according to the guidance of the Spirit. Yet, as Paul tells us in 4:13-14, the

³³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 230, 233, 249-50, 255-56.

³⁴ Barth, *Ephesians*, 443.

³⁵ O’Brien, *Letter*, 308; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283-84; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 560-61; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 230, 232-33.

³⁶ It is worth noting that 1 Corinthians 3 contains a longer version of what Paul describes in Ephesians 4:14. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul is addressing divisions among Christians which resulted from fleshly, human thinking disguised as spiritually guided thought. He describes a single temple being built up by the workers who all work together as God’s servants, despite their different teachings and even animosity. He admonishes them to avoid deceiving themselves by their own seemingly wise beliefs based on worldly thought, saying they should become foolish in order that they may be made wise by God.

very fact of disunity says otherwise. It suggests that the churches have been tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, despite their most sincere efforts to be faithful and their earnest belief that their thinking is divine rather than human. Paul's clear teaching is that flawed dialogues lead to disunity, fragmentation, and individualism. If there is division and it persists and increases over time, then we know the thinking that underlies it, and the spirit which animates it, is not the Spirit of God. If our denominations have their own developed theologies that cause us to have separate identities and cause us to remain out of fellowship and mutual submission, then we have violated Paul's teaching in 4:13-14 (and elsewhere). We must return to God and His divinely ordained process for attaining wisdom and knowledge *together* rather than cling to the cherished epistemic practices and separate identities we love all too much. The evidence is in – the fragmented Church today proves we have not been successful in avoiding Paul's warning. We must reexamine our epistemic practices, every one of us in every denomination.

The antidote to being tossed around by every wind of doctrine is for the whole Body to engage in the divinely authored and guided dialogue led by the teaching ministers with all members mutually submitted and reasoning together. This is a type of naturally occurring dialogue among those who share a common life. Paul sees all believers as called to some sort of role in developing the Church's understanding of the Faith and knowledge of Christ. When the Body is functioning as it should, the Body matures in every way, including moving towards a common faith and understanding. The fact of division suggests the Church is plagued by flawed dialogues and thus not functioning as it should. We need a better understanding of the practices that comprise true dialogue.

5.2.3 Dialogue Training

In Ephesians 4:17-6:9, Paul is engaging in the type of dialogue training he and the other apostles are responsible for providing to the saints. More specifically, Paul is engaging in dialogue training, some of which provides specific instruction but most of which is aimed at training believers how they ought to reason together in order to receive wisdom and knowledge. Having told them that a true dialogue guided by the Spirit and aimed at understanding the Faith is how they are to be built up so that they are able to manifest God's glory, Paul now seeks to train them how they are to engage in that dialogue.

In 4:17-24, Paul contrasts the futility of darkened thinking and its deleterious results that marked their old life with enlightened thinking that occurs in Christ. That enlightened thinking comes about when believers take up their identity as the temple, are marked by peace, and participate in the process that renews their minds with divine wisdom and knowledge.³⁷ The passage serves as an introductory exhortation that frames the following instruction in light of all that he has said so far in Ephesians. So, Paul says they were taught "in Christ" to put on the "new man" in place of the old and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds (4:21-24). The passage refers to their entry into the Body, the one new humanity created in peace by Christ according to the true image of God, and the continued teaching that takes place within the Body to transform their minds. They are no longer to walk in the old way of life marked by futile, darkened thinking that comes from alienation from God (4:17-18) but rather must walk in the

³⁷ Lincoln says this renewal of mind is a renewal in knowledge, and identifies that knowledge as the truth of the Gospel and the apostolic tradition. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 287, 290. Based on what I have said in prior chapters and earlier in this chapter, I wish to be more specific and identify the temple and peace themes along with divine wisdom and knowledge as the content that comprises the deposit of Faith in view in this passage.

new, worthy way of life marked by continued enlightenment and renewal of their minds that results from the true dialogue (4:1, 11-16, 20-24).³⁸

Paul then turns in 4:25 to show them *how* to be continually renewed in their thinking by training them in the practices that comprise the true dialogue. So, he describes particular practices that comprise the worthy life, but the practices he describes are ones they already know and believe.³⁹ After giving amazingly insightful instruction throughout Ephesians up until this verse, instruction about the nature of God's work in and through Christ and the Church and the importance of responding as a well-functioning Body in order to receive wisdom and insight, Paul's next step in his argument is to tell them not to bear false witness, not to let the sun go down on their anger, to quit stealing, and other obvious ethical teachings that virtually all Jews and Gentiles would already share. His instruction seems out of place at first blush.

Paul is demonstrating that the Gospel of peace is the key to unlocking and applying already known teachings. He is giving the inherent logic to the Christian life, showing that all ethical teachings can be traced back to the Gospel of peace. His instructions in this section are all accompanied with a rationale that explains why Christians ought to implement those practices as they live out the life worthy of their calling.⁴⁰ By starting with easy ethical instructions that are part of how they have been taught in Christ (4:20-23), Paul is showing them how they are to engage in dialogue about the received apostolic tradition. The Gospel of peace is the key to

³⁸ Commenting on 1:17 and referencing 4:23, Barth says that the Spirit creates a new mindset and illuminates believers through a continued process. Barth, *Ephesians*, 148, 50.

³⁹ Thielman says Paul reminds them of traditional ethical teachings in order to give them practical instruction to maintain the unity given by the Spirit. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 292, 294.

⁴⁰ Verhey and Harvard say that Ephesians revamps traditional material in light of the newly revealed secret. Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 180. Barth tells us the motivations given in each traditional ethical instruction are social in nature and thoroughly evangelical. Barth, *Ephesians*, 546-47.

unlocking the deposit of Faith; it is the inherent logic that underlies all true ethical teaching contained in God's Word.

We see then that Paul has described the work of God in and through the Church in Ephesians 1-3 and is now training them how to unlock that message together as they are guided by the Spirit in their properly ordered dialogue. The Gospel of peace, the whole deposit of Faith, can be grasped as they reason together as part of the divinely authored and guided dialogue. That reasoning process involves understanding the logic of the Gospel and being able to apply it corporately to all ethical questions. Starting with easy ethical questions to illustrate this reasoning process, Paul is training them so that they understand how to repeat that reasoning process when faced with harder ethical questions they will no doubt encounter.

This analysis applies to all of 4:25-6:9, which is best understood as Paul using well-known, traditional material to illustrate how the logic of building up the Body of Christ undergirds that traditional material. The traditional material is fundamentally an application of the underlying logic Paul has been explaining to his audience all along. Paul is training them to think in terms of the logic of the Gospel of peace in all areas of their lives. Understanding this didactic technique enables us to see that Paul is driving a straight line from Ephesians 1:9 (God's purpose to unite all things in Christ) all the way to the end of 6:9, and indeed to the very end of the document. He is showing that they can be certain the ethical instructions are true precisely because they are aimed at the mystery revealed (1:9-10).

The Church is able to evaluate doctrines and practices based upon the logic of the Gospel of peace that proclaims all things will be united in Christ and that the Church is to function as the Body of Christ, incarnating the Word and thus manifesting glory and peace. Paul is demonstrating *how* to think about what they ought to do to live worthily of their calling. He is

demonstrating that the themes of glory and peace, as they result in unity and holiness, provide the underlying logic for all ethics contained in God’s Word and previously revealed to them. If they understand their calling, and if they reason together according to the prescribed dialogue, they will see that God’s ethical instruction has always been driven by this underlying logic. More specifically, when they reason together as all households do through their naturally occurring dialogues (i.e., navigating life together in relationships of mutual trust and submission as humans are naturally inclined to do within their households and communities), they are to do so under the Headship of Christ informed and instructed by the light of His gifts, the ministers of His Word.

Putting all of this together, they are to take up practices which fit their identity and calling in Christ, and they are to do so together. Paul is therefore showing them *just how* to reason together, to navigate life together, such that their ethical conclusions are informed and driven by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. Paul does not pretend to give them every answer to every issue they may face. Instead, he is teaching them how to do this themselves,⁴¹ not individually but corporately, in conjunction with the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets and the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit within the Church. All of this takes place as the ministers of God’s Word continue to proclaim the Word to equip the saints and as the saints

⁴¹ Indeed, the exhortations to discern what is pleasing to the Lord (5:10) and to understand what the will of the Lord is (5:17) support the argument here that Paul is training them how to reason together rather than giving them a list of specific teachings to follow. Commenting on 5:10, Thielman observes that Paul refers to the “use of critical judgment” and “left room for believers to make decisions by using their own renewed thinking.” He makes similar observations about 5:17. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 341, 356-57. Cf. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 369, 384-86. While 5:10 and 5:17 can be read in isolation as suggesting believers are able to determine proper conduct by some other mechanism, the immediate context and the argument of Ephesians as a whole strongly suggest it is only by reasoning together in light of the Gospel of peace that believers are able to discern and understand.

participate in the ongoing dialogue. The whole process is organic, and it occurs when each person understands their identity, calling, and specific role to help build up the Body.

4:29-30 deserve special attention as we seek to understand Paul's dialogue training efforts. As many scholars have noted, 4:29-30 serves as a summary of the preceding ethical instructions in 4:25-28, showing that the underlying logic of all of them is that we are to build up the Body in cooperation with the Spirit.⁴² No doubt the summary commands in 5:18 and 5:21 are meant to reinforce the same message in 4:29-30, that we are to be mutually submitted and to cooperate with the Spirit in building up the Body so that it may be filled with God's fullness. Grieving the Spirit summarizes the opposite way of life. A few additional observations about 4:29-30 will be helpful, for they enable us to see that flawed dialogues are what grieve the Spirit.

The contrast between speech that is good for building up and speech that is harmful in 4:29 is sometimes taken to refer simply to an admonition to avoid crude joking, hostile or abusive language, or simply that which is unwholesome or evil. Indeed, *σαπρὸς* has a range of meaning that includes all these negative results, but in the context of its contrast to that which builds up the Body in cooperation with the Spirit's work, it is best to see *σαπρὸς* as referring to that which inhibits the Body's growth or even reverses it.⁴³ Cooperating with the Spirit to build

⁴² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 293, 307; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 345-46; Verhey and Harvard, *Ephesians*, 197.

⁴³ *σαπρὸς* literally means evil or harmful, though in the sense of that which is unwholesome and corrupting. Paul contrasts it in 4:29 with that which is *ἀγαθὸς πρὸς οἰκοδομῆν* ("good for building up"). He clearly means to contrast that which is harmful to communal life and the goal of building up the temple with that which is good for it. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 305; O'Brien, *Letter*, 344-45; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 316. Moreover, it helps here to recall the notion of creation described in the last chapter. When God creates, He instills life-giving order, and the blessings of that order are referred to as peace (which also contains the notion of all that is good and of wholesomeness). Paul's contrast here between *σαπρὸς* and *ἀγαθὸς* would appear to be invoking the notion of peace. Just as the logic of the Gospel of peace underlies the ethical instructions in 4:25-28, it is present in 4:29-30 which summarizes those verses. Grieving the Spirit is therefore connected to false dialogue and leads to ruin; true dialogue cooperates with the Spirit and leads to life and peace. *σαπρὸς* is best understood as the opposite of peace. Thielman's observations seem to be directly on point when he observes that Paul's use of *σαπρὸς* in 4:29 generally

up the Body through the true dialogue process constitutes the worthy life – grieving the Spirit is engaging in any form of false dialogue that has the effect of working against that goal.⁴⁴

The importance of this observation is far-reaching and much more convicting than an interpretation that sees 4:29 as referring merely to crude joking or unwholesome talk or 4:30 as some specific sin against the Spirit. Instead, *any* speech that inhibits or destroys the process of building up the Body is covered. Dialogue that grieves the Spirit can include confessional statements, epistemological assertions, and self-justifying truth claims if they work against the Spirit’s goal to build up the Body. Division is a sign of ignorance and immaturity (4:14), and speech that causes disunity or prevents the building up of the one Body of Christ in greater visible unity actively works against and grieves the Spirit (4:29-30). Every church must reevaluate and reform their epistemic practices and consider ways to reunite with other churches, lest they continue to run afoul of these instructions. The consequence of failing in these reforms is that each church and the whole Church will persist in its current state of disunity, as well as diminished doctrinal truth.

5.2.4 Mutual Submission in Every Household

Paul’s dialogue training continues in the household code of 5:22-6:9 as he sets out to show how the logic of the Gospel applies in the household.⁴⁵ However, Paul does not leave the

refers to “any speech that works against ‘the building up of the Body of Christ’” and includes “the theologically deceptive speech of 4:14.” Thielman, *Ephesians*, 316. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 304-07.

⁴⁴ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 346, 348.

⁴⁵ Thielman argues that Gentiles need basic moral instruction to show how the life left behind now that they have been changed by the Gospel should also itself be changed by the Gospel. Paul thus uses the framework of the household code from their culture and “infuses that framework with the theology of the letter’s first three chapters.” Thielman, *Ephesians*, 369. I would argue Thielman is on point and would only add that Paul is also training them how to reason together.

household code fully intact but rather transforms it in light of the Gospel of peace and its overarching principle of mutual submission.⁴⁶ Paul thus shows us how to reform mistaken doctrines and practices in light of the logic of the Gospel of peace, not merely how the Gospel of peace unlocks and underlies all true ethical teachings (as in 4:17-32). Though a discussion of the specific teachings in the household code is beyond the scope here, a brief unpacking of the verses at a high level to show their overall function in Ephesians will help us grasp more about the nature of Paul's intended dialogue training.

Thielman states that Ephesians 5:15-6:9 is a sustained description of the wise life, first in worship and then in the private household.⁴⁷ I have already argued that 5:15-21 stands alone and serves as a mini-summary of the prior instruction beginning in 4:1 and a springboard for the following instruction in 5:22-6:9, with the exhortation to mutual submission in 5:21 serving as the overarching principle in all of Paul's instruction regarding how to fulfill our calling to be filled by the Spirit.⁴⁸ So, while I disagree with Thielman that 5:15-21 is part of the household

⁴⁶ Much has been written about Paul's treatment of the household code and whether he modified it sufficiently in light of the Gospel. Without weighing in on that issue, I note only that Paul does not leave the household code fully intact, instead showing that the Gospel transforms it. Lincoln observes that the exhortation to mutual submission is a distinctive introduction to the household code, showing that whatever roles are appropriate because of the structures imposed by the household, there is an overarching demand of mutual love and service, motivated by each believer's relationship to Christ. He states Paul provides a creative take on the household code, one that accepts the basic patriarchal framework and yet gives it a distinctive Christian modification that radically refocuses the motivations from selfish gain to mutual service and the good of the other. Lincoln ultimately concludes that contemporary Christians can best appropriate Paul's instruction by bringing the heart of the message to bear on the conventions of our time. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 385-86, 392-93.

⁴⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 353.

⁴⁸ Thielman observes that 5:21 serves the dual purpose of transitioning from a description of corporate worship to the next section and as a heading and primary concern of the new section regarding mutual submission in the household. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 365. Hoehner likewise observes that 5:21 is a hinge verse that serves to conclude the characterization of believers filled by the Spirit (5:18) and the following section in which the concept of mutual submission will be applied and developed. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 719-20. Following Thielman and Hoehner regarding this dual purpose of 5:21, I only wish to add that Paul intends the verse to serve as a summary command for all Christian life, both in God's household (i.e., the temple) and in every private household.

code, his observation does help us see that Paul addresses two types of households as part of his endeavor to train members of the Church to reason together based on the logic of the Gospel of peace. His ethical instruction prior to the household code focuses on how the Church should be organized in such a way as to build up the Body of Christ. Paul previously alluded to God as father of every household (3:14-15), and after talking about the public household of the Church, he shifts to private households to show that every aspect of life is to be based upon the logic of the Gospel. Mutual submission is not merely in the Church but in believers' homes as well, and thus in all of their relationships.⁴⁹

Paul thus uses the principle of mutual submission to transform the household code, thereby showing how to evaluate social structures in light of the Gospel of peace. Perhaps more importantly, at least for purposes of the argument here, Paul continues with his training of the Church in these verses, showing us *how* we are to reason together in our ongoing dialogue according to the logic of the Gospel.⁵⁰ Traditional doctrines and practices, no matter how deeply entrenched they may be in our churches and societies, ultimately must be reformed according to

⁴⁹ It was commonly believed in Paul's day that a well-organized society was only possible when the home was put in proper order. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 386; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 722f.; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 366-67. Whether or not Paul shared this belief, we need only see that he understood his audience would have that thought in their minds when they heard him speak of the Church as being properly ordered socially under Christ the Head and according to God's Wisdom. This also explains the abrupt shift from instruction about a well-ordered Church to instruction about a well-ordered home. Summarizing life in the Church in terms of mutual submission, Paul could simply begin talking about the home and its relationships without any transitional introduction. His audience would simply expect it, and the rhetorical effect of such an abrupt transition would be to drive home the point that every relationship among believers should be informed and corrected by the principle of mutual submission and the goal of being filled with God's fullness. 5:21 is thus best seen as a focal point of the practical instruction. Coming off of the summary command to be filled with God's fullness as the Church, Paul's audience would have heard him say we are to do so by mutual submission, and such mutual submission must also occur even in private households.

⁵⁰ Barth states that every "ought" in 5:21-33 is supported by a Christological and ecclesiological "is". He also states that calling husband and wife one flesh is a demonstration and sign of peace between the two. Barth, *Ephesians*, 652, 734-7. He likewise sees the same elements of the Gospel as underlying Paul's treatment and modification of the other two relationships and tells us the three sets of relationships stand for all personal relationships. Barth, 754-58. Paul brings the logic of the Gospel to bear on all relationships, and by so doing, demonstrates how Christians are to reason together to make their calling a reality.

our calling to build up the Body to maturity. Mutual submission, driven by mutual faith and love, must govern all of our relationships. Where it is lacking, so too is a proper response to the Gospel.

5.3 The Mature Body

Given the central role Ephesians 4:13 plays in Ephesians and in my thesis, I must summarize it in light of all that has been said so far. When the teaching ministers and all of the saints cooperate with the Spirit and play their roles in building up the Body, the result is that the one new man, the Body politic consisting of all those in Christ, is brought to full maturity. Paul's vision is of a corporate Body whose members have so fully embraced their calling within the Body that they manifest visible unity and function in a coordinated way. This well-functioning, mature Body of Christ has so fully understood its calling and properly responded to it that it is able to receive and incarnate the Word, thereby manifesting the glory of God in the same way Jesus did when He walked the earth. So mutually trusting and loving are the members of Christ's Body, so marked by peace, so led by Christ and the Spirit, that they fully reflect and embody God's Word. This is of course a vision of the eschatological Church, but we are fully equipped to realize that vision before the eschaton and are called to strive to do so.

Ephesians 4:13 thus states that this fully mature Body of Christ attains the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul is declaring that the various theologies and doctrines of the churches and individual Christians will be refined and become the unified theology and doctrine of the Church. In other words, the practices constituting the corporate way of life in Christ, led by the Spirit and focused on receiving and implementing the Word, result in a mature Body not only capable of fully manifesting God's Word and God's glory but also marked by a unified theology and doctrinal commitment. When seen in this way, it should be

quite obvious that a fully mature Body of Christ that manifests God's Word on the earth can only do so if it speaks with one, unified voice, and this is precisely my point – Paul's message in Ephesians only really makes sense when understood in this way.

5.4 Ecumenical Epistemic Practices

If I am correct, the significance for the Church could not be any greater. For, to put the point another way, the same practices that lead to a holy Church filled with God's fullness are the normative epistemic practices of the Church. It is not by reasoning, by experience, by observation, by historical-critical method, by mere tradition, or by any other method that we are able to discern truth about God and God's Word. True, these and other practices are, in varying degrees, helpful to that cause, and nothing I am suggesting here claims otherwise. Indeed, I have argued Paul trains believers to reason together about the deposit of Faith in light of the logic of the Gospel of peace, and each of the above epistemic practices, in one form or another, would seem to have a place in that dialogue. The claim here is that, while any such practices might be helpful to the cause, Paul's instruction suggests the fundamental practices for understanding and properly receiving God's Word are the very same practices Paul prescribes for daily living – those practices constituting the corporate way of life involving mutual submission under the rule of Christ the King.

People who share an identity and navigate life together will reason together naturally and in a mutually trusting way. When that naturally occurring dialogue is aimed at a common goal of building the temple, is marked by peace and thus mutual faith and love, is organized and guided by the Spirit and focused on the Word – that is to say, as Paul does, when that dialogue occurs “in Christ” – then it will build up the participants into a single Body that incarnates the Word and manifests God's glory.

What makes us a holy, unified Body also makes us understand God's Word clearly, and nothing else does. All other proposed sets of epistemic practices and dialogues are human-made contrivances that not only fail to deliver but also, as a result of such failure, necessarily lead to division within the Church and the churches. Emboldened by confidence in our epistemic practices, we declare it unholy to be in union with those who disagree with us, and we thereby justify dividing the Body of Christ, or remaining in division, according to human contrivances. Doing so, we grieve the Spirit. Paul's vision could not be any different – we mutually submit to one another out of reverence for Christ even when, perhaps especially when, different understandings prevail among us. We put on those practices comprising the corporate way of life that constitutes our calling with the hopeful expectation that, by engaging in a common life, we will begin to understand God's Word in the same way and will continue that trajectory until one day, that last day, we will be in complete agreement. As Paul would have it, doctrinal unity is the result of naturally occurring dialogue under the Headship of Christ; it is not a prerequisite for living the Christian life together.

The ecumenical focus of Ephesians thus comes into sharp view. Paul's notion of the life worthy of the Christian calling consists of a specific kind of dialogue, one that naturally occurs among those who are in Christ and moves them over time towards increased unity. As they cooperate with the Spirit by putting on the practices of mutual submission, they are increasingly made to function as a coordinated Body, becoming the mature man and leaving behind the fragmentation and individualism that mark immaturity. In precisely this way, God completes His creation by finishing his temple-building project, and God's fullness fills the united Church. This has been God's whole purpose in salvation history. Paul's message in Ephesians is aimed at making Christians understand this blueprint and then feel compelled by gratitude to cooperate

in building the temple and thus bless God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing of heaven. That cooperation is itself a dialogue, and to call it anything other than ecumenical would be a mistake. The proper response to the Gospel *is* ecumenical dialogue. Anything other than this vision of the Christian life misses the mark.

CHAPTER 6

A MODEST PROPOSAL

Most of my work so far has been aimed at describing what true ecumenical dialogue looks like, at least according to Paul in Ephesians. In this chapter, I turn to apply that work to the contemporary discussion regarding how the exercise of the Petrine office may be reformed in order that it might be more acceptable to non-Catholic Christians. I will not criticize the Roman Catholic Church or its ecumenical theology, much less presume to speak for it on such matters. As a non-Catholic Christian, I see much to love about the Roman Catholic Church and its current teachings regarding ecumenism. My observations below are offered in the hope that the Petrine ministry may be better enabled to serve as an instrument of unity among all Christians.

My intention in this chapter is to state a case for a modest reform of the Petrine office in a manner consistent with official Roman Catholic teaching. That case is based upon the Gospel as Paul articulates it in the first three chapters of Ephesians and the implications Paul derives from such articulation as he lays them out in the last three. As I discuss below, Paul's argument in Ephesians is a perfect model of the Roman Catholic concept of the "hierarchy of truths" articulated at Vatican II in Section 11 of the *Decree on Ecumenism*. That concept understands the doctrines of the Faith as wholly related to one another, with some doctrines having the highest rank and serving as the fundamental doctrines from which the rest are derived and by which they are interpreted.

The concept was developed in response to the pressing issue of how the Roman Catholic Church might, and might not, be able to move towards doctrinal agreement with other churches in ecumenical dialogue. The approach of most other churches generally is to examine their own doctrines to determine which ones are their essential doctrines and which ones they would be willing to give up for the sake of unity. The concept of the hierarchy of truths takes a different and, in my judgment, more sophisticated approach to the issue. It seeks to say which doctrines are the fundamental ones precisely because they play a central role in expressing the truths of the Faith, serving to shape the other doctrines which must be understood and articulated in light of those fundamental ones. It is a way to conceive of the “essentials” without relegating other doctrines to a negotiable or optional status, thus preserving the idea that all official teachings are true and binding on the faithful. Doctrines can change over time, but they remain true even when they are changed because those changes only come in the form of further developments to express the underlying truths more fully and clearly. Thus, no doctrines may be given up for the sake of unity, since that approach would essentially pit truth and unity against one another. Instead, doctrinal unity can only be achieved when doctrines are developed and articulated more fully and clearly such that all parties see them as expressing truth and thus agree to them.

The reason Vatican II set forth the concept of the hierarchy of truths in the *Decree on Ecumenism* was to declare that their own doctrines can in fact change and that Rome is committed to pursuing those changes for the sake of unity. In other words, though the concept is a statement about the nature of doctrine, it is more precisely about the nature of how doctrine changes, when those changes may occur, and how they are to be brought about. Doctrines change by being developed in the light of increased understanding of the truths which are already expressed in those doctrines, and the result is a clearer and fuller expression of those truths.

Rome is demonstrating how to pursue greater truth and unity at the same time, carving a viable path forward for those who look to and pursue the very same truth – Jesus, the very Word of God – and yet end up with seemingly irreconcilable doctrines. If they disagree, it is not necessarily because one has it right and the others do not. Instead, it is very possible that each church’s doctrines have grasped and articulated the truth of the Faith successfully to a great extent and yet may still need further development if they are to grasp and articulate that truth clearly and fully. The path to unity is not to lay some of those precious doctrines aside, to turn our backs to one another, or to engage in dialogue simply to win others over to our doctrines. Instead, we pursue unity by gaining additional insight into truth, so that we can develop our doctrines into more capable expressions of the truth that all Christians can affirm.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear how the hierarchy of truths should play out in Rome’s continuing ecumenical dialogues. Several of the most prominent Roman Catholic theologians since Vatican II have failed to reach consensus among themselves regarding the required doctrinal consensus that must be achieved with non-Catholic churches for reunion to occur. The hierarchy of truths, meant to clarify the path forward, has not yielded its intended results. Rome has been unable to walk down that path with other churches because its own brightest scholars have been unable to agree among themselves what the hierarchy of truths would require of Rome or the other churches for the desired reunion. This is not because the hierarchy of truths is the wrong approach. Instead, it just needs to be developed further so that the path it provides is clearly illuminated. As I argue below, Paul’s way of proceeding in Ephesians demonstrates an ideal model of the hierarchy of truths at work, shining a much needed light on the path provided by that concept. Furthermore, the message of Ephesians itself shines a second, even brighter

light on the path, showing how the hierarchy of truths ought to be applied in the Church as it lives out its calling through faithful participation in the dialogue which constitutes that calling.

All of this will be fleshed out and made clear through an examination of the ecumenical approaches of Dulles and Kasper, two stalwarts in the Roman Catholic Church who both have many insights to offer the problem at hand. While they disagree in their conclusions regarding what constitutes necessary and sufficient doctrinal agreement for reunion, their agreement on many relevant issues is immense, and both can be seen as providing faithful and penetrating developments and applications of Vatican II's teaching. As I will argue, Kasper's view of what is needed for reunion ultimately proves better based on lessons gleaned from Ephesians, though his view needs further development in that light. I will suggest ways that further development might take shape.

To reach my conclusions on these matters, I will examine each of their views on ecumenism with a focus on what they believe is required for reunion and how they get to their conclusions. After an assessment of Dulles's proposal, I will briefly examine what some prominent Roman Catholic scholars have said about the possibility and need for reforming the exercise of the Petrine office after Vatican II, along with the principles upon which such reform would need to proceed. This examination will enable a better assessment of Kasper's proposal since his proposal is rooted in those same principles, especially as he himself has attempted to understand and develop them in the light of Vatican II. I will also examine what Ephesians might have to say about their respective views on ecumenism, focusing on its insights for the concept of the hierarchy of truths. This will in turn enable me to state a clear proposal regarding how the exercise of the Petrine ministry may be reformed in a manner that would appear to be faithful to Roman Catholic teaching and ought to make that ministry more acceptable to non-

Catholic Christians. I will start with this last point first, showing why such a reform driven by the message of Ephesians should make the headway necessary for the Petrine ministry of unity to be received with gladness. There is great reason to hope such an embrace of the Petrine ministry of unity is close at hand, even if an acceptance of other papal roles may not be, as long as that ministry of unity and its exercise can be reformed and articulated in terms of the Gospel.

6.1 Embracing the Petrine Office As Shepherd of Ecumenism

As Pottmeyer has observed, a lack of a universal ministry outside the Roman Catholic Church has led to negative experiences and led to “a rising hope today in the ecumenical movement that an ecumenical Petrine ministry, exercised in accordance with the gospel, may be a special gift God has for Christianity.”¹ The general consensus among top ecumenists is that the Roman Catholic Church must play a critical role in ecumenism, with the bishop of Rome being the only plausible candidate to oversee an effective ministry of unity.² Indeed, the vast majority of Christians should be agreeable to such a proposal, based upon the results of official ecumenical dialogues. Among them are the Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist churches³ which, when combined with Roman Catholics, comprise approximately three-quarters of all Christians. This would be a very good start for the Church to begin walking together again!

¹ Hermann Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 16.

² Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (eds.), *In One Body Through the Cross* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 54-55.

³ See Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 267-69; Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits* (London: Continuum, 2009), 133-37.

A survey of the writings of top ecumenical theologians from these “subject churches” (as I will call the particular non-Catholic churches named above) on the possibility of the Petrine office serving in a worldwide ministry of unity invokes optimism and provides ideas for how that office must be reformed in order to turn the possibility into a reality. DeVille provides just such a survey of the writings of some of the most prominent Orthodox theologians on the role of Petrine primacy in relation to the Orthodox churches.⁴ Based on his examination of their work, DeVille asserts there are areas of clear consensus and agreement. They all recognize Rome has had primacy throughout the history of the Church and see a present necessity for that primacy. Moreover, they all see a vibrant and active role for the bishop of Rome:

The bishop of Rome, for most Orthodox theologians, would not be a toothless titular head of the church but would have real responsibilities in summoning all the Church together, cautioning the wayward, building up the bonds of brotherly unity, ensuring proper canonical procedures, witnessing to a unity of doctrine and morals even when unpopular, and promulgating the decisions of the synod of bishops of which he would be collegial (and not monarchical) head according to the model of a patriarch and his synod.⁵

DeVille likewise notes there are at least three aspects of the papacy generally rejected by Orthodox theologians. First, there cannot be any bishop with juridical power over other bishops since all “are sacramental equals in their stewardship of the Eucharistic mysteries,” which is the basis for each local church in Orthodox ecclesiology. The one Church is a communion of local churches eucharistically defined. This view is reflected in Trinitarian theology: there is one Church just as there is one God, but the Church exists as a perfect union of the churches just as the Godhead is a perfect union of the three persons. Second, papal primacy is rejected to the extent it is based on juridical or extra-sacramental grounds since it is only legitimate when seen

⁴ Adam DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

⁵ DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 45.

in relationship to a synod of bishops “whose unity is manifested above all in the celebration of one Eucharist.” Third, Roman primacy must not be separated from a clear exercise of conciliarity, synodality, and collegiality, the only legitimate exercises of fraternal episcopal relations allowed under Orthodox theology.⁶ It is clear that all of the Orthodox theologians examined in Deville’s work favor a role for the Petrine office as a ministry of unity over the universal Church, within certain limitations.

Turning to sample what the other subject churches might be willing to accept, I observe what several seasoned ecumenists have said in their contributions to a symposium convoked to respond to the request of John Paul II made in *Ut Unum Sint* that non-Catholic Christians engage him in dialogue about the Petrine ministry.⁷ A Lutheran response given by Meyer states that it is the concept of papal jurisdiction that is most problematic but that a primacy of the Petrine ministry in service of unity among a communion of churches would likely be acceptable to Lutherans if it were made subject to the Gospel.⁸ In an Anglican response given by Hind, he states that all forms of episcopal ministry, including the Bishop of Rome, are ministries of primacy aimed at growth in love and unity and that Anglicans are by no means opposed to the exercise of a worldwide primacy in the service of unity. He goes on to state that organs and ministries for the universal Church are necessary, that Anglicans themselves have had to develop

⁶ Deville, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*, 44-46.

⁷ James Puglisi (ed.), *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999). Though there were of course Orthodox theologians who contributed to this symposium, I will not mention any below since I have treated Orthodox sentiments above and those contributors’ views were adequately addressed by Deville in his examination.

⁸ Harding Meyer, “‘*Suprema autoritas ideo ab omne errore immunis*’: The Lutheran Approach to Primacy.” In *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 15-34.

them within their own communion, and that no one other than the Bishop of Rome would be a viable candidate for a universal ministry of unity.⁹

Wainwright suggests the Roman Catholic Church describe the Petrine ministry in terms of truth and love and as a presiding ministry which helps Church growth, in order that Methodists may one day come to recognize a more prominent role for the Petrine ministry. After reviewing the results of the official Methodist-Catholic dialogues, Wainwright concludes with a suggestion that the pope invite churches recognized as being in real, if imperfect, communion with the Roman Catholic Church to cooperate in formulating a statement of the Gospel that all can agree on. Not only would this result in a single Gospel that could be proclaimed worldwide, the process of such a cooperative and productive process could also provide additional light on the nature of the primacy of the Petrine office.¹⁰

Providing a Reformed view, Vischer argues that a personal ministry of unity in service of the Church would likely be acceptable to Reformed churches given their recent experiences and developments that have seen the need and benefit such a role in other inter-church activities. He believes the Church should engage in dialogues about the “core of the Christian message” and that doing so will enable more clarity and agreement regarding how a ministry serving the unity of the universal Church may be fashioned in order to lead it to a more effective witness.¹¹ A Baptist response was given by Geldbach, and though it was, not surprisingly, much less

⁹ Bishop John Hind, “Primacy and Unity: An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue.” In *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 35-57.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Wainwright, “‘The Gift Which He on One Bestows, We All Delight to Prove’: A Possible Methodist Approach to a Ministry of Primacy in the Circulation of Love of Trust.” In *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 59-82.

¹¹ Lukas Vischer, “The Ministry of Unity and the Common Witness of the Churches Today.” In *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 137-51.

optimistic, it did leave room to hope such free associations of churches may likewise join the effort under the right circumstances. Observing there is very little room for agreement, he marshals together practical arguments and parameters that may make Petrine primacy acceptable, much like Vischer's argument does. Thus, Geldbach says the Petrine office could serve a limited role as spokesman and facilitator of dialogue in a collegial manner, not only with bishops but also with other representatives of God's people.¹²

An articulation of the Petrine ministry and its exercise in accordance with and in service of the Gospel would seem to go a long way towards winning acceptance of the Petrine ministry by many non-Catholic Christians, even if some such as the Baptists might still require more.¹³ Ramsey's "The Gospel and the Catholic Church" provides substantial help towards such an articulation, containing a particularly insightful analysis of how a robust understanding of the Gospel helps shape the proper life and structure of the Church.

Ramsey's general argument is that the structure of the Church expresses the truth about Christ and Christians and that it grew organically over time, moving from baptism, Eucharist, and apostles in New Testament times to baptism, Eucharist, bishops, the Bible, and the Creeds.¹⁴

¹² Erich Geldbach, "Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: A Baptist Perspective." In *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church*, ed. James Puglisi (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 153-69.

¹³ I cannot help observe that Reformed and Baptist theologies tend to minimize the social dimensions of the Gospel. If they came to agree on an understanding of the Gospel as I have outlined it in my examination of Ephesians, I suspect they may be much more eager to explore a universal ministry of unity and even accept that the Petrine office is the only viable candidate given the deeply held convictions of other Christians. Given the centrality of the Gospel to all of the traditions I have mentioned above, I remain convinced that a deeper understanding of the Gospel shared by all is essential to laying the groundwork for the acceptance of the Petrine ministry of unity by non-Catholic Christians. The shared, deeper understanding of the Gospel could also serve to reform and limit the Petrine office's role within ecumenism without the necessity of otherwise reforming or limiting the papacy within the Roman Catholic Church, though I suspect such an enhanced understanding of the Gospel would likely lead to such reforms as well.

¹⁴ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2009), 48-49.

He argues that each of those marks, both in New Testament times and afterwards, reflected the message of the Gospel and were all tested over time against that message. They all bear testimony to the Gospel itself, proclaiming it to the world in word and deed.¹⁵ He notes the office of the papacy was a later development, and it likewise must be tested in the same manner, in light of the Gospel.¹⁶ In short, “the Gospel of God [is] uttered in the one Body by its whole structure” and that structure sprang from the Gospel to produce the visible and ordered Church, not institutionally but organically as the one Body of Christ grew organically.¹⁷ Ramsey eloquently summarizes the importance of church order to the proclamation of the Gospel:

To assert that Church order is thus related to the Gospel is unpopular in many modern theological circles. It is widely assumed that a deeper understanding of that Gospel brings an indifference to Church order. But Baptism and Episcopacy are part of the utterance of God’s redemptive love, and they proclaim that men’s love is made perfect only by the building up of the one Body in which alone, by the due working of all its parts, the truth that is in Jesus is finally learned.¹⁸

Certain aspects of order have proven indispensable in the Church’s attempts to proclaim and embody the Gospel faithfully. Too many Christians fail to appreciate this deep insight. The Gospel itself, when properly understood and lived out over time, leads organically to certain practices of church order that prove necessary to a faithful response to the Gospel. Directly to the point of ecumenism, the Gospel’s focus on peace as reconciliation and consequent unity among those in Christ requires certain structures within the Church to serve as instruments to bring about visible unity. Without those instruments of unity, it will be virtually impossible to

¹⁵ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 54-55.

¹⁶ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 55.

¹⁷ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 56.

¹⁸ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 56.

live out the Gospel's mandate to embody the Gospel. The Petrine ministry is one such instrument of unity that was generally accepted in the first millennium in the way it had been developed by the Church within that period but has now become an obstacle to unity. It need not and must not remain as an obstacle if ecumenism is to have any real chance at all. Ramsey's insight would seem to help non-Catholic Christians understand the value of the Petrine ministry as an instrument of unity.

Ramsey goes on to argue that the Petrine office has no more primacy than to focus and express the one authority of the apostles, and he ultimately concludes that, despite its historical development beyond this function, the Petrine office may yet play a special role as an organ of unity and authority in the reunited Church of the future.¹⁹ He adds that the discovery of the precise functions of the Petrine office in the reunited Church comes by means of the same organic growth of the Body, the same development out of and expression of the Gospel that brought about the other structures of the Church:

[T]he discovery of its precise functions will come not by discussion of the Petrine claims in isolation but by the recovery everywhere of the Body's organic life, with its Bishops, presbyters and people. In this Body Peter will find his due place, and ultimate reunion is hastened not by the pursuit of "the papal controversy" but by the quiet growth of the organic life of every part of Christendom.²⁰

Ramsey's analysis and claims echo Paul's message in Ephesians and have much to offer the Body today as it sets about to establish a role for the Petrine ministry of unity all in the Church can accept. Success in this endeavor will only come about through a deeper understanding of the Gospel brought about through a patient dialogue among all those in Christ.

¹⁹ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 61, 193.

²⁰ Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 194.

What becomes clear through this brief overview of some of the most prominent non-Catholic voices within ecumenism is that a Petrine ministry of unity, as a shepherd over ecumenical efforts, could in fact be acceptable to many non-Catholic churches given the right parameters. Specifically, the Petrine office and its exercise would need to be reformed and articulated in accordance with and in service of the Gospel. A better understanding of the Gospel, not least by non-Catholic Christians who have failed to understand its horizontal dimensions (and thus also the full nature of its vertical dimensions), will be necessary. Two questions addressed to the Roman Catholic Church thus emerge. First, does Roman Catholic teaching allow the reforms to and limited exercise of the Petrine office necessary to make it acceptable to non-Catholic Christians? It would certainly seem to, as I will discuss briefly below. Second, if its teaching does allow for such a reformed and limited exercise of the Petrine office in a universal ecumenism, is Rome willing? Though less certain, I am optimistic Rome is willing, based on its official teaching to date and what some of its most prominent ecumenical scholars have said. I believe a clear path forward will increase those chances.

As I will argue, Ephesians helps illumine a path already described by but not made clear at Vatican II, and it does so in a manner rooted in the Gospel. It thus enables an articulation of the Petrine ministry and its exercise in terms of the Gospel in a manner that would appear to build a bridge between Rome and the subject churches. After an overview of the clarification gained by the approaches to ecumenism offered by Dulles and Kasper, I will then turn to a deeper discussion of the hierarchy of truths that would seem to compel Rome towards such a reform, attempting to lay out the principles by which it would be accomplished and ultimately the contours that I believe must define it.

6.2 Assessing Dulles's Proposal

In my first chapter, I affirmed Dulles's proposal of an ecumenism conceived of as an exchange of gifts, articulated in his 2007 article "Saving Ecumenism From Itself."²¹ As a way to launch this section, I quote a seminal passage from that article regarding what Dulles would find acceptable in a proposed "exchange of gifts" notion of ecumenism:

Each party will engage in ecumenical dialogue with its own presuppositions and convictions. As a Roman Catholic, I would make use of the methods by which my church derives its distinctive doctrines. *I would also expect that any reunion to which Catholics can be a part would have to include as part of the settlement the Catholic dogmas, perhaps reinterpreted in ways that we do not now foresee.* Other churches and ecclesial communities will have their own expectations. But all must be open to possible conversion. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to lead us, as Vatican II recommended, "without obstructing the ways of divine Providence and without prejudging the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit." (Emphasis added).²²

The passage shows what might be expected if we were to begin the analysis based on Paul's notion of dialogue in Ephesians – that we engage in dialogue without abandoning our fundamental beliefs. It also states plainly that the Roman Catholic Church must be open to reforming its doctrines as part of that dialogue, in accordance with Vatican II, just as all other churches must also be. However, the details of the debate within the Roman Catholic Church about which doctrines are open to such reform, precisely how to go about reviewing those doctrines, and just how much doctrinal consensus is necessary before reunion is possible are all hidden behind the italicized language of the passage. This is where the notion of the "hierarchy of truths" plays out, where the real debate within the Roman Catholic Church occurs.

²¹ Avery Dulles, "Saving Ecumenism From Itself." *First Things* 178 (December 2007), 23-27.

²² Dulles, "Saving Ecumenism From Itself," 27.

In an earlier article entitled “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement: Ten Theses,”²³ Dulles provides a penetrating analysis of the key issues that go to the heart of the debate and offers his own positions on them, showing his wisdom and keen insight from his years as a prominent participant in Rome’s ecumenical efforts. A review of the main points in that article will enable us to better understand and answer the central questions at stake here. Generally speaking, Dulles’s views appear consistent with the message of Ephesians and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. However, as I will argue, Dulles ultimately misses the mark in his conclusion regarding what Rome should count as sufficient doctrinal agreement for its reunion with other churches. While Dulles is consistent with Roman Catholic teaching on this point, so too are other prominent Roman Catholic ecumenical scholars who have offered alternatives. As I will show, his insights on the way to his ultimate conclusion are invaluable, though he ultimately reaches a flawed conclusion.

Dulles begins his article with the basic premise that some measure of doctrinal consensus, a measure less than complete agreement on all matters of doctrine, is a prerequisite for church unity. There are disputed questions in every church, and different theological schools of thought on those questions can be healthy and helpful for making progress toward greater doctrinal clarity and for making doctrines relevant to changing times. So, there is room for original thought and discussion, and these are indeed necessary. Dulles then cites Section 11 of the *Decree on Ecumenism* for the importance of the concept of the “hierarchy of truths” in ecumenism. He notes Rome embraced this concept as the way to differentiate between its essentials and non-essentials, and while Vatican II did not specify a list of essential doctrines, it

²³ Avery Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement: Ten Thesis.” *Theological Studies* 47 (1986), 32-47.

strongly suggested some truths are central and foundational, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation.²⁴ As I have already stated, how this concept of the hierarchy of truths is to be understood and applied remains the central issue today among Roman Catholic scholars, with major implications for ecumenism. The remainder of Dulles's article focuses on this issue.

Dulles thus observes Vatican II's recognition of a graded hierarchy of truths does not lead to the conclusion certain dogmas are optional, though it nevertheless does have important ecumenical consequences because it enables Rome to recognize Christian communion as extending beyond the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Citing Sections 3 and 22 of the *Decree on Ecumenism* and Congar, he notes that Vatican II's ecumenism "is based on an ecclesiology of imperfect communion, which is in need of being further developed." Importantly, he also observes that this concept of imperfect communion has implications for the possibility of Eucharistic sharing, a topic I will address briefly in a separate section below. He then draws the conclusion Vatican II teaches that a considerable measure of ecclesial communion exists "where there is agreement in the basic essentials of the Christian faith, and the practice of valid baptism." He makes his conclusion more concrete by observing that "the mainline churches, whether Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Protestant, already share in common a large fund of doctrinal materials" in upholding the Scriptures, the ancient creeds, and, in most cases, the Trinitarian and Christological decisions of the first four councils. "Churches sharing such a wealth of common beliefs, and the kind of worship and practice that flow from

²⁴ Dulles, "Paths to Doctrinal Agreement," 32-35.

them, ought not to regard one another as strangers.”²⁵ On this point, Dulles shows a strong similarity to Ramsey as discussed above.

Dulles then gets to the heart of the matter, asking whether this degree of agreement on doctrinal materials and the worship and practice that flow from them is sufficient for them to come into communion with Rome, or must they also positively affirm other dogmas defined by the Roman Catholic Church which have so far been rejected. He notes most Roman Catholic theologians at the time of his article in 1986 said such dogmas must be positively affirmed, though Rahner has suggested the level of agreement already attained is sufficient as long as churches agree not to condemn the binding doctrines of other churches as being contrary to the Gospel. Dulles also states that Rahner believes such agreement already exists and that God is therefore calling the “mainline churches” (i.e., the subject churches) to reunite now. Though Dulles doubts such agreement already exists, he does think it could be possible soon. He then turns to the more substantive question of whether such agreement is sufficient for reunion.²⁶

In response to Rahner, Dulles cites Ols’s view that doubting or denying the truth of a dogma is in effect to reject the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching authority and thus to separate oneself from its communion. While Dulles generally agrees with that view, he wishes to qualify it on the basis of his remaining observations which tend in the direction of Rahner. Thus, he states that “something of the Rahner proposal can perhaps be salvaged.” To start, he believes it would be beneficial for the subject churches to take the actual step of recognizing one another’s binding doctrines as not manifestly contrary to the Gospel, since that would bring “them into

²⁵ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 35-36.

²⁶ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 36-38.

closer communion.”²⁷ From this point on, Dulles’s analysis moves closer to the central issue of how to understand the hierarchy of truths as it applies to ecumenism.

Dulles therefore asks whether certain doctrinal developments formulated in response to certain pressing issues in past times might no longer be needed when those issues have subsided. If that is the case, it may be possible to conclude those particular formulations are “relatively remote from the center of the Christian faith” and thus allow some “doctrinal leniency” for the sake of unity. In support of this suggestion, he cites the reasoning of the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15:28 and the Section 18 of the *Decree on Ecumenism* which relied on that reasoning for the principle that, in order to maintain or restore unity, one must impose no burden beyond what is indispensable. Dulles therefore proposes “in the interests of unity the churches should insist only on the doctrinal minimum required for a mature and authentic Christian faith, and that doctrines formulated in response to past historical crises should be carefully reviewed to see whether they must be imposed as a test of orthodoxy today.”²⁸ Thus, we can clearly see at least one way Dulles wants to flesh out the concept of the hierarchy of truths in ecumenism. If a doctrinal formulation, or some part of it, is only applicable in certain historical contexts, it may very well be of lower rank in the hierarchy of truths and could therefore possibly be removed from a list of the doctrines which must be shared for church unity. Moreover, the Christian call to unity would seem to require us to take steps to review our cherished doctrines to determine a minimum requirement we may impose on others.

²⁷ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 38-39.

²⁸ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 39-41.

Turning to discuss “a hermeneutics of unity,” a label he adopted from Ratzinger, Dulles begins a series of critical observations that help sharpen the issues in play and illumine a clearer path through them. First and foremost, the principle that doctrinal formulations are historically conditioned has been increasingly accepted in the various churches over the last several decades. Therefore, “dogmatic formulations are sometimes in need of being reinterpreted to make them intelligible, acceptable and relevant in a later age.” He continues by observing a principle central to my own analysis in this work: “A particular problem arises with regard to the doctrines defined in view of the historical experiences of a single ecclesiastical body, such as Roman Catholicism, to which other Christians were not a party.”²⁹ This “particular problem” stems from the dynamic I have described as the separate development of doctrines through the naturally occurring dialogues that take place within different identity groups among those who are mutually submitted. That dynamic leads to expressions of doctrinal truths that the participants in the dialogue (the “insiders”) believe but that very frequently will be rejected by those who belong to other identity groups (the “outsiders”) who have developed their own doctrinal expressions separately. This dynamic and what I will call the “outsider problem” produced by it were considered by Paul, and his answer to it stands at the center of his message in Ephesians. We will only come to true, unified belief about the Faith given to us by Jesus if we take part in the dialogue comprising our calling. I will come back to this thought again and expand upon it after seeing how Dulles proposes we handle the problem and after considering what insights Kasper has to offer.

²⁹ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 41.

Dulles turns next to a “bold and creative proposal” Ratzinger first made in 1976 in the context of a possible reunion between Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians and continued to advance thereafter. Ratzinger’s proposal, made in light of the insight that doctrinal formulations are historically conditioned and lead to the “outsider problem,” was that Rome must not require more of a primacy doctrine from the East than was formulated and practiced during the first millennium. In response to criticism suggesting Ratzinger seemed to endorse something akin to Rahner’s view (with which Ratzinger has expressly disagreed) that reunion is possible without insistence on positive assent to second millennium decrees on primacy, Ratzinger restated his position in terms of what he then dubbed a “hermeneutics of unity.” That hermeneutics requires a “reading” of the doctrinal expressions of both parties in the context of the whole tradition and a deeper understanding of Scripture, and it includes an investigation of “how far decisions since the separation have been stamped with a certain particularization both as to language and thought” that might well be transcended without compromising the content of the statements.³⁰

Dulles summarizes a proposal similar to Ratzinger’s made by Congar which holds that doctrines are sometimes too narrowly stated in terms of a given social and intellectual framework and thus may need to be “reappropriated” in terms of a larger context in the light of a fuller reflection on Scripture and tradition. Congar couches his proposal within the concept of “reception” by which a church seeks to understand how its inherited doctrines were shaped by their historical context in order to apply them to their current context in service of the Gospel. Dulles also cites Lindbeck for the insight that the doctrinal formulations of one church or tradition have often been misunderstood by believers of other traditions who have been shaped

³⁰ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 41-42.

differently by the cultural-linguistic components of their own traditions.³¹ In all of these proposals, we can see confirmation of and insight into the so-called “outsider problem.” My simple solution, following Paul, is that we walk as “insiders,” as I discuss further below.

Dulles concludes his discussion of the historical conditioning of doctrinal formulations and the outsider problem with an affirmation: “Through reinterpretation in a broader hermeneutical context, the limitations of controverted doctrinal formulations can often be overcome, so that they gain wider acceptability.” This “hermeneutics of unity” can, in some cases, lead to joint reformulations acceptable to the participant parties, but when it does not, we can sometimes still say that substantial agreement has been reached without requiring the parties to assent to an identical doctrinal formulation. To support this idea, Dulles cites the long-held principle that no one expression can be adequate to express the mystery apprehended in the Faith. He also refers to Congar’s discussion of the *filioque* controversy between East and West in which Congar states both sides’ formulations of the mystery experienced may be coherent and complete although in some respects unsatisfactory, and that neither can be superimposed on the other. Finally, he cites Section 17 of the *Decree on Ecumenism* as suggesting “the possibility of a certain dogmatic pluralism,” noting it remarked that the differing doctrinal formulations of the Eastern and Western churches should often be seen as complimentary rather than conflicting.³²

Dulles ultimately embraces the possibility of such pluralism and adds his own personal experience as support:

Doctrinal agreement, therefore, need not take the form of a submission by one group to the formulated positions of the other. It may occur by means of a mutual recognition of the complementarity of formulas that cannot be reduced to a common conceptual

³¹ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 42-44.

³² Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 44-5.

denominator ... The ecumenical dialogues of the past few decades have made it clear, at least in my opinion, that the antitheses were never so sharp as appeared; for the two parties were using the same words with different shades of meaning, and different words to mean much the same thing. The meaning itself was richer than the conceptual content of the words.³³

His version of the hermeneutics of unity thus views some degree of doctrinal diversity as legitimate, at least when that diversity is the product of different groups developing their doctrines separately over time. Yet, Dulles would not seem to let this principle run very far. His hermeneutics of unity comprises all of his qualifications to Ols's view, and it only provides room for a small degree of doctrinal diversity in particular circumstances and for particular reasons.

We should not be surprised then when Dulles states his ultimate conclusion on the matter. Contrasting his stance with the Rahner proposal, Dulles says "I am of the opinion that considerable time and effort will be needed to achieve the kind of doctrinal agreement needed for full communion between churches as widely separated as the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic."³⁴ He goes on to suggest such agreement must be accomplished over three stages. First, the churches could jointly declare their allegiance to the teaching of Scripture and to the interpretations of it given by the ancient creeds and early ecumenical councils. Such a declaration may be possible in large measure now, and it would "already assure a large measure of communion." Second, the churches can gradually advance toward declaring some or all of the other churches' doctrinal positions are not contrary to the Gospel. Third, the churches can then progress to the point of positively accepting one another's binding doctrinal formulations, presumably allowing for the limited doctrinal pluralism he took great pains to carve out in his

³³ Dulles, "Paths to Doctrinal Agreement," 45.

³⁴ Dulles, "Paths to Doctrinal Agreement," 46.

hermeneutics of unity discussion. Only after all three stages have been completed between any two churches will they have reached the doctrinal agreement necessary for full communion between them. He does note that the ecumenical effort pays off in rich rewards all along the way, though this does nothing to scale back what we may refer to as a “maximalist” view of the degree of doctrinal assent that Rome would require for reunion with other churches.³⁵

As I claimed above, there is much to be admired and gleaned from Dulles’s penetrating analysis, though his maximalist conception of the doctrinal consensus required for reunion is ultimately flawed. I am now in a position to substantiate this claim and, more importantly, repurpose his deep insights in a better manner. To begin, I observe that, after all of his deep insights, Dulles seems arbitrarily to reach his ultimate conclusion. His deep insights could just as easily have been applied so that reunion is possible after his first or second stage is completed. More specifically, he failed to connect his deep insights to the application of the hierarchy of truths in any necessary way. The main insights he put forth to flesh out that concept were the historical conditioning of doctrinal formulations by separate groups, the so-called “outsider problem,” the “hermeneutics of unity,” and the possibility of some degree of legitimate doctrinal diversity. Separately or taken as a whole, do these insights lead necessarily to the conclusion that full communion between two churches requires that they first complete Dulles’s third stage? If not, then we may accept his deep insights without accepting his conclusion regarding how they should be applied when fleshing out the hierarchy of truths. While his insights do advance the discussion, they do not work to settle the ultimate question about how that concept should be applied in Rome’s ecumenical endeavors.

³⁵ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 46-47.

I have already addressed each of his insights to a greater or lesser degree in earlier sections of this work,³⁶ attempting to show how such insights and others are embedded in Paul's message in Ephesians and, in particular, his notion of ecumenical dialogue. I suggest if we bring the light of Paul's message in Ephesians to bear on the concept of the hierarchy of truths put forth by Vatican II, the same insights Dulles has offered can be fully situated within Paul's message in a simpler, clearer way. Moreover, as Paul expresses and applies those insights, it is clear that churches need only complete something very similar to Dulles's first stage before they are to put on the practices of mutual submission out of their reverence for Christ and operate as Church. Dulles's second and third stages thus simply describe the continued progress of the Church towards full unity of the Faith, one of the results it progressively realizes when Christians take up their calling to walk together in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Ultimately, Dulles's exchange of gifts model of ecumenism is sound, for his insights which underlie that model can be tied directly to Paul's message in Ephesians. However, his conclusion about the doctrinal consensus required for reunion does not flow necessarily from his deep insights.³⁷

³⁶ I have described his notion of the historical conditioning of doctrinal formulations by separate groups and the so-called "outsider problem" in terms of separately developed doctrinal formulations that are likely to be rejected by those who did not participate in the dialogue which led to their formulation or in subsequent dialogues in which they eventually become insiders. Likewise, I have described the "hermeneutics of unity" and legitimate doctrinal diversity in terms of mutual submission and reasoning together, in spite of our doctrinal differences, to determine how to apply the light of the Gospel to all matters of the Church's life. While my descriptions are not perfect parallels to Dulles's, they nonetheless address the same phenomena at work in the dialogue among the Church's members and some of the main issues involved in development of the Church's doctrines. I have yet to connect those concepts to the hierarchy of truths and state definitively what degree of doctrinal consensus I believe ought to be required for communion.

³⁷ Instead, what drives his conclusion is his mere acceptance of Ols's view as the proper starting point, seemingly because, as he states, most Roman Catholic scholars at the time of his article stood against Rahner's view. He merely presumed the more traditional view and placed the burden of proof squarely on proponents of Rahner's. This is prudent as far as it goes, since proposals against traditional doctrines should bear the burden of proof. However, it is not definitive, nor can it withstand increased insight. As I will argue, Ols's view stems from a conception of the Church developed during the second millennium and will likely be reformed beyond Dulles's own qualifications once Vatican II's project to recover first millennium teachings is fully realized. That recovery project can and should be accomplished, I believe, in the light of Ephesians.

Kasper provides a clearer way forward. After a brief look at the possibility of and guiding principles for reforming the Petrine ministry, I will turn to Kasper's view on the nature and trajectory of that reform as well as his view of ecumenism, to clarify a viable path to reform.

6.3 Reforming the Petrine Office In Light of the Two Vatican Councils

6.3.1 Possibility of Reform

Several prominent Roman Catholic scholars have recently observed that the development of the doctrine of papal infallibility during the second millennium culminated in its definition at Vatican I in 1870 and, though not inconsistent with Church teaching in the first millennium, largely omitted the central themes of the first millennium from that definition. Among those scholars, Schatz observes that concrete claims of a primacy of the Bishop of Rome over the whole Church cannot be found during the first three centuries of the Church and that no one during that time frame would have said he had the power over all bishops to speak the last word on matters affecting the whole Church or even head over all Christians.³⁸ Yet, Schatz rightly asserts this fact does not entail such a primacy today is therefore illegitimate, arguing instead in much the same way Ramsey does that it is only over the course of history that the Church becomes increasingly aware of the need for and propriety of certain structures to preserve and faithfully transmit the Faith deposited in the Church by Christ. So, when the Church became aware of the need for an enduring center of unity to maintain itself in the truth of the Faith, it looked to its own traditions and Scriptures and saw new significance in the role Jesus gave Peter

³⁸ Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 36.

in founding the Church, thus seeing a primitive image and model of unity that ought apply to the entire Church.³⁹

Regardless of how one characterizes the role of the Bishop of Rome in the earliest centuries of the Church, it is clear at least that he played a prominent role throughout the first millennium that was honored and generally accepted throughout the Church despite some disputes at that time about the particulars of his role that eventually contributed to the split between East and West. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the West went on to develop his role further after that split, casting his primacy in a more jurisdictional way than was typically done in the first millennium, with that development reaching its climactic official expression at Vatican I. While the details of that development in the second millennium can likewise be characterized in different ways, and those characterizations usually lead to different appraisals of Vatican I, this broad understanding of the different developments in the two millennia is generally shared. The real debate today focusses on how Vatican II relates to Vatican I and, more importantly for the discussion here, how that relationship affects what might be possible in Rome's ecumenical efforts.

Vatican I has been the stumbling block for non-Catholic Christians, and if its definition of primacy is normative for how the Petrine office must be exercised, non-Catholic Christians will almost certainly continue to reject it. However, if Vatican II clarifies and develops Vatican I in such a way that enables the Petrine office to be exercised differently in the current age of increased cooperation, then there is hope. Happily, there is a general sentiment shared by some of the most prominent Roman Catholic scholars that the Petrine office can in fact be exercised

³⁹ Schatz, *Papal Primacy*, 36-38.

differently today.⁴⁰ The differences among these scholars focus on the issue of how far the Roman Catholic Church can go to reform the Petrine office based on their various understandings of Vatican II. Even in those differences, it appears there is enough consensus to enable the reforms I will suggest in my modest proposal, especially when the light of the message of Ephesians is brought to the discussion. That consensus comes from and revolves around a recovery of the first millennium understanding of *communio* and the Eucharist that drive Vatican II's interaction with Vatican I.

6.3.2 Pottmeyer's Balancing of the Vatican Councils

Pottmeyer argues that, from our current vantage point, we can look back at Vatican I and see that the primacy and authority of the pope were formulated there “in a consciously one-sided way,” a “deliberate one-sidedness” that was “not intended to change anything in the original constitution of the church as sanctified by tradition.”⁴¹ Because Vatican I led the development of a more centralized structure to the Roman Catholic Church in contradiction to and obscuration of certain aspects of traditional teachings regarding the Petrine office, the leaders of Vatican II sought to end that centralization by means of a recovery of those traditional teachings and integration of them with the teachings of Vatican I. Thus, Vatican II sought to situate the teachings of Vatican I in the wider context of all of its teachings, specifically within the first millennium understanding of the Church as *communio*. Vatican I was concluded prematurely

⁴⁰ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 261, 309; Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*. Translated by Ruch C.L. Gritsch and Eric W. Gritsch (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 47, 70, 77; Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, the Eucharist, and Church Unity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 85; Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 20, 131-32; Dulles, “Saving Ecumenism From Itself,” 27.

⁴¹ Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 48.

due to the outbreak of war, and its agenda was left incomplete. Vatican II thus sought to complete the agenda of Vatican I and place its doctrinal expressions in the broader context of the whole of Rome's teachings, and this was accomplished in light of the recovery of the principle of *communio* that had taken place in the intervening years between the two councils.⁴²

Pottmeyer describes the two councils as a debate between the doctrines that had been developed during the second millennium and defined at Vatican I with the doctrines developed during the first millennium and recovered and defined more fully at Vatican II. That debate was between the centralizing forces of the conception of papal primacy in jurisdictional terms (i.e., pope as monarch overseeing other bishops) and the collegial forces of the conception of papal primacy in terms of *communio* (i.e., pope as head of the college of bishops). Jurisdictional primacy developed over the course of the second millennium in response to the divisive pressures that had taken hold among Christians and the increasing impact of the rise of modernism, reaching a climax toward the end of the nineteenth century when Vatican I was convened to define primacy in the terms necessary for the day.⁴³ The principle of *communio* that had then been developed and employed during the first millennium when the Church manifested greater unity had been increasingly relegated to the background during the second millennium, until its recovery during the twentieth century.

Thus, the debate between the two Vatican councils served to deepen the Church's awareness of the necessity and truth of both councils' fundamental truths, thereby enabling the Roman Catholic Church to develop and express its doctrine of the Church more fully and

⁴² Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 7, 16, 20, 35.

⁴³ Pottmeyer provides a lengthy and detailed account of this historical process in chapters 2-5 of his book.

completely.⁴⁴ In this light, Rome is seen as properly developing its doctrines over the course of its history in response to the issues it confronts along the way.⁴⁵ As Pottmeyer observes, however, the Second Vatican Council, like the first, was unable to complete its agenda of fully integrating the two truths that had been developed during the first and second millennia.⁴⁶ While Vatican II had provided a necessary contextualization of Vatican I's primacy of jurisdiction through a recovery of *communio*, thus putting the two underlying truths into some measure of proper balance, it has yet to complete the development of Rome's doctrine of the Church in a way that gives full expression to both truths. Instead, the balancing achieved by Vatican II's further development of Vatican I has provided a building site and the foundations upon which to construct a more fully developed expression of the truths about the Church and the proper exercise of the Petrine office within it.⁴⁷

6.4 Kasper's Approach to Reform and to Ecumenism

6.4.1 Kasper's Trajectory For Reform

Kasper likewise sees Vatican II as paving the way forward for completion of the unfinished project of a fuller development of the doctrine of the Church and the primacy of the Petrine office, arguing that the two Vatican councils must be interpreted together. He thus states that Vatican I defined primacy "for exceptional situations in which the normal instances break

⁴⁴ Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 131.

⁴⁵ This process strongly resembles Paul's notion dialogue in Ephesians and echoes many of Dulles's insights discussed above. It represents a dialogue among those in communion with Rome that spans across various cultural contexts over the course of two thousand years, guided and led by the teaching ministers who reflect deeply on the various doctrinal expressions that emerged by different groups over the course of that history and sought ways to integrate them so that a greater unity of faith among those groups emerges over time.

⁴⁶ Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 110.

⁴⁷ Pottmeyer, *Towards*, 124-25, 128-29.

down or fail and the normal ways of communication are not possible” and that “[t]he Petrine ministry must be led out of a historically conditioned narrowness and must be integrated again into catholic wideness of the *communio ecclesiarum*.”⁴⁸ Vatican II took an essential step forward in this regard and placed Vatican I’s teaching on primacy within a “more comprehensive perspective” and the “whole of ecclesiology” by means of its focus on “the Church as the people of God and as *communio*.”⁴⁹ He notes Vatican II has nonetheless left open certain questions both within the Roman Catholic Church and within the context of ecumenism, a fact he says is revealed by the results of that council. While it “opened many doors into the future,” some have been closed again as Rome has moved towards a new form of centralism in the post-conciliar confusion regarding how to integrate the teachings of the two Vatican councils, despite the fact that the majority of the Vatican II council intended the opposite. He thus concludes that both Vatican I and Vatican II are in need of a “re-reception and further development that is presently only at its very beginning.”⁵⁰

Regarding the primacy of the Petrine ministry within the doctrine of the Church, Kasper suggests the direction of further development and clarification indicated by the two Vatican councils will be an articulation of that role in terms of a “Eucharistic *communio ecclesiology*.”⁵¹ Kasper notes that primacy must be exercised differently in different contexts “depending on changing historical necessities and always for the good and in the best interest of the ecclesial

⁴⁸ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 258.

⁴⁹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 258-59.

⁵⁰ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 260.

⁵¹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 262.

unity.”⁵² Since Vatican II, the Petrine ministry has “stood at the beginning of a new epoch” during which its significance will only increase.⁵³ Furthermore, he observes that the idea of the Church as *communio* in a sense grounded in the nature of the *communio* of the Trinity was the “ecclesiological guiding principle” of Vatican II. That notion of *communio* “has become decisive” for him, and he has developed it further in the context of his participation in ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox theology. In that more developed notion, the Church understood as *communio* becomes concrete reality wherever and whenever the Eucharist is celebrated.⁵⁴ Thus, his suggestion that a further development and clarification of the primacy of the Petrine ministry be made in terms of a “Eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology” is a suggestion that it be grounded in these particular principles, particularly as those principles are further developed and integrated in a more comprehensive way.

Kasper sees two approaches that can be taken to complete this task. The first is rooted in a conception of primacy that sees the essential Petrine function for the whole Church to be “witness, teacher, and guardian” of the Faith and to “watch over the keeping of and unity in the Faith.” The second is rooted in a conception of primacy that sees the essential Petrine function to be “to preside in love (ἀγάπη)” in which ἀγάπη is “a Eucharistic term which means solidarity in the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ given through joint participation in the Eucharist.” In this second approach, the Petrine function is conceived of as a universal pastoral office “having a special responsibility for the Eucharistic community in the Church and between the individual

⁵² Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 261, citing *Considerations on The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church* (Vatican City, 2002), 12.

⁵³ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 261.

⁵⁴ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 21.

churches.” He notes a decision between these two approaches is an open question but that each will require further developments within the Roman Catholic Church and through dialogues with other churches, developments which are not only necessary but also possible.⁵⁵

I believe a thorough understanding of Ephesians avoids a decision between Kasper’s two approaches and instead enables both approaches to be achieved simultaneously. Building on Kasper’s work to clarify the path forward in terms of a Eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology, I will attempt to articulate a way to further develop and clarify the primacy of the Petrine ministry in the light of Ephesians and thus to reform the exercise of the Petrine office in a way that encompasses both of Kasper’s proposed approaches to this task. This proposal will therefore articulate the Petrine office and its exercise in accordance with and in service of the Gospel. A brief overview of some of Kasper’s additional observations regarding *communio*, Eucharist, and ecumenism are first necessary to enable the proposed reform.

6.4.2 Hierarchy of Truths As Tool of Reform

Kasper holds that ecclesiology and ecumenical theology are not foundational truths themselves but rather must be derived from foundational truths through an application of the concept of the hierarchy of truths.⁵⁶ As I suggested above, the hierarchy of truths is a key insight of Vatican II and was the focus of Dulles’s efforts to put forth a conception of the doctrinal consensus needed for reunion and a theology of ecumenism. An analysis of Kasper’s application of the concept of the hierarchy of truths is particularly helpful, not only in contrast to Dulles’s application and resulting conclusions but also to enable us to better appreciate the full extent of

⁵⁵ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 262.

⁵⁶ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 53, 304.

what Paul accomplished in Ephesians. As will be made clear below, Ephesians is a perfect example of Kasper's way of applying the concept of the hierarchy of truths to ecclesiology and ecumenical theology, and the implications of Paul's application are far reaching.

Ecclesiology is a matter of understanding the Church in terms of the fundamentals of the Faith following the ancient axiom of faith seeking understanding. This axiom demands that we unfold the inner logic of what it means to be the Church in a public way by giving a rational account of the doctrine of the Church. Kasper notes three ways of elevating matters of faith into understanding. First, we can do so by means of analogy to natural reasoning, a notion pregnant with insight but beyond the scope of the discussion here.⁵⁷ Second, ecclesiology can and must be derived from the fundamental truths of the faith in a particular way:

[T]he individual truths of faith, including those statements of faith about the Church, must be shown in their inner relation to the whole of faith, and the inner logic and structure of faith must be made visible ... In this, the hierarchy of truths must be respected. This means that the individual doctrines must be interpreted on the basis and in the light of the fundamental doctrine about God and Jesus Christ. Proceeding from the doctrine of God, Christology and Pneumatology, ecclesiology can thus be understood as a coherent and harmonious whole...Ecclesiology thus always stands under a superior standard against which it must be critically and constructively interpreted.⁵⁸

As I will discuss more fully below, Paul endorses this view of the application of the hierarchy of truths to the doctrine of the Church and to ecumenism because this is precisely how his argument proceeds in Ephesians. In other words, Paul did exactly what Kasper says we must do in order to understand the doctrine of the Church. This leads to a second important implication – since Paul has already done this work and therefore embedded it in the foundation of the apostolic teaching, anything else we might be able to say about the doctrine of the Church

⁵⁷ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 53.

⁵⁸ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 53.

must be interpreted and, as necessary, reformed according to what Paul has already laid down definitively.

Kasper's third way of proceeding regarding faith seeking understanding in the realm of ecclesiology is to regard faith in terms of "the purpose and destination of humanity and the world" and then to situate ecclesiology in the context of hope for humanity and the world.⁵⁹ Echoes of Paul's urging of Christians to walk together now in a manner worthy of our eschatological calling as that calling is derived from the Gospel of peace are clearly at work here. This further substantiates the idea above that Ephesians is a definitive teaching regarding the nature of the Church and of ecumenism.

Importantly, Kasper ties this idea of developing an understanding of the Church based on its eschatological calling directly to the life of the Church, including particularly the liturgy. In a discussion about papal infallibility tying together much of what has been said above about Kasper's views, Kasper observes that dogmatic decisions express eschatological truths and are always made within specific historical contexts. Putting the point succinctly, he says "[t]he eschatological definite occurs in historical conditions." As a result, they must be historically interpreted in terms of today's context and language and may also be subsequently deepened and developed.⁶⁰ He then articulates several rules recognized by Rome for "this historical hermeneutic of dogmatic statements," rules which largely overlap and compliment his idea of faith seeking understanding discussed above. We need only note three of those rules in order to see the tie between eschatology, liturgy, and the doctrine of the Church.

⁵⁹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 53-54.

⁶⁰ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 264.

First, the hierarchy of truths must be respected, which he says means individual truths of the Faith must be understood in connection with and in light of “those Christological and Trinitarian statements of faith that are fundamental for them.”⁶¹ We thus see Kasper’s consistent use of the hierarchy of truths to address doctrines related to the Church. Second, the Faith as a whole is not a mere a mere “abstract construction of doctrine” but rather is:

...the faith lived and witnessed in the Church. It manifests itself in the *sensus fidelium* guided by the Holy Spirit and in the different forms of his ways of expression. This includes in particular the liturgy. The liturgy celebrated together is the most important interpretation instance of the Church’s faith.⁶²

The Faith is manifest in and understood in terms of the life of the Church, particularly in its liturgy, and doctrines are thus merely one way of expressing the Faith. Putting these two rules together, we see the hierarchy of truths must be applied so that the life lived and the doctrines expressed by the Church are derived from and reflective of the fundamental truths. Moreover, the Church’s life and doctrines must be in concord with each other, and when they are not, then there has been a failure in how the Church has interpreted one or both of them. Paul’s notion that the Church is to manifest the Word as Christ’s Body on the earth through its walk and its dialogue is echoed by Kasper here. Kasper’s thoughts about the Eucharist and ecumenism discussed below should be seen in terms of this principle of the Faith lived out and witnessed in the life and doctrines of the Church.

In the third rule, dogmas are statements about salvation and must be understood and interpreted in light of the final goal of humanity and his existential life along the way to that salvation. Thus, Kasper says that “dogma is about interpreting the message of God as the

⁶¹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 264-65.

⁶² Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 265.

eschatological salvation of man” and must be explained soteriologically and shown in its spiritual significance.⁶³ Again, we see the importance of the Church’s eschatological calling as directly tied to a proper doctrine of the Church.

So, Church doctrine and the life of the Church must be understood and reflect the truths of the Faith in terms of eschatological salvation. The Church can only be understood properly when its doctrines express the truths of its calling in terms of both the eschatological hope to which it is called and its current way of life in light of that eschatological hope. Moreover, because the Eucharist, when properly understood, is so central to both that eschatological calling and that sojourning calling, it too must be understood and articulated together with and as a central part of the doctrine of the Church. Kasper is right to tie the idea of developing an understanding of the Church based on its eschatological calling directly to the life of the Church, including especially the liturgy. We thus see his vision of a further development of “Eucharistic *communio ecclesiology*” taking shape.

6.4.3 Eucharist, the Gospel, and Unity

Regarding the Eucharist and its centrality to the life and doctrine of the Church, Kasper has much insight to offer into Roman Catholic theology, opening up a path to develop it more fully and in a faithful manner. After some penetrating observations about the Church as the heavenly gathering on the earth⁶⁴ and as the house of Wisdom and house of God⁶⁵ (among other observations), Kasper is then able to describe the Church as the “community of the sanctified”

⁶³ Kasper, *The Catholic Church* 265.

⁶⁴ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 95-97.

⁶⁵ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 101-07.

who share a common participation “in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, and particularly the Eucharist.”⁶⁶ “[T]he celebration of the Eucharist is the climax of ecclesial life.”⁶⁷ He

continues:

In the celebration of the Eucharist the eschatological gathering of God’s people already happens now; through it we are integrated into the great communion of saints spanning heaven and earth ... This again points to the eschatological dimension of the Church and the gathering of the eschatological people of God which begins in it ... So the Eucharist, as real symbol, anticipates the eschatological fulfilment; it is pre-celebrated and experienced as a foretaste of the coming kingdom ... [I]n the Eucharist, so to speak, the curtain into the coming heavenly Jerusalem opens slightly. In it the grey daily routine is interrupted and a piece of heaven on earth can be experienced.⁶⁸

Without need for further elaboration, I merely observe first that so much of what I have attempted to show Paul has taught us in Ephesians can be found in these insights offered by Kasper.⁶⁹ Second and most importantly to Kasper’s own view, we can see in these passages precisely how he believes *communio* and the Eucharist come together to help define the Church in his proposed Eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology, with their focus being on eschatological gathering.⁷⁰ Third, an implication of his deep insight, albeit perhaps an unintended one or at least one that has escaped him, is that there appears to be a contradiction of sorts in his teaching

⁶⁶ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 111.

⁶⁷ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 113.

⁶⁸ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 113.

⁶⁹ Much of his comments about the Church as heavenly gathering, house of Wisdom, temple of God are supported with observations he makes about Ephesians.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity*, 135, 149. Pope Benedict agrees with Kasper on the centrality of these ideas. He poses the question, “How, then, shall the Church actually live and be structured in the concrete so as to conform to the will of the Lord?” He then provides two answers which he says describe the essence of the Church. First, “[t]he Church is Eucharist.” Second, the Church’s name (ἐκκλησία) tells us the Church is “the gathering of men from the four corners of the earth.” He observes that these two answers can be summed up in the one statement “the Church is the dynamic process of horizontal and vertical unification.” It is the “coming together of divided humanity” and “the union of man with the triune love of God.” He notes the early fathers summed up these two aspects of Eucharist and gathering in the word *communio*. Benedict, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, Translated by Adrian Walker (San Francisco [Calif.]: Ignatius Press, 1996), 75-76.

regarding the Eucharist. With the Roman Catholic Church, Kasper understands the Eucharist as participating in the eschatological gathering of those in Christ (including non-Catholic Christians who are in Christ), yet he along with Rome would largely prohibit Eucharistic sharing with non-Catholic Christians. Of course, there are reasons given by the Roman Catholic Church and Kasper himself, but they do not go very far to address the fundamental contradiction.⁷¹

In light of Kasper's observations about how the hierarchy of truths is applied so as to derive and further develop ecclesiology in terms of its eschatological gathering (i.e., *communio*) and the Eucharist which participates in that gathering today, it appears there is only one real way to resolve the contradiction. At the least, Vatican II's ongoing project of recovering first millennium notions of *communio* and the Eucharist in order to develop a deeper understanding and clearer expression of the doctrine of the Church should include a reexamination of this prohibition against Eucharistic sharing. As I will argue below, when we add the light of Ephesians to further develop Kasper's own thinking on the trajectory of Vatican II's ongoing project, it would appear that Eucharistic sharing should be one of the practices of walking together before full doctrinal consensus is achieved. It should be practiced as an instrument of unity in a divided Church.

⁷¹ Kasper states that the basic precondition for admission to the Eucharist is being able to affirm all that Rome teaches takes place in the Eucharistic celebration. Moreover, the Eucharist presupposes that those who take part are "united in the common faith" and "share in full ecclesial fellowship." He states that Christians cannot all come together to share the Eucharist "[f]or the sake of the truth." Because we are all baptized into the one Body but do not share the required unity, we are in an "intermediary situation." He claims that the principle laid down in the early Church stating each Christian receives the Eucharist in the Church of his fellowship cannot be changed. He does note that Vatican II recognized this principle is ultimately subject to the principle that the salvation of souls is the highest law, and thus Vatican II gave some guidance regarding discretionary administration of the Eucharist to non-Catholic Christians in individual cases. Walter Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 71-73, 109, 143-45.

6.4.4 Ecumenism and Its Limits

Kasper's notion of ecumenism, like that of Dulles, is based on a notion that it is to be an exchange of ideas and gifts,⁷² and he provides some helpful details regarding what the exchange looks like in practice as I describe briefly below. Moreover, like Dulles, Kasper states that full visible communion is the goal of Rome's ecumenical efforts, marked by unity in the one faith, the same sacraments, and communion with the successor of Peter.⁷³ However, Kasper is quick to state that Rome's goal is not an ecumenism of return in which other churches simply join the Roman Catholic Church as it exists today, since it as much as other churches is in need of further reform that will come through further development, not least through ecumenical dialogue.⁷⁴

Kasper holds that Vatican II established certain principles as a theological foundation for ecumenical dialogue, setting forth those principles in light of its own doctrine of the Church.⁷⁵ As stated above, Kasper sees ecumenical theology as being derived from foundational truths through the application of the hierarchy of truths, something Vatican II sought to do in establishing a theological foundation for ecumenism in light of its understanding of the Church. Thus, Rome set forth an ecumenical theology which itself was derived from its further developed doctrine of the Church, and that development of the doctrine of the Church was derived from more fundamental doctrines through an application of the hierarchy of truths. In a crude shorthand that illustrates the process, fundamental doctrines about the Trinity, the Gospel, and

⁷² Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 269, 309.

⁷³ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 308.

⁷⁴ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 309.

⁷⁵ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 304-05.

eschatological salvation provide the basis for the derivation of ecclesiology, from which ecumenical theology is then derived.

Turning to consider ecumenical dialogue (which he distinguishes from ecumenical theology), Kasper argues that ecumenical dialogue does not proceed from a hierarchy of truths approach as dogmatic theology (including ecumenical theology) does but rather from the basis of common ground shared by those in the dialogue who then attempt to understand one another's positions in order to better share the treasures each holds in their own communities. However, "each question must be understood in the context of the whole and under consideration of the hierarchy of truths."⁷⁶ Kasper is clear here that the hierarchy of truths is a principle of interpretation of dogmatic truth as a way to understand the Faith and to make reforms when necessary. Thus, while Vatican II identified the hierarchy of truths as a path upon which ecumenism could proceed without compromising truth, it is not because that concept enables an articulation of essentials. Instead, it enables Rome to reform its doctrines when, through ecumenical dialogue, it discovers such reforms are necessary and proper. Specifically, because doctrines relating to lower ranking truths are derived from those of the higher ranking truths, we must interpret and, when necessary, can reform lower ranking doctrines in terms of higher ones.⁷⁷

Kasper closes his discussion of ecumenism with a brief discussion of what Rome has called a spiritual ecumenism and an ecumenism of life. It is way for Christians who lack full

⁷⁶ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 306.

⁷⁷ On this view, if Rome's the doctrine of the Church is reformed, its ecumenical theology will also likely be reformed, which in turn shapes the boundaries for how its ecumenical dialogue can proceed. If it can be established that Ephesians lays down a definitive notion of dialogue in the light of its articulation of the doctrine of the Church, it would seem that Vatican II's teaching would need to be reformed in a manner more reflective of Paul's own apostolic teaching.

visible unity to be able to live together, to walk together, to share life together under the guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit, even if only in a restrained and limited way. This ecumenism of life recognizes the importance of ecumenical efforts taking place at all levels of the Church, not just among the academics and experts in each church, and is characterized by joint prayer, joint witness, and working for the common good of society.⁷⁸ It is a spiritual ecumenism because, fundamentally, it “takes seriously that the unity of the Church is not our work but the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹ As such, we should “pray for a renewal of the event of Pentecost” and be open to the working of the Holy Spirit who began the ecumenical movement and whose work it is to bring about its fruits.⁸⁰

Without denying the importance of the truth Kasper is articulating here – that it is only by the guidance, power, and continued work of the Spirit that visible unity comes about – I cannot help but observe that Kasper seems to minimize our role in seeking unity in the passage.⁸¹ The way he articulates our role is almost exclusively in a passive manner, suggesting everything to be accomplished is only the work of the Spirit.⁸² I suggest his view contains a misunderstanding of our role which leads to unintended implications, including an anemic description of spiritual

⁷⁸ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 309-10.

⁷⁹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 310.

⁸⁰ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 310.

⁸¹ Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 310-11.

⁸² This minimization of our role has the appearance of wisdom because it safely maximizes God’s role in securing the desired result, thus avoiding all appearances that we ourselves can accomplish unity. Yet, if it is solely the Spirit’s role to bring about unity, is the Spirit culpable? No doubt Kasper would say no, but then how does he account for the fact that the Spirit has not seen fit to produce the visible unity that stands at the very center of the Faith, having even lost ground on that front over the last millennium? Of course, Kasper would not agree that the increasing fragmentation of the Church over the last millennium is the Spirit’s fault, and I do not mean to suggest otherwise. I am simply pointing out the need for a closer look at how we are to cooperate with the Spirit’s work to bring about unity.

ecumenism that fails to include the full embrace of mutual submission and all of its constitutive practices that Paul tells us comprise our calling. As I have already argued, Paul's teaching in Ephesians regarding our work as it relates to the work of the Spirit is that we are to cooperate with the Spirit and actively pursue our calling. Paul's prayer is that the Spirit would empower us to understand together the full extent of our eschatological calling and how it is to be lived out, and then that the Spirit would guide and empower us, ultimately filling us up with the fullness of God's glory, as we walk together in a manner worthy of that calling. He does not urge us to wait on the Spirit for something more than we already have, nor does he urge us to be mutually submitted but only in a restrained and limited way carefully delineated on the basis of the current status of our doctrinal consensus. Instead, he urges us to come together and walk, promising that the Spirit will do its part and bring us into greater and greater unity, maturity, and doctrinal consensus. He urges us to walk together *so that* we will become more united, with the Spirit making it a reality.

If we do less than we are supposed to do to cooperate with the Spirit, under the guise that there is nothing more we can do because *all* of the work belongs to the Spirit, then the Spirit will not come. The point is that we must clearly understand our role, and if Paul's teaching in Ephesians has been properly understood, then Kasper has ultimately missed the mark on this point and articulated an ecumenical theology that must be reformed.

6.5 Ephesians and the Hierarchy of Truths

We are finally ready to see how the light of Ephesians helps clarify and illuminate the path forward for ecumenism set forth in Vatican II's concept of the hierarchy of truths. If we stand back and view the message and structure of Ephesians at the highest level, we can see how it relates to Vatican II's concept of the hierarchy of truths and answers the central question

regarding the degree of doctrinal consensus required for full communion. We need not labor long to see these points clearly, for the hard work has already been done in prior chapters.

6.5.1 Clarifying the Path

Paul's message in Ephesians is that the Church is to bless God in response to all of the blessings He has bestowed on us in Christ. After setting forth this command in Ephesians 1:3 and thereby indicating the structure of his sermon (i.e., bless God, who has so richly blessed us), Paul proceeds to describe the good news regarding all of the magnificent ways God has blessed us, thus providing an articulation of the Gospel in Ephesians 1:4-3:21. In Ephesians 4-6, Paul then tells us how we are to function as the Church in our proper response to his doctrinal instruction in Ephesians 1-3 in order that we might bless God. According to that instruction, we are to walk together by putting on the practices that comprise our calling to be the temple and embody peace, a calling summarized as mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. We are to be properly ordered by the Spirit and participate in God's special plan for the Church by engaging in the divine dialogue which comprises our calling. We are to do all of this in spite of the fact that we do not have full unity of the Faith, something that comes about gradually over time as a result of walking together.

While we are to walk together even when (especially when!) we have not yet attained full doctrinal unity, this does not mean that all doctrines are up for grabs. Paul tells us, rather plainly, exactly what we must agree on – the Gospel and our calling in response to it *as Paul articulates them in Ephesians 1-3 and 4-6 respectively*. Nothing else can be listed as a precondition for walking together – if it could, then Paul would be wrong in his teaching that we are to walk together on that basis alone. Agreement about the nuances and details of the Faith will come later as a *result* of our proper response. Walking together, we will develop and formulate

doctrinal expressions that more fully capture the truths of the Faith, and we will agree on those doctrinal expressions precisely because we developed them together.

We must also recognize that the necessary and sufficient doctrinal consensus for full communion is the content of Paul's own articulation of the Gospel and our calling in response to it, as he lays them out in Ephesians. Certainly, the rest of Scripture is on equal footing with Ephesians in every way for the life of the Church, including its doctrines and practices. I am not in the least suggesting Ephesians has any unique status in the Church. Moreover, as I have already stated, later developments by the Church regarding its doctrines and practices must also carry some level of authority for Christians in later generations, if for no other reason because Paul says that we will gradually attain greater doctrinal truth and unity. My only point here is that Paul himself determined that his articulation of the Gospel in Ephesians 1-3 was sufficient to justify the command to walk together in mutual submission out of reverence for Christ and equally sufficient to lead to his conclusions regarding the nature and details of that calling as he articulated them in Ephesians 4-6. He referred to nothing outside of the four corners of that document, other than the God who inspired it and continues His to work to build up the Church and bring all of creation to its eschatological goal of manifesting His glory. Instead, Paul saw his message in Ephesians as containing everything required to urge us to walk together in the manner worthy of our calling to build up the Body of Christ. We disagree with Paul if we require anything more before we walk in that manner.⁸³

⁸³ We may perhaps generalize Paul's notion of what is necessary and sufficient doctrinal agreement for walking together so that the final principle is that we need only agree on the Gospel and our calling to walk together according to the Gospel as those concepts are developed and articulated in Scripture, thus ruling out other, later developments and articulations of the Gospel and the Church's calling as acceptable candidates for determining when we can and should walk together. In addition to the four different books we refer to as Gospels, we also find in Scripture various other summaries of the Gospel as well as different teachings the apostles left us expounding upon the Gospel and its bearing on our calling. Indeed, all of Scripture may rightly be said to bear testimony to the Gospel and our calling. These different books, summaries, and teachings may sometimes sound different and be

If I have properly understood Paul's message in Ephesians, then Dulles's maximalist conception of the degree of doctrinal assent we may rightly require for reunion with other churches is simply incorrect. As he would have it, later developments of doctrine would have the effect of making communion more difficult, at least when they have been developed separately among different identity groups. Over time, those separately developed doctrines entrench differences among those who are united in Christ. They reinforce different identities among those who rightly share the single identity given them by Christ, thereby making the scandal of division seem normal. Continuing in their turning their backs on one another, they fail to take up the practices of their calling together, practices designed to unify them and build up the Body. When Dulles and a great multitude of other faithful, sincere Christians take a maximalist conception regarding doctrinal consensus, they persevere in the long-standing presumption that doctrinal unity is required for full communion and simply fail to grasp Paul's teaching that doctrinal unity comes after full communion. The need to reverse this long-standing presumption is the central thesis of my work.

difficult to reconcile. Yet, there is only one Gospel and one calling that comprises a proper response to it – Ephesians 4:4-6 affirms this, and we have ample other reasons to hold this principle. If we follow Dulles regarding the long-held principle that no one expression can be adequate to express the mystery apprehended in the Faith, we can see that, even the apostles themselves, though they understood the deposit of Faith Christ left them to a sufficient degree, they nevertheless did not grasp it fully since it contains truths no mere human will fully grasp prior to the eschaton, let alone fully articulate. Thus, even in Scripture we see different articulations of the one Gospel and the one calling, each such articulation bearing faithful witness to them. Yet, the apostles did not break their unity. While Paul's message in Ephesians contains the necessary and sufficient articulation of the Gospel and of our calling for walking together, other teachings in Scripture bear witness to the very same Gospel and calling. In this light, we see a reflection of Paul's notion that the Church will not share a fully unified set of doctrinal expressions of the Faith until the eschaton – even expressions of the Faith in Scripture are varied, and necessarily so because of the incredible depth and breadth of the Faith.

6.5.2 Unity Versus Truth?

Vatican II's concept of the hierarchy of truths was introduced as part of its differentiation between truth and the expression of it, a crucial insight that, as Dulles tells us, allowed Rome to see non-Catholic churches as possessing some of the elements of the Church.⁸⁴ This insight regarding the differentiation between truth and its expression does much more than that – it is perhaps the key concept for unlocking *why* Ephesians can tell us to walk together even before we attain doctrinal unity without leading to the unwelcome conclusion that doing so has the effect of sacrificing truth in order to attain unity. This is a central concern at the heart of many who are hesitant to embrace ecumenical efforts. Understanding that Paul endorses this distinction between truth and the expression of it, and why he does so, should erase those concerns.

When we fail to appreciate this distinction, we therefore perceive rejection of our doctrinal formulations as a denial of truth, and we are prone to see calls for unity before complete doctrinal agreement as pitting unity against truth. If instead we see our doctrinal expressions as attempts to articulate truth, we are able to understand that those articulations are marked by differing degrees of specificity and completeness as a result of the different and limited experiences and cultural contexts in which the different identity groups formulated their various doctrinal expressions. We are thus able to understand why those who are committed to the same *truths* we are (i.e., the *truths* of the Faith) might *express* them differently than we do simply because they developed those expressions in different contexts with different dialogue partners. This is the “outsider problem” I described earlier in this chapter. Just as Ratzinger and Dulles were moved to make exceptions to their otherwise maximalist conceptions of the

⁸⁴ Dulles, “Paths to Doctrinal Agreement,” 35.

doctrinal consensus needed for reunion, so too those who understand this distinction between truths and attempts to articulate them will be more likely to agree that doctrinal diversity *can* be legitimate.⁸⁵ The remaining question is how often such diversity actually is legitimate, and a simple recognition of the outsider problem does not answer this more important question. Recall Dulles simply presumed Ols's maximalist view (seemingly based on tradition) and was moved to crack the door open when he understood the outsider problem. We need another insight to answer this question.

A second, more important insight thus comes when we understand that *all* doctrinal expressions are incomplete, in the sense that they do not express the underlying truths fully and adequately for every context.⁸⁶ Understanding this insight enables us to see that we need to walk together in a coordinated way if we are to grasp and articulate the truths of the Faith more fully and completely. We need to walk in unity in order that we attain greater truth and can express it more fully. We must walk together in the dialogue Paul prescribes in order to attain truth, knowing that a greater grasping of truth and a greater consensus about how to express it will result. Walking together prior to full doctrinal agreement does not sacrifice truth for unity. Quite the contrary, it is necessary for both truth and doctrinal unity.

The distinction between truth and its expression articulated in Vatican II's concept of the hierarchy of truths opens the door to appreciate doctrinal diversity, but it is not fully developed, as the lingering debate among Dulles, Rahner, Kasper, and other Roman Catholic theologians

⁸⁵ This must be distinguished from the quite different position that all doctrinal diversity *is* legitimate, which is more in line with a relativistic position.

⁸⁶ This is true for at least two reasons. First, even the most fundamental truths about truths of the Faith are mysteries and are incapable of full expression within the limits of human language and thought. Second, all doctrines we possess today were developed in particular contexts by particular Christians and not in every context in a coordinated way by all Christians (we must include future Christians and future contexts in this analysis).

shows. That further development comes in the light of Ephesians. If we walk in the true dialogue with others in Christ, truth and unity are never really pitted against one another. Instead, as we walk together, the truth to which we are committed will be more fully grasped and articulated and, at the same pace, more capable of universal assent.

6.5.3 Illuminating the Path -- Modelling The Hierarchy of Truths

As I stated above, Paul's derivation of the proper response which constitutes our calling from the fundamental truths of the Gospel is a clear model of the hierarchy of truths at work to develop an ecclesiology and an ecumenical theology articulated in terms of a particular kind of dialogue. We need not look any further than the unity creed in Ephesians 4:4-6 to establish Paul's intent to derive his teaching regarding the Christian calling directly from the fundamental truths of the Faith. Its location in the letter confirms this. Immediately after the first three chapters, which laid out the fundamental truths of the Faith in an expression of the Gospel marked throughout by Trinitarian language, Paul urges Christians in 4:1-3 to live in a manner worthy of the calling necessitated by that expression of the Gospel. This states the theme for the last three chapters which describe that calling more fully.

So, while Ephesians 4:4-6 might initially seem to be an unnecessary pause in his argument, it is actually a statement showing *how* the Christian calling, summarized in broadest terms in 4:1-3 and to be described more fully in 4:7f., derives directly from the fundamental truths laid out in the first three chapters. In other words, 4:4-6 functions as a perfect example of how the hierarchy of truths is to be applied to describe the Christian life. Those verses describe the three persons of the Trinity and their salvific activity in creation in the specific terms Paul used to articulate the fundamental truths of the Faith in Ephesians 1-3. He has already done the hard work of filling in the details of what he means by that terminology as it is tied to the persons

of the Trinity (i.e., Spirit tied to body and hope of our calling, Son tied to faith and baptism, Father tied to all of creation and filling it with His presence), and now he is tying that terminology to the themes of unity and peace that define and summarize the aim of our calling (4:3). Thus, 4:4-6 is a short pause in Paul's argument, but Paul himself sees it as wholly necessary to demonstrate that the calling he is about to describe more fully derives in a necessary way directly from the fundamental truths of the Faith (i.e., Trinity, Christology, eschatological salvation, and Gospel).

In a perfect demonstration of the application of the hierarchy of truths in Ephesians, Paul has definitively laid out the doctrine of the Church in terms of its fundamental life in response to the Gospel and in a manner necessary to settle what counts as necessary and sufficient doctrinal consensus to enable walking in unity. He has already articulated an ecumenical theology and expressly taught it as constitutive of our calling. We need only understand and accept his teaching if we are to move past the current confusion obstructing ecumenical progress. Whatever else we might want to say about the doctrine of the Church, we should follow Kasper's (and Paul's) model of applying the hierarchy of truths and derive those statements from more fundamental truths. Yet, it is critical that we see Paul's teaching regarding the Church and the contours of its calling as standing among the fundamental truths. That teaching is part of the apostolic teaching, and it is directly and expressly on point. He has done the hard work necessary to define what is required for us to be able to walk together in full submission, what that walk looks like, and how we are to reason together in light of the Gospel (i.e., how we are to apply the hierarchy of truths together) to navigate life and express the Faith more fully and completely.

6.5.4 Articulating the Essentials

Paul's articulation of the Gospel and the nature of our calling is itself sufficient to justify walking together. Later developments, no matter how valid they may be, are to come after we walk together, not before, and they cannot be the basis for dividing. Therefore, Rome has a clear path to articulate its essentials for reunion because Paul has already articulated them. Whether it is willing or not is another matter, but I do see a trajectory in its own teachings that suggests it might be.⁸⁷

Dulles wisely delayed embracing Rahner's approach to ecumenism because he understood the value of tradition and the wisdom of presuming its doctrines are true unless they are rebutted by proof. That approach should likewise be taken here with regard to my work. However, I have met that burden of proof and have done so on Roman Catholic grounds. At least, that is what I have attempted to do. Others more knowledgeable about Roman Catholic theology than I am must evaluate my claims. I only ask that sentimentality for cherished traditions not cloud that evaluation.⁸⁸

To help us all remove sentimentality from the analysis, I turn to my final observation about the application of the hierarchy of truths to the issue of determining and articulating the essential doctrines for reunion. The observation is made through a juxtaposition of two

⁸⁷ The same question must also be posed to other churches who are perhaps further behind in reaching this conclusion about the particular essentials that are required for reunion since they have failed to grasp the importance of the hierarchy of truths to this issue.

⁸⁸ A first response to new ideas is all too often to reject them and to find ways to attack them, and this impulse must be resisted. The impulse is a matter of sentiment and habit, of clinging to cherished doctrines, and so it must be neutralized through an appeal that shows why those cherished doctrines might not be worthy of the high esteem in which we hold them. This is to say that tradition must not be esteemed for the sake of tradition, something that often occurs under the banner of wisdom as we claim we are merely putting the burden of proof on the new ideas.

approaches to the application of the hierarchy of truths to articulate a doctrine of the Church and an ecumenical theology.

In the first approach, we can seek to apply a concept of the hierarchy of truths to articulate a doctrine of the Church based upon our understanding of the fundamental truths of the Faith as we develop and articulate those truths in our various doctrinal statements by pouring over the Scriptures and our traditional understandings of them for insights that may help us in our efforts. Because we are divided and walk separately, we embark on that arduous process in our separate identity groups. Yet, those efforts only seem to lead us to different conclusions and entrenched differences. We might then decide that our division is a scandal and attempt to overcome it by sending experts from our various groups to conferences where they engage in official dialogues aimed at overcoming our differences. Those experts learn that these dialogues are much harder than they ever imagined and thus take up the incredibly difficult process of developing ecumenical theologies.

Presuming a best case scenario, those experts do so by following Kasper's idea of the hierarchy of truths, thus attempting to derive their ecumenical theologies faithfully from their doctrines of the Church, which they previously attempted to derive from their doctrines regarding the fundamental truths. Any variance in the conclusions drawn along the stages of this process taken up by the experts in the various identity groups will lead to disagreement among those experts. As a result, they engage one another in an "exchange of gifts" ecumenism in their attempts to overcome this outsider problem, but they ultimately make slow if any real progress. Meanwhile, those experts decide it is best to wait on the Spirit to move Christians past their doctrinal differences so that they can finally walk together fully and completely rather than in limited and restrained ways.

This narrative summary of the first approach to applying the hierarchy of truths to carve an ecumenical path forward is of course the story, more or less, of how ecumenism has been pursued. More accurately, it is a caricature of that history, but one told in a more idealized way, as if the participants had fully internalized the great insights of Dulles, Kasper, Ramsey, and countless others, and then applied those insights in their pursuits. This idealized caricature may perhaps be the best path forward currently on offer. Yet, when seen in the light of Ephesians, its seeming wisdom appears foolish. For all of its brilliance – and it truly is brilliant – it ultimately amounts to a recreation of the wheel due to a failure to understand Paul.

The second approach is to see that Paul has already done everything described in the first approach (and probably much more than anyone has yet identified) and has embedded an ecumenical theology and a notion of ecumenical dialogue in the bedrock of the apostolic teaching. He has articulated his understanding of the Gospel, developed over the course of his lifetime, and articulated a doctrine of the Church and its calling in terms of a proper response to the Gospel marked by the true dialogue, deriving the latter directly and necessarily from the former. He has therefore applied the hierarchy of truths perfectly and definitively, and by so doing has ended the discussion. All that is left to do is to understand and follow his teaching, and that teaching is clear. Those who are in Christ are to walk together in full mutual submission out of reverence for Christ even before full doctrinal consensus is attained. Any further stipulations for walking together would appear to be divisive speech (i.e., *λόγος σαπρὸς* in Ephesians 4:29) and to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

6.5.5 Overcoming Babel: Continuing Pentecost

It is not far off to see our differently developed doctrinal expressions as different languages for making our various claims about the truth of the Faith. As a result of living

together in mutual submission, different identity groups come to use the same “language” to describe their shared life. What they declare about the world, in the doctrines and practices that mark their shared life, is developed by them together and articulated in a manner that reflects their understanding of truth. Those declarations comprise a “language” shared by that identity group, and when they encounter those outside their identity group who speak a different “language,” a failure of understanding often occurs. They often have different conceptions of what is true, and even when they have the same or similar conceptions, they express them differently according to how their “language” has been developed over time. This again is the “outsider problem.”

When we understand our doctrinal diversity as a “language” barrier (or at least something very similar), the miracle at Pentecost is seen in fresh light:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4).

The Spirit first came upon the Church when all of the early Christians had gathered together in one place, and the coming of the Spirit enabled them to overcome language barriers that had been present since God scattered humanity at the Tower Babel. Paul’s message in Ephesians is a perfect model of this same dynamic repeated over and over again. When those in Christ gather together, the Spirit fills them with power and overcomes their “language” barrier so that, over time as they continue to gather in the name of Christ, they increasingly come to understand and articulate the Faith in one language and one voice. Paul’s instruction that we walk together in mutual submission out of reverence for Christ in order to be filled by the Spirit should be seen as a continuing Pentecost. It comprises the calling to which we have been called – to be gathered together in Christ – and the result of gathering together is that the Spirit comes upon us and

makes us into one visible Body by growing and maturing us as we cooperate with the Spirit's work, finally coming to perfect maturity marked by full doctrinal consensus.

So, Paul's message in Ephesians can be seen as a call to repeat Pentecost over and over again. He is articulating that continued Pentecost gathering in more concrete terms, describing how we cooperate with Spirit. We gather together even when we do not speak the same language, recognizing the unity, peace, and common identity created by Christ and walking together in the true dialogue. When we do all this, the Spirit will become manifest and enable us to grow more fully as one Body, increasingly overcoming our language barriers along the way.

This leads to another key truth. The Eucharist, as the primary visible manifestation of the Gospel and our calling as the Church, should happen *before* we attain full doctrinal consensus (i.e., before the "language" barrier is fully removed). As I demonstrated in the prior section, Paul is clear that we are to walk together in a manner worthy of our calling (i.e., the eschatological gathering to which we have been called; the "hope of our calling" (Ephesians 4:4)) when we agree on the essentials of the Faith as he articulates them in Ephesians 1-3. As Roman Catholic doctrine so poignantly teaches us, the Eucharist celebrates and participates in that eschatological gathering (i.e., the hope our calling) and is the climax of ecclesial life. Any denial of Eucharistic sharing on the basis of doctrinal differences simply fails to understand Ephesians.

6.6 Reforming the Petrine Office For Service As Shepherd Over Ecumenism

Kasper posed two alternative approaches to further develop and clarify the primacy of the Petrine ministry in terms of the Eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology he believes defines the trajectory of reform set forth by the two Vatican councils. The first approach sees primacy of the Petrine ministry as primarily to serve as witness, teacher, and guardian of the Faith and to keep

watch over the unity in the Faith. The second approach sees primacy of the Petrine ministry as primarily to preside in love (ἀγάπη) over all Christians through a universal pastoral office responsible for the Eucharistic community in the Church and between the individual churches. We are now in a position to see that both approaches can be taken simultaneously, and, if such reform is done in a particular way, it should allow for widespread acceptance of the Petrine office as shepherd over ecumenism. That acceptance will only come if a greater understanding of the horizontal dimensions of the Gospel is realized and shared within the Church since most Western churches will evaluate a reformed exercise of the Petrine office primarily through the lens of their understanding of the Gospel. As I have attempted to show, the light of Ephesians enables Rome to make the necessary reforms to the Petrine office and provides a better understanding of the Gospel that would allow a large number of non-Catholic churches to accept the primacy of the Petrine office as a shepherd over ecumenism.

6.6.1 Limited, Incremental Primacy

Acceptance of the primacy of the Petrine office by non-Catholic Christians should be pursued incrementally by the Roman Catholic Church through targeted and limited reforms tailored to meet particular circumstances. The pope has the unilateral authority to exercise his ministry of unity in his discretion as long as such exercise is consistent with the Faith and Roman Catholic doctrine. My suggestion is that he should determine how he can exercise his ministry of unity faithfully in a manner tailored to particular circumstances today so as to render that exercise acceptable to the subject churches mentioned earlier in this chapter, and possibly others. In this regard, he should start by exercising his primacy in a limited way, most likely along the lines of a first millennium conception of primacy already held by the East and capable of

acceptance by the other subject churches if the Petrine ministry and its exercise can be articulated in accordance with and in service of the Gospel.

Such acceptance of the primacy of the Petrine office in only a limited manner would not compromise the integrity of that office or of existing expressions of Roman Catholic doctrine but would rather enable the pope to fulfill his own ministry of unity more fully. Doing so would enable more Christians who, under Roman Catholic doctrine, fall under the pastoral care of the pope to come under his actual care, even if only in a limited way to start. Conceivably and very likely, entire churches could come under the pope's primacy in this limited way. This in turn would enable the churches to walk together and would give the pope pastoral access to and some level of effective ministry over Christians in those churches. The result of such walking together would be increased unity and increased consensus of belief.

The pope's access to and limited ministry over a greater number of Christians would lead to increased truth and more complete articulations of the Faith for at least two reasons. First, greater functional unity in the true dialogue leads to greater truth and greater doctrinal consensus. Second, assuming with Roman Catholic teaching that the Petrine office has a central role in the development and articulation of doctrine, it will enable Rome to listen effectively to the witness of even more of Christ's disciples in the love of mutual submission. Rome will therefore be better able to articulate the Faith in more fully developed doctrinal expressions on behalf of the entire Body.

Those more fully developed doctrinal expressions will in turn lead to greater unity among those in the expanded dialogue, leading to another benefit. Those who did not join in the first iteration of the expanded ministry of the Petrine ministry of unity will be more inclined to do so after seeing the fruit of that first iteration. The doctrinal expressions which result from the first

iteration, along with the increased love and care that will necessarily flow out of it, will cause those who were not part of it to recognize such fruit and be stirred to investigate more closely. Through this iterative process, the role of the Petrine office will expand incrementally, just as Paul tells us the growth of the Body will occur incrementally until the mature man is reached.

6.6.2 Eucharistic Sharing

Vatican II recovered the first millennium sense of gathering around the bishop for the Eucharist as constitutive of the nature of the Church and has laid the groundwork to articulate the doctrine of the Church on this basis. When Christians celebrate the Eucharist, they step out of time and space and into the eternity of heaven, taking part in the one eschatological gathering around Christ in perfect unity. Yet, I suggest that it did not go far enough in this recovery because it still contends that the Eucharist is also a celebration of current, imperfect unity. This appears to be an equivocation between two competing views of the Eucharist, namely the competing views of the first and second millennium. The first millennium view was developed when the Church was marked by greater unity and a *communio* ecclesiology, while the second millennium view was developed during increasing fragmentation and a juridical ecclesiology developed to contend with it. It would seem Vatican II's recovery of the first millennium's notion of *communio* and its related understanding of the Eucharist has not gone far enough. As Kasper noted, Vatican II laid the foundation for continued development.

I suggest a full recovery of the first millennium sense of the Eucharist will lead to understanding eschatological unity as the primary thing celebrated and that the notion it is a celebration of current visible unity is only proper in a lesser, derivative sense. Vatican II saw Vatican I's notion of primacy as of limited application, being properly developed and exercised in its particular context but in need of wider contextualization within Rome's whole teaching

(and especially in light of the first millennium teachings). Likewise, it appears a similar move may be needed with respect to its teaching regarding Eucharistic theology and practice. As such, Rome should reform its doctrine of the Eucharist to reflect its proper participation in and celebration of eschatological unity rather than any current unity in the Church. If the full significance of the fact that those duly baptized in Christ are members of that eschatological gathering is appreciated, then their proper participation in the Eucharistic celebration of that eschatological gathering becomes clear. Any sense of celebrating the current unity within a particular church is, at best, a derivative of the celebration of the eschatological gathering and at worst a divisive act.

But, of course, I do not speak for the Roman Catholic Church and would not presume to do so. Nonetheless, even if I am wrong in this respect, I am firmly convinced that the current state of Rome's teaching allows the Petrine office to specify circumstances when the Eucharist could be administered solely as a celebration of the eschatological gathering, thus allowing Roman Catholics to share in the Eucharist with other Christians under carefully prescribed circumstances. All that is required is for the pope to exercise his ministry of unity in such a way that such Eucharistic sharing takes place, and he should do so for the same reasons and in the same manner described above with respect to a limited reformation of his office in order to secure a limited sense of primacy. Not only does Vatican II appear to allow for such an exercise,⁸⁹ it would seem to suggest it, especially if we see Vatican II as in need of further development in the light of the first millennium teaching on the Eucharist as my discussion of

⁸⁹ See Dulles, "Paths to Doctrinal Agreement," 35-36; Kasper, *Sacrament of Unity*, 72-73.

Kasper showed. If we bring the light of Ephesians to bear on this issue in aid of this further development, it appears such an exercise of the Petrine ministry may be required.

Thus, the pope may exercise his ministry of unity to carve out acceptable circumstances when all baptized Christians may come together to celebrate their eschatological unity.⁹⁰ This would put the unifying power of the Eucharist to work as one of the most important and effective practices comprising the Church's calling, helping the Body to build itself up in love. Dialogue alone is not sufficient. Even Paul's more robust notion of dialogue would not be enough if it does not include the Eucharistic participation in and celebration of eschatological unity. That robust understanding of dialogue goes a long way, but there is no doubt the Eucharist was instituted by Christ to celebrate the reality of the peace and unity He created among those who are in Him. There is no more powerful practice of unity available to the Church, and its unifying effects must be put to work in the Church.

The notion of *communio* had been obscured over the second millennium which was marked by increasing division and led to doctrinal expressions that entrenched that division. Recovery of that concept, with the Eucharist at the center, was therefore needed at the time of Vatican II, which went a long way to accomplish that recovery. We have strong reason to believe the Eucharist likewise needs further development. Ephesians provides a way forward. My proposal here is that Rome work to clarify a rule for a normal, regular Eucharistic sharing as

⁹⁰ Those circumstances would of course need to include certain elements and requirements to satisfy other Roman Catholic teachings. While I would not venture to articulate a comprehensive list, I would think the following would be included: the Eucharist is celebrated by a Roman Catholic bishop or duly ordained clergy serving under him; the liturgy is revised for the particular occasion, perhaps only by adding clarifying statements before and after the celebration to ensure clarity that it is not a celebration of current disunity in the pilgrim Church but rather the eschatological gathering; it may be deemed a special celebration limited to special events within the Church calendar or perhaps only monthly, quarterly or annually.

part of its reform of the exercise of the Petrine ministry of unity. Doing so will unleash the unitive power of the Eucharist and bring about more visible unity.

6.7 Conclusion

The key insight and central thesis I have attempted to establish in this work is that the practices comprising the calling to which the Church has been called, practices that enable the Church to build itself up by gathering and reasoning together in the power that exists in the true dialogue focused on the Word under the Spirit's guidance, are to be pursued regardless of a lack of doctrinal unity. Indeed, they are all the more important precisely when the churches are unable to agree on doctrines. Such disagreement is not an obstacles for walking together – it is a sign that we have failed to walk together as we are called to do, and it should spur us all the more to find ways to walk together without delay. By so doing, we will function as the Church and, as a result, not only fulfill our calling to manifest God's Word clearly but also come to greater consensus on how we express the truth of God's Word.

By engaging in the practices comprising Paul's notion of ecumenical dialogue, we will be empowered to develop doctrines that are more capable of wider assent (i.e., unity of belief) and that more fully express the eternal truths which are less perfectly expressed in the doctrines developed and articulated thus far by any of the separate churches. I have sought to establish this notion of ecumenical dialogue by an unpacking of Paul's articulation of the Gospel and the Church's proper response in Ephesians. If I have been successful in this goal, then I will have shown how this understanding of the Gospel and its resulting notion of ecumenical dialogue stand at the center of the Faith, among those truths of highest rank in the hierarchy of truths, precisely because Paul himself intended to place them there when he authored his magnum opus encyclical to the Church about its calling. According to Paul's message in Ephesians, his notion

of dialogue in Ephesians 4-6 flows directly out of Ephesians 1-3 and comprises the calling of the Church. His notion of dialogue not only stands at the center of the Faith but encompasses the whole of the Church's response to the Gospel. Everything Christians are to do ultimately falls within and is generally described by this response.

While there is more work that can and should be done to prove my central thesis, space has not allowed for it, but the core of that work has been made plain enough. In any event, the reader does not need to look far to find corroborating work in the writings and dialogues that have taken place within ecumenism and within the various churches in recent decades. Indeed, certain elements for an agreement on my central thesis already exist and play a central role in much of that body of work. I am convinced that such agreement will come, perhaps soon, if the teaching ministers in the various churches will work to renew their churches and the Church in light of Paul's message in Ephesians.

Christians must look towards the eschatological vision of the Church as the ingathering of God's people and the very temple of God – this is the calling to which we have been called. Holding that calling squarely in view, we must seek earnestly to reform and develop our doctrines in this current age of increased cooperation and desire for unity. We must also understand that the truths contained in our current doctrinal expressions are at least partially obscured because those expressions were formulated through separate dialogues in a period of great division. We have turned our backs towards one another and thus failed to exchange the gifts of mutual testimony owed to one another in Paul's notion of dialogue, thereby impoverishing all of our doctrines at least in part. If we will walk together in a manner worthy of our calling, we will attain a greater maturity of the Body because of the divine power at work

within us. As Ephesians 4:13 tells us, that maturity is marked by doctrinal expressions that are both capable of Church-wide assent and more fully expressive of the eternal truths of the Faith.

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