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**Mature in Christ:**  
**The Contribution of Ephesians and Colossians to**  
**Constructing Christian Maturity in Modernity**

Bradley J. Matthews

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Theology & Religion  
Durham University  
2009

## Abstract

This thesis addresses the manner in which Christian maturity is constructed in modernity. The premise developed through the course of the study is that modern works on the nature of Christian maturity have disregarded, or even been ignorant of, the genealogy of maturity. Thus, their constructions of Christian maturity are significantly influenced by modern ideals that are, at times, at odds with ideals espoused by the biblical texts. Specifically, the Enlightenment directed the goal of human existence towards individual autonomy, and subsequent psycho-social theory has standardised the attainment of this goal according to a series of developmental stages. Whilst there are different trends in modern constructions of Christian maturity, the paradigm of developing individual autonomy is still the underlying principle of each construct.

I argue that the ancient world constructed maturity in a fundamentally different manner. Human teleology referenced not only individual persons, but also a divine figure, social group, and the cosmos. Even though Ephesians and Colossians express their theology of Christian maturity in different ways, both letters present a remarkably similar construction that operates within the ancient referential framework. Christian maturity is the eschatological existence of believers, both as individuals and as the corporate community of the Church, in Christ. Moreover, within the mystery of God's plan, the attainment of Christian maturity is the mechanism that will bring about the redemption of the entire cosmos. Thus, Ephesians and Colossians construct Christian maturity so that the teleology of the individual references the triune God, the Church and the cosmos.

This reading that is based on a historical and philological exegesis of Ephesians and Colossians necessitates the hermeneutical task of determining how to re-appropriate this theology of Christian maturity in the modern world. I argue that there are three distinct features of the construction of Christian maturity when compared to other ancient constructions, namely its basis in God's mystery, in the somatic nature of the Church, and especially in union with Christ. Whilst it is not possible to return to a pre-modern conception of human teleology, it is possible to recover these three distinct features within the modern discourse about maturity. The proposal offered demonstrates how the recovery of these distinct features provides the necessary corrective to the modern construction of Christian maturity.

## **Declaration**

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is the author's own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to any university or college for a degree.

## **Copyright**

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*For Abigail*

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## Abbreviations

### *Primary Sources*

<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Acad.</i>	Cicero, <i>Academica</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	Philo, <i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Cyrop.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Cyropaedeia</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	Philo, <i>De Decalogo</i>
<i>Diss.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Discourses</i>
<i>DL</i>	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
<i>Ench.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Manual (Enchiridion)</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Seneca, <i>Epistulae Morales</i>
<i>Fin.</i>	Cicero, <i>De Finibus</i>
<i>Ios.</i>	Philo, <i>De Iosepho</i>
<i>Leg. alleg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum Allegoria</i>
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuagint</i>
<i>Med.</i>	Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditationes</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
<i>ND</i>	Cicero, <i>De Natura Deorum</i>
<i>Polyb.</i>	Polybius, <i>The Histories</i>
<i>Sobr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Sobrietate</i>
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
<i>Vit. Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De Vita Mosis</i>

### *Dictionaries/Lexica*

<i>BDAG</i>	W. Bauer, et. al. (eds.), <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
<i>DDP</i>	I. Stuart-Hamilton, <i>Dictionary of Developmental Psychology</i>
<i>DTIB</i>	K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), <i>Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner
<i>PDP</i>	A. S. Reber and E. S. Reber, <i>The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology</i>
<i>SOED</i>	W. R. Trumble and A. Stevenson (eds.), <i>Shorter Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>

## *Journals*

<i>AncPhil</i>	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>AusBR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>DRev</i>	<i>Downside Review</i>
<i>EP</i>	<i>Ekklesiastikos Pharos</i>
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios Biblicos</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IJST</i>	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>OSAPh</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## *Volumes*

<i>AB</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible</i>
<i>AVT</i>	<i>Ancient Versions and Traditions</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>

*Series*

AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ASNU	Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BCPhil	Blackwell Companions to Philosophy
BibU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
Ebib	Études Bibliques
EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
FBBS	Facet Books, Biblical Series
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
IPAL	International Psycho-Analytical Library
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSPseudSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SBLEJL	SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBL SBL	SBL Studies in Biblical Literature

SBLSBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSCS	SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSP	SBL Seminar Paper Series
ScrHerm	Scripture and Hermeneutic Series
SMBen	Série Monographique de Benedictina
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina Series
SPhiloAn	Studia Philonica Annual
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Maturity is a remarkably pervasive concept in the modern world. It functions primarily as an assessment of persons that co-ordinates their biological growth with their psychological development. The pervasiveness of this concept is seen in its biological application to animals and vegetation, or even material application to a variety of inanimate objects. Despite this widespread usage, maturity remains remarkably difficult to define, or even describe, when used in reference to human beings. For instance, one contemporary definition of ‘maturity’ is:

[T]he state of adulthood, of completed growth, of full functioning... The term is widely used, generally with an adjective prefixed to specify the kind of growth achieved, e.g. sexual maturity, intellectual maturity, emotional maturity, etc. Note that while some of these can be reasonably well defined, such as sexual maturity, most cannot. They generally entail value judgements made of persons to reflect how successfully they correspond to socially and culturally accepted norms. What is considered emotionally childish in one society may very well be an aspect of emotional maturity in another.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the nature of maturity is elusive not only due to the need for subjective evaluation, but also because it varies both between societies and within them when multiple cultures and sub-cultures overlap. As a consequence, any discussion of maturity must be delimited to a particular cultural environment and its heritage.

This thesis will address the nature of Christian maturity, with a specific focus on its development in the Western tradition. The basic premise governing this study is that modern constructions of Christian maturity have disregarded its origins and genealogy. Specifically, I will show that little, if any, consideration is given to the theological implications of Christian maturity as first articulated in the ancient world. It will be demonstrated that this is due to a radical genealogical shift that occurred in the construction of maturity at the time of the Enlightenment. In other words, modern persons construct Christian maturity and its significance in a fundamentally different manner from that of persons in antiquity because of the influence of a modern discourse that differs significantly

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1. A.S. Reber and E.S. Reber, ‘Maturity’, *PDP* 416.



from that of the ancient discourse. As such, the questions stand as to what these discursive differences are, and whether an attempt to recover the ancient implications is necessary and/or possible.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is twofold. First, it will provide an exposition of the nature of Christian maturity as it was understood within its original ancient context. This will entail both an exegetical and theological analysis of some of the biblical materials that constitute the foundational texts of the Christian faith, and an assessment of the ancient discourse that contextualised those biblical texts. Second, it will explore the manner in which this ancient construct offers a corrective to modern constructions of Christian maturity. Such an endeavour will require hermeneutical consideration of how the theology of Christian maturity found in those biblical texts is best translated into our modern context. Whilst these two tasks have been undertaken separately by other scholars, I will demonstrate that their efforts have either disregarded or underestimated the magnitude of the disparity between the modern and ancient discourses. I will provide an assessment of the studies on Christian maturity presently available in order to reveal this shortcoming. Based upon the observations of this survey, I will justify the selection of biblical texts for this study and clarify the relevant terminology before proceeding to outline further the aims and structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Survey of the Modern Discourse**

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary constructions of Christian maturity. In order to do this, it must first be recognised that the Christian community is now a sub-culture within post-Christian societies.<sup>2</sup> Even so, the genealogies of human maturity in post-Christian, Western societies and of Christian maturity in the Christian sub-culture share a common origin. As such, one should expect to find commonalities between the two. At some point, though, the genealogies of the two diverged so that there will also be observable differences. It is necessary, therefore, that I first sketch briefly

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2. E.g. A.D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (London: Longman, 1980), ix: 'A post-Christian society is not one from which Christianity has departed, but one in which it has become marginal. ... Like the early Christians in a pre-Christian, classical world, they [modern Christians] become a "peculiar people", anomalous in their primary beliefs, assumptions, values and norms, distinctive in important aspects of outlook and behaviour. They become a sub-culture.'

the historical factors that have led to the manner in which modernity constructs maturity. This will in turn allow me to situate the modern constructions of Christian maturity in relation to that of the broader discourse. I will show that scholars attempt to construct Christian maturity using either modern psychological theories, or a variety of biblical texts, as their primary reference. Both efforts, however, give little attention to their indebtedness to the modern discourse. After surveying these two trends separately, I will then assess two works that make initial, but unsuccessful, attempts at negotiating the differences between the ancient discourse found in the Bible and the theories of the modern discourse.

### 1.2.1 The Modern Construction of Human Maturity

The foundation for the modern conception of maturity was laid down by Immanuel Kant when he elevated individual autonomy to being the goal of human existence.<sup>3</sup> According to Kant, ‘immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another.’<sup>4</sup> He claimed that neither a particular personal experience, nor the sum of all personal experiences, provided a sufficient basis for pure reason to address all questions presented by the sciences, especially those of metaphysics and ethics.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Kant argued that these questions required personal judgements that should be made responsibly through the use of one’s own rationality. He believed that individuals fail to do so as a result of either laziness or cowardice, thinking that it is both easier and safer to follow guardians.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Kant stressed that if individuals are truly free, and aware of the proper uses of reason as well as the misuses of it, then it is incumbent upon them to use their own reason in order to promote the further enlightenment of society. As such, individual autonomy was charged not just as a possibility of human existence, but indeed as its goal for the sake of all people. Given this, Kant restricted individual autonomy in the public sphere by duty to the moral law because he believed that the individual’s

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3. Cf. D. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7-16.

4. I. Kant, ‘An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?’ in *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Moral Practice*, trans. T. Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1983), 41.

5. E.g. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood, trans. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 127-52.

6. Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ 42.

attainment of moral perfection enabled the possibility of a perfect moral world. This would occur as persons perform their duty to themselves and to others in accordance with a universal morality.<sup>7</sup> Whilst Kant's optimism for the potential evolution of an ideal world was later dispelled by modern philosophy,<sup>8</sup> his elevation of individual autonomy to the goal of human existence has remained relatively unchallenged.

The extent to which Kant's goal of autonomous existence has been assimilated into our modern culture is observable in Daphne Hampson's recent argument for feminism as a type of maturity:

To be autonomous is to overcome heteronomy. Heteronomy, the law of another ruling one, is the situation of the child. To be an adult is to have come into one's own. 'Enlightenment', said Kant, with reference to the movement of the late eighteenth century, is the 'exit of humanity from its self-incurred minority'. And he continues: '*sapere aude!* (dare to know)'; 'have courage to use *your own* understanding'. ... Women are those, last but not least, who are able to claim their maturity and to think for themselves. ... Far from being disruptive of human relations, the recognition of the full maturity of all adults is prerequisite for the human relationships which we would have. It is only as I am treated as an equal, and conceive of myself as such, that I shall be able to be fully present to others.<sup>9</sup>

It is noteworthy that Hampson seamlessly moves between the concepts of autonomy and maturity, and then associates the two with thinking for oneself, being treated as an equal and conceiving of oneself as such. However, what is telling is that she references Kant's logic as though it is authoritative rather than defends it as a potential way of viewing the human condition. Thus, for Hampson, Kant's equation of maturity with autonomy needs no justification in modernity. To be immature, either as or like a child, is to be dependent upon another, whilst maturity is the potential for adults to 'come into their own'. Even though Hampson's purpose is to apply this to specific concerns, it reveals an assumption that maturity is synonymous with autonomous existence.

The relevance of this is that autonomous individualism directs the modern construction of maturity primarily through psycho-social development theories. Fundamental to these theories is the premise that human persons develop from infancy to old age according to a series of identifiable stages.<sup>10</sup> The foundation for

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7. J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 529-30.

8. K. Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-23.

9. D. Hampson, 'On Autonomy and Heteronomy', in *Swallowing a Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity*, ed. D. Hampson (London: SPCK, 1996), 1-2 (emphasis original).

10. E.g. I. Stuart-Hamilton, 'Maturity', *DDP* 93: 'Any consideration of how well developed an individual is compared to his/her age average.'

this premise was already being laid with the inception of psychology as a discipline. Specifically, Sigmund Freud<sup>11</sup> argued that all human pathologies or neuroses develop in childhood, which then obstructs the person's ability to function in accordance with their own values and beliefs in adulthood. Freud's daughter expanded his arguments into a theory of childhood development. According to Anna Freud,<sup>12</sup> a child passes through a series of five developmental stages (oral, anal, genital, latency and adolescence), each of which contains the potential for correct development or for stunted growth through the development of neuroses. In essence, the way in which individuals successfully or unsuccessfully develop through these stages influences their sense of identity and capacity to function in the world throughout adult life.

Three other major theories were produced with regards to personal development. Erik Erikson<sup>13</sup> essentially expands upon Freud's development theory by dividing the adolescence stage into two distinct stages and adding two later stages of adult development. Much like Freud, Erikson argues that persons encounter a common set of experiences and challenges that leads to positive or negative developmental outcomes. In contrast to Freud and Erikson, Carl Jung<sup>14</sup> has produced a theory of personal development that places less emphasis on the individual's childhood and distributed four stages more evenly over the course of a person's life (childhood, youth, mid-life and old age). Accordingly, he focuses less on the potential of each stage to produce negative outcomes in favour of exposing the processes of development generally experienced. Thus, he divides the first half of a person's life into the process of establishing themselves in the world, and the second half into the process of distinguishing themselves as individuals. Daniel Levinson<sup>15</sup> proposes a theory much in line with Jung's, but carves out periods of transition from one stage to the next, where the processes of each amalgamate into unique transitional experiences. Even though these major theories differ to varying

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11. E.g. S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1, *The Pelican Freud Library*, eds. J. Strachey and A. Richards, trans. J. Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949), 383-403.

12. A. Freud, *Normality and Pathology in Childhood: Assessments of Development*, IPAL 69 (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 54-107.

13. E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1963), 247-74.

14. C.G. Jung, *The Development of Personality*, vol. 17, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 47-62, 167-86.

15. D.J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1978), 3-63.

degrees, they follow a similar pattern of thought that the individual grows according to a series of predictable stages.

Beyond theories of personal development, a number of psychologists and scholars have sought to construct theories of specialised, or specific, aspects of development. Amongst these efforts is the theory of cognitive development put forward by Jean Piaget.<sup>16</sup> He argues that the cognitive development of infants and children differ significantly from that of adults, and therefore maps out the stages of cognitive development from infancy. The first of these stages involves the infant's thought development as one of physical discovery and action. The second is when symbolic thought evolves as the toddler learns language, but only on an intuitive basis because of their egocentricity and inability to categorise. In the third stage, the child becomes capable of sustained abstract thought. Yet, it still must be attached to concrete objects that the child can see and interact with. Finally, the fourth stage is when the adolescent develops the ability to sustain abstract thinking as a purely mental activity.

Closely linked to cognitive development is Lawrence Kohlberg's<sup>17</sup> theory of moral development. He engages with Piaget's theory that speaks to the topic of moral development, but modifies it in order to produce an expanded and distinctive series of moral developmental stages. Kohlberg argues that the individual's growth in ability to make moral judgements occurs contemporaneously with cognitive development. He identifies seven stages, the first of which involves moral decisions being made on the basis of fear that bad actions lead to bad experiences. Yet, as the child becomes capable of abstract thought, a series of moral stages based upon reciprocity follow. Stage 2 is motivated by pragmatic personal interests, whereas stage 3 is concerned with the maintenance of relationships and stage 4 that of social order. These first four stages are evenly grouped as 'pre-conventional', or the self-interested acceptance of rules, and 'conventional', which entails accepting rules for the sake of family, friendship and society. Beyond this, he identifies another series of post-conventional stages where the individual critically evaluates morality apart from

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16. J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child*, trans. H. Weaver (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 3-151. See also P. Sutherland, *Cognitive Development Today: Piaget and His Critics* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1992), 7-28.

17. L. Kohlberg, *Moral Stages: A Current Formulation and a Response to Critics*, Contributions to Human Development 10 (Basel: S. Karger, 1983), 5-42.

external authorities. This includes stage 5, where social contracts are interpreted in the light of individual rights, and then stage 6, where morality is self-chosen in accordance with personal conscience and appeals to universal principles. Finally, Kohlberg argues that a contemplative stage 7 describes a small number of individuals who go on to inquire into the metaphysical nature of morality.

Finally, Paul Tillich<sup>18</sup> argues that an individual's worldview develops according to stages. However, he neither relies upon empirical psychology in his work, nor presents his beliefs on worldview development in terms of stages. Nevertheless, Tillich's system can be broadly categorised into three stages.<sup>19</sup> The first is that of a pre-conscious acceptance of the worldview of others. This entails accepting the myths and symbols of one's parents and community simply on the basis of their status and authority. The second stage, however, shifts to that of consciously accepting this worldview. In other words, as children develop cognitively and morally, they become capable of recognising that these myths and symbols belong to other people, but still seem to explain the way the world operates. Yet, in time, the individual begins to see that there are multiple worldviews that, at times, conflict with one another. These multiple, often competing, worldviews also begin to fail the person's own experience of the world. Hence, individuals eventually arrive at the third stage, where the broken myths and symbols are personally re-signified and re-employed according to their own self-constructed worldview.

This survey is intended not only to outline the various development theories that govern the construction of maturity in modernity, but also to expose certain inherent presuppositions underlying their formulation. Specifically, the reality that these theories arose from the interpretation of clinical studies and interview transcripts necessarily entails that the presuppositions of these scholars were involved. This is most effectively demonstrated by Carol Gilligan<sup>20</sup> who takes issue with the work of Erikson, Piaget, and especially Kohlberg. Gilligan notes that women in Kohlberg's studies are regularly evaluated as less morally developed than men of an equivalent age. In the course of her own study, she finds that men

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18. P. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1957), 30-54.

19. Cf. M. Jacobs, *Towards the Fullness of Christ: Pastoral Care and Christian Maturity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), 40.

20. C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 5-23.

and women make moral decisions differently when confronted with the same dilemma. However, because Kohlberg's stages are predisposed towards male forms of moral decision making, women are consistently regarded as morally underdeveloped. Gilligan's observations have been so influential that Levinson subsequently published a work on women's personal development<sup>21</sup> even though his first work, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, contained a statement on the dust cover that the book explained 'the specific periods of personal development through which *all human beings* must pass'.<sup>22</sup>

My intention, however, is to address another presupposition governing the manner in which development theories are framed altogether. A diagram that approximately aligns the trajectory of each theory will be helpful here:

<b>Freud</b>	Oral	Anal	Genital	Latency	Adolescence				
<b>Erikson</b>	Trust vs. Mistrust	Autonomy vs. Shame	Initiative vs. Guilt	Industry vs. Inferiority	Identity vs. Confusion	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	
<b>Jung</b>	Childhood			Youth		Mid-Life		Old Age	
	First half of life (Establishing)					Second half of life (Individuation)			
<b>Levinson</b>	<i>transition</i>	Childhood and Adolescence		<i>transition</i>	Early Adulthood	<i>transition</i>	Mid Adulthood	<i>transition</i>	Late Adulthood
<b>Piaget</b>	Sensori-motor Thinking	Intuitive Thinking	Concrete Thinking	Abstract Thinking					
<b>Kohlberg</b>	Fear	Pragmatic Reciprocity	Relational Reciprocity	Social Reciprocity	Individual Rights	Universal Principles		Stage 7 (Contemplative)	
	Pre-conventional		Conventional		Post-conventional				
<b>Tillich</b>	Pre-conscious Literalism		Conscious Literalism			Broken Myth and Use of Symbols			

Figure 1: Psycho-social Development Theories<sup>23</sup>

This diagram reveals a basic presupposition of these theories: that individuals are, and should be, on a developmental trajectory towards individual autonomy. Whilst this is not immediately apparent in the personal development theories (Freud, Erikson, Jung and Levinson), it is more readily observable in the trajectories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Tillich. For instance, Piaget's cognitive development theory presupposes that children are engaged in the activity of

21. D.J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Woman's Life* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1996).

22. Emphasis mine.

23. Adapted from Jacobs, *Fullness of Christ*, 40.

becoming able to think for themselves independent of external objects or authorities. Likewise, Kohlberg orders moral development along a trajectory from rule-accepting to rule-creating autonomy, with the end point being the individual's contemplation of their own moral place within the universe. Tillich similarly envisages the individual as engaged in a process of transition from accepting externally provided worldviews to creating one's own personal worldview. Given this, it can be seen that individuation and self-reliance are indeed operative assumptions in the personal development theories. As such, even though autonomy is never given explicit scope in the final stages, it is apparent that these theories hold that individuals develop from a state of dependence upon others to a state of self-reliance, self-construction, and self-understanding.

It should be expected, therefore, that developing individual autonomy governs the goal presented by James Fowler's<sup>24</sup> theory of faith development. In opposition to modern definitions of 'faith' as something possessed, Fowler argues that faith is 'the most fundamental category in the human quest for relation to transcendence.'<sup>25</sup> Put differently, faith is a universal *activity* of human life that is similar in process regardless of its variety of form or content. Thus, Fowler argues that every person's 'faithing' develops according to a series of identifiable stages. These stages were identified by evaluating clinical interviews in combination with a synthesis of the developmental stages from Kohlberg, Piaget and Erikson:

- Stage 0: Primal Faith – learns 'to faith' based upon parental presence and nurture.
- Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith – intuitively 'faiths' by asking deep questions but accepting simple answers, thereby perceiving and adopting the faith of the parent.
- Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith – 'faiths' by accepting the myths (stories/images/symbols) of others at face value and lives accordingly.
- Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith – 'faithing' begins to synthesize the various myths of the community into a personal convention that authoritatively orders the world.
- Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith – recognizes the individual nature of 'faithing' and attempts to reflectively adjust their conventions to address other persons.
- Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith – develops the capacity to appreciate and relate to persons in other stages, thereby learning from other ways of 'faithing'.
- Stage 6: Universalising Faith – 'faithing' that removes the self as the centre of concern, thereby being able to address reality with an almost transcendent vision of the moral/religious universal community.

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24. J.W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981), esp. 119-213. See also J.W. Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 53-77.

25. Fowler, *Stages*, 14.



As with the previous development theories, it can be seen that Fowler's theory of faith development transitions the individual from a state of dependence to one of autonomy. Specifically, whereas 'faithing' is initially dependent upon parents and then others, it eventually develops into a self-constructed activity.

This survey therefore identifies several important features of the construction of maturity in modernity. First, the nature of maturity in the modern discourse is ultimately that of autonomous existence. This ideal has been applied to several facets of human existence, so that one can speak of personal autonomy, cognitive autonomy, moral autonomy, and so forth. Second, this goal makes maturity something highly individualistic. In other words, if individual autonomy is the goal of maturity in modernity, it necessarily follows that it can only be assessed on an individual basis. Finally, maturity is something achieved through a developmental process. The dominance of psycho-social development theories is seen clearly in the pervasive attitudes that maturity is something assessed of individuals with respect to their age and peers. Beyond these three observations, it must be noted that Fowler has expanded development theory so that it is now accessible to the construction of maturity in religious sub-cultures. This reality necessitates an evaluation of how the Christian sub-culture constructs the nature of Christian maturity in the light of this pervasive modern discourse.

### **1.2.2 The Modern Construction of Christian Maturity**

Based upon the observations of the previous survey, I will show that three major trends result in the modern discourse on Christian maturity. These trends may be categorised in relationship to modern psychological theory. One trend constructs Christian maturity by assimilating modern development theories, whereas another trend is to neglect, or even reject, modern theories in favour of reading the biblical texts. The third trend attempts to negotiate these two. Thus, I will substantiate the categorisation of works on Christian maturity into these three major trends and then assess the strengths and/or weaknesses of each.

#### **1.2.2.1 Christian Maturity and Development Theory**

The first trend in contemporary works on the nature of Christian maturity attempts to provide a construction that primarily, if not entirely, refers to psycho-social development theories. Whilst this trend does not dominate the specific

discourse about Christian maturity, it nevertheless reveals the influence that development theory in general, and Fowler's faith development theory in particular, holds in modern conceptions of maturity. Furthermore, this trend provides a foil against which the other trends in constructing Christian maturity may be compared.

An example of this first trend is found in the work of Michael Jacobs<sup>26</sup> who argues that the primary concern of pastoral care is to foster mature Christians. He derives his title for the work from the statement in Eph. 4.13 where believers are exhorted to attain to the fullness of Christ. However, when Jacobs outlines for pastors the guiding principles that foster Christian maturity, he provides a synthetic analysis of several developmental theories in which Fowler's theory takes priority. In particular, he demonstrates how personal, cognitive, moral and world-view development theories co-ordinate with faith development theory, and then applies these observations to pastoral practices with, and goals for, individuals at each stage of their development. Whilst this methodology is coherent, Jacobs' equation of the type of maturity fostered by development theories with the statement of Christian maturity in Ephesians remains ill-considered and unjustified. For instance, he disregards the theology of Eph. 4.13, which (as I will show) is not concerned with the development of individual believers in their capacity 'to faith', but rather with the corporate growth of the Church.<sup>27</sup> As such, Jacobs' work injects statements about Christian maturity from Ephesians into a development theory mould so that the final product no longer resembles what may be found in that text.

Brian Underwood<sup>28</sup> has produced a similar work for ministers working with young teenagers. He argues that Col. 2.6-7 provides the three essential goals of Christian maturity: (i) walking in Christ, (ii) rooted in Christ, and (iii) built up in Christ. Yet, when Underwood develops a methodology for ministers engaged in fostering these goals, it is similarly based upon psycho-social development theory. His exposition of these theories significantly outweighs his analysis of Col. 2.6-7 to the degree that any appreciation of the Colossian pericope is both undervalued and underdeveloped. Specifically, he does not show how the passage relates to the

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26. Jacobs, *Fullness of Christ*, 21-46, 62-137.

27. See §3.3.2.

28. B. Underwood, *Towards Christian Maturity: A Handbook for Leaders of Young Teenagers* (London: Church Book Room Press, 1968).

broader themes of growth in the letter, or to the statement of maturity in Col. 1.28 and its explication in 3.1-4.<sup>29</sup> Again, modern development theory dominates the discussion so that the biblical text becomes scriptural window-dressing.

In my estimation, works of this type are caught in a precarious position between two competing assumptions. One apparent assumption is that any discussion of Christian maturity must somehow be rooted within at least one biblical text that justifies the work as a whole. The other assumption seems to be that there is no material within those biblical texts for a substantive discussion about the nature of Christian maturity, whilst such material abounds in modern development theories. As such, two primary concerns derive from these works on the nature of Christian maturity. First is the unconsidered belief that the type of maturity expressed by modern development theories is conducive to, or can be equated with, the nature of Christian maturity found in the biblical texts. In other words, these works fail to consider if the ideal of individual autonomy that governs psycho-social development theories can be reconciled with a proper understanding of the nature of Christian maturity expressed by the biblical texts. If it is not reconcilable, then the application of development theories to pastoral practices intended to foster Christian maturity inevitably creates tensions between the nature of the goal and the means of attaining it. The second concern is the manner in which the biblical texts are fundamentally neglected. Specifically, these works neglect the possibility that a theology of Christian maturity can be derived from their reference texts so that no significant analysis of the biblical materials is conducted. As such, this trend in works on the nature of Christian maturity is highly problematic.

#### **1.2.2.2 Christian Maturity and the Biblical Texts**

The second trend amongst works on Christian maturity attempts to identify its nature by engaging exclusively with the biblical texts. This task is undertaken either through a systematic study of a particular text or by conglomerating a series of qualities identified in various texts. The strength of both methods is that the question of what constitutes Christian maturity is addressed to the foundational texts of Christianity. However, these efforts are not without their own significant shortcomings. Both fail to consider the influence of the modern discourse on their

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29. See §4.3.1.3 and §4.4.2.2.

assumptions and findings. They also suffer from a methodological problem in that they do not justify their transition from an exposition of the biblical materials to the discussion of Christian maturity. As such, the following survey will demonstrate these shortfalls in order to show their inability to do justice to the nature of Christian maturity espoused by the biblical texts.

One example along the trajectory of identifying qualities of Christian maturity is the work of Daniel Jenkins.<sup>30</sup> He argues that ‘the Christian claim is that there is only one kind of maturity, only one form of true humanity, whose nature has been made clear in Jesus Christ.’<sup>31</sup> However, Jenkins’ assessment of the qualities of the mature Christian exemplified by Christ reveals only a sporadic interaction with the biblical text. Specifically, he identifies three qualities from the Sermon on the Mount (meekness, peacemaking, and generosity) and two from Philippians (magnanimity and joyfulness). Furthermore, he argues from Ephesians that two principles govern Christian maturity: (i) maturity may only be comprehended and attained in relationship and (ii) believers share a mutual interest in each other’s attainment of maturity. Hence, believers are to mutually encourage one another through relationship towards the embodiment of the five qualities of Christian maturity.

Bernard Häring<sup>32</sup> also offers a work on the nature of Christian maturity along this trajectory in which he argues that Christian maturity and holiness are synonymous. Thus, he states:

Mature Christians know that Christ is *the Truth*. For them the one thing that matters is to know Christ and, through him, the Father, and to know even better the origin, destiny and vocation of man.

Holy people know that they are not private owners of salvation truth. ... Their own striving for a more profound, more encompassing and vital knowledge of truth goes hand in hand, therefore, with their desire to learn with others and to help others on the road to truth.<sup>33</sup>

It can be seen that Häring here has equated ‘mature Christians’ with ‘holy people’, and this status is something both presently enjoyed and progressively strengthened in relationship with other believers. He subsequently derives a host of implications from this basic conception of maturity, such as that it entails dialogue with others, rejoicing in beauty, cultural and ecological responsibility,

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30. D. Jenkins, *Christian Maturity and Christian Success* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), esp. 11-34.

31. Jenkins, *Christian Maturity*, 116.

32. B. Häring, *Christian Maturity: Holiness in Today’s World* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1983).

33. Häring, *Christian Maturity*, 9 (emphasis original).

discernment and love, to name a few. In his discussion of each of these implications, Häring employs different biblical passages to justify his observations and conclusions. As such, he regards Christian maturity to be a proper, and even doxological, performance of the vocation God has given human beings.

These works are commendable for their intention to identify qualities of Christian maturity that are both comprehensible and practical to the modern believer. However, the weakness of their efforts is found in a failure to provide a methodological justification for their selection of biblical passages and, consequently, the qualities that they derive as central to Christian maturity. For example, Jenkins justifies neither his selection of five qualities from two separate passages, nor the neglect of other qualities listed in those same passages. Moreover, he does not justify the selection of the passages themselves and why they are particularly relevant to the discussion of maturity. Indeed, nothing in the passages selected in either work necessitates a discussion of maturity. Instead, it seems that Jenkins and Häring have prioritised specific qualities and principles primarily because they are conducive to their rhetorical goals.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it may also be observed that certain elements of the modern discourse on maturity are operative in these works. Namely, they both assume from the outset that maturity pertains to the individual and entails a process of growth. Certainly, both works argue for a view of maturity that is attainable only through community, but this maturity nevertheless is identified fundamentally with the individual and their progressive development. Hence, no consideration of the biblical texts has occurred wherein it is asked whether these basic assumptions are valid.

Along the other trajectory, D. A. Carson<sup>35</sup> provides a systematic exposition of Christian maturity from 2 Cor. 10-13. He claims that these chapters ‘clearly reveal the heart and mind of the apostle Paul’<sup>36</sup> more than any other single text. This is because it exposes the nature of Paul’s apostolicity with its consequent humble activities that contrast the boasting of his super-apostle antagonists. According to Carson, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to an obedience motivated by both meekness

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34. For instance, Jenkins is concerned for believers to be open participants in the Christian ecumenical movement, which to some extent explains the thrust of the qualities that he has emphasised and the interest in mutual support. Similarly, Häring laments what he considers to be the failure of Christianity to be distinct from broader culture, which accounts for his equation of maturity with holiness.

35. D.A. Carson, *A Model of Christian Maturity: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 10-13* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

36. Carson, *Christian Maturity*, 14.

and concern for the Lord's approval, whereas his opponents attempt to win human approval and induce disobedience. Furthermore, the apostle represents his antagonists as pretending to be pious whilst really being satanic agents who do damage to the Church. In contrast, Paul models to the Corinthians an attitude opposed to boasting and quick to acknowledge weakness because it extols Christ's strength and glory. As such, he both warns the Corinthians that their continued disobedience and failure to follow his example will result in the Lord's discipline, and exhorts them to aim for 'perfection' (2 Cor. 13.11 – κατάρτισις). Carson argues that this language of 'perfection' is synonymous with Christian 'maturity'.

Carson's work is meritorious in that it analyzes a specific text and attends to the various scholarly debates evoked by it. However, the argument as a whole is not without certain deficiencies. First, his equation of perfection with maturity is tenuous not only because there are no extant examples of the term κατάρτισις, or its cognate verb καταρτίζω, denoting maturity,<sup>37</sup> but also because the text as a whole does not contain themes conducive to a discussion of Christian maturity. The evidence for this is that Carson makes no link to the concept of maturity until the final pages of his work, which indicates that nothing in his analysis necessitates that this concept be employed. Instead, it seems that Carson invokes the term 'maturity' not out of necessity from the text, but rather because he finds it more conducive to the modern ear than 'perfection'. Second, he identifies the four features of maturity as: (i) receiving Paul's delegates; (ii) preparing a contribution for the Jerusalem church; (iii) abandoning any lingering idolatry (6.14-7.1); and (iv) avoiding boasting in the midst of church discipline. This is problematic in that the first two features are highly specific to the historic circumstances of the Corinthian congregation, the third is drawn unexpectedly from an unaddressed passage without consideration of its modern implications, and both the third and fourth features do not make positive statements about Christian maturity. Finally, Carson's work also operates with an unassessed assumption that maturity is individualistic and requires progressive growth.

The survey of this trajectory, therefore, reveals two fundamental concerns confronting an attempt to determine the nature of Christian maturity from the biblical texts. The first is the manner in which these works provide little or no

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37. For a discussion of the relationship between the semantics of Greek terminology and the concept of 'maturity', see §1.4.1.

justification when selecting biblical texts for an exposition of the nature of Christian maturity. To be sure, it would be invalid to claim that Jacobs, Häring and Carson work with passages completely irrelevant to the topic of maturity. However, these scholars overstate their claim to expose what Christian maturity *is* when the biblical text or texts in question provide so little justificatory material. The second concern is the remarkable disregard evident in these works for one's own modern presuppositions about the nature of maturity. In particular, these scholars do not begin by questioning what the biblical text states about the nature of Christian maturity, but seek instead to fit the biblical material into a preconceived, and distinctly modern, view of maturity. Consequently, this trend of scholarship on the nature of Christian maturity proves to be as problematic as the first trend.

### **1.2.2.3 Christian Maturity and the Historical Divide**

In light of the observations made regarding these trends amongst works on Christian maturity, two studies merit attention for their attempts to negotiate the differences between the modern and ancient discourses. Both efforts address some, but not all, of the concerns previously identified. This section will outline the strengths and weaknesses of these two works in order to demonstrate that further clarification of the divide between the ancient and modern constructions is needed. Moreover, these works provide an initial means of exploring the methodological pitfalls that confront an attempt to re-appropriate features of the ancient construct in modernity.

The first work to be considered is that of Millard Sall's<sup>38</sup> study of the relationship between the goal of modern psychology and the biblical conception of Christian maturity. First, he explores what psychology teaches about human identity and living, giving precedence to Freud's theory that the human mind is composed of the three constructs: id, ego and superego. Using this conception of human beings, Sall outlines the stages of normal human development and the potential developmental breakdowns that lead to a weak sense of identity, anxieties, and other disabilities. Next, he considers what the Bible teaches about humanity, beginning with the applicability of psychological categories such as the ego to the biblical material and ending with an argument that the Bible regards

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38. M.J. Sall, *Faith, Psychology & Christian Maturity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975).

Christianity to be the balanced life. Because of this, he argues that the mark of the mature Christian is the balanced life, which is expressed in Gal. 5.22-23 as the fruit of the Spirit. Finally, Sall addresses the question of how psychological and biblical teaching may be harmonised, which effectively functions as an effort to find a place for psychotherapy in the life of believers. Whilst he does provide some limited critiques of Freud and psychotherapy, Sall's overriding concern is to justify the value of psychological teaching and counselling. This is best evident in his description of Christ as the 'Master Therapist' and exposition of narratives in the gospels as counselling encounters.

Sall's effort may seem to belong to the first trend of works on Christian maturity, but I suggest that several features of his study exclude him from such categorisation. Specifically, he demonstrates an awareness that modern psychology and biblical anthropology may have, or at least may be perceived to have, different presuppositions. As such, Sall expends considerable time and effort justifying his psychological views about human persons from the biblical material. He also is willing to critique modern psychology, albeit briefly, in the light of biblical teaching. Finally, he considers how psychological and biblical languages of human existence can be reconciled and harmonised. Nevertheless, Sall's work still remains susceptible to many of the criticisms raised by the preceding surveys. For instance, he fails to provide any form of justification for selecting the 'fruit of the Spirit' in Galatians as the marks of Christian maturity. Additionally, his analysis of the biblical texts in terms of psychological categories reveals a base intention to interpret the biblical material according to a modern paradigm rather than to explore what categories and paradigms the texts use themselves. As such, it becomes apparent that the shortcoming in his work is the lingering modern conception of Christian maturity as individualistic. With this presupposition firmly rooted, he approaches the biblical text with the wrong questions of how it affirms his pre-conceived notions of the relationship between psychology and Christian maturity.

The second work under consideration is James Samra's<sup>39</sup> recent study on the nature of Christian maturity in the undisputed Pauline letters. He identifies

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39. J.G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation, and the Local Community in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles*, LNTS 320 (London: T&T Clark, 2006). For an expanded analysis, see also his original thesis: J.G. Samra, 'Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles' (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2004).



several key passages that clarify Paul's apostolic commission, the nature of maturity, the process of maturation and its relation to the local congregation. Samra argues that Paul regarded his apostolic responsibility to involve presenting mature believers on the day of Christ that consequently orientated his pastoral efforts towards this goal. Furthermore, he concludes that conformity to the image of Christ is the central motif of Christian maturity so that believers are mature insofar as their actions and attitudes correspond to their status in Christ. This is attained through the process of maturation in participation with Christ and through the work of the Spirit involving five means: (i) identifying with Christ; (ii) enduring suffering; (iii) experiencing the presence of God; (iv) receiving and living out wisdom from God; and (v) imitating a godly example. Finally, Samra argues that the local church is beneficial to this process of maturation in that it facilitates these five means.

Samra's analysis is commendable particularly for the manner in which he justifies the selection of biblical passages that speak directly about, or are thematically related to, the nature of Christian maturity. Moreover, even though Samra draws upon modern psychological theory, his concluding description of Christian maturity remains firmly couched in biblical language and categories. Despite these merits, his work also suffers from a critical shortcoming. Samra acknowledges a disjunction between the modern terminology of 'maturity' and ancient concepts of human growth and teleology, but opts to disregard this discontinuity. To justify this decision, he states that both the ancient and modern concepts of maturity pertain to the individual's 'progress relative to his/her peers without implying that development is completed'.<sup>40</sup> In other words, Samra assumes the modern construction of maturity as individualistic and entailing progressive development when assessing the biblical material. This position allows him to apply observations drawn from social learning theory, abnormal psychology and psycho-social development theories<sup>41</sup> to his analysis of Paul without considering if the anthropological presuppositions of these theories are amenable to Pauline anthropology. As such, Samra's important study of maturity

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40. Samra, *Conformed*, 4.

41. Interestingly, even though Samra's assessment 'spiritual maturity' draws upon observations from moral and cognitive development theories, no reliance on, or mention of, Fowler's faith development theory occurs in his thesis. See Samra, 'Conformed to Christ', 3, 53-59.

in the undisputed Pauline letters is undermined by a critical disregard for the differences between modern and ancient constructions of human teleology.

This survey therefore reveals that further work on the nature of Christian maturity is needed. Even though both of these efforts address some of the concerns confronting an analysis of Christian maturity, neither sufficiently appreciates the scope of the task at hand. This is evident in that these two studies approached the task from differing perspectives, Sall from a modern psychological perspective and Samra from a biblical studies perspective, but ultimately suffered from the same deficiency. Specifically, both works reveal that the modern conception of maturity still dominates the analysis so that any distinctive, or altogether different, features of maturity in the biblical material are lost.

### **1.2.3 Summary**

An assessment of the modern discourse on human maturity and the resultant trends in contemporary works on Christian maturity reveals a common set of concerns. The effort to determine the nature of Christian maturity engages the question of how it relates to the modern ideal of individual autonomy and the consequent rise of psycho-social development theories as a means of describing the attainment of that ideal. Yet, this effort must address also the biblical materials in order to articulate the nature of Christian maturity in accordance with the foundational texts of Christianity. These two responsibilities create significant difficulties, because (as I will show) ancient and modern discourses on maturity are not alike.<sup>42</sup> Even though some constructions of Christian maturity manage to recognise and negotiate the disparity, it is apparent that the modern discourse still colours the assumptions governing their analysis of the biblical texts. Given this, a fresh approach is needed in order to address the question: ‘What is Christian maturity?’

### **1.3 Clarification of Terminology**

Before proceeding to identify the biblical texts that will serve as the source materials for this study, it is first necessary to clarify how I intend to use maturity language throughout the thesis. Given my assertion that modern and ancient

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42. See §6.2.

notions of maturity differ, it would be detrimental to the purposes of this study to employ the language of maturity in a casual manner. Specifically, without clear definitions, no method of delineating whether I am speaking of conceptions fundamental to antiquity or those fundamental to modernity is available. As such, I will provide working definitions for three terms to be used in this thesis: ‘maturity’, ‘mature’ and ‘maturation’. These definitions are based partially upon modern meaning and partially upon the observations that I will make in the subsequent analysis of the ancient discourse. Indeed, this is somewhat necessary seeing as modern definitions are frequently circular.<sup>43</sup> Yet, it is also intentionally done so that the language, whilst technical, is nevertheless still within a conceptual range accessible to the modern reader.

### *Maturity*

Given that the purpose of this thesis is to articulate the nature of Christian maturity, it would be detrimental to provide a definition that leads to a foregone conclusion. For instance, contemporary definitions of maturity are ‘the state of being complete, perfect, or ready’ and ‘fullness or perfection of natural development or growth’.<sup>44</sup> If ‘fullness of development’ was admitted as an element of maturity, it would colour the conclusions reached during an analysis of the ancient discourse. However, it is similarly dangerous to allow the subsequent observations about ancient constructs to dictate the definition. As such, a common ground between modern and ancient concepts is needed. It will be demonstrated in the subsequent analysis of the ancient discourse that such a common ground does exist. Namely, the point of contact between modernity and antiquity with respect to the concept of maturity is that it pertains to the ideal state, or goal,<sup>45</sup> of human existence. As such, when the term ‘maturity’ is employed in this thesis, it is used with the intent to express the end goal of human existence. Note that this does not incorporate questions of how that goal is determined or attained, because such features of maturity vary widely between antiquity and modernity and within them. Moreover, it does not constrain ‘human existence’ to either individualistic or corporate notions.

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43. For instance, ‘maturity’ is defined as ‘the state of being mature’ (*OED* 9:486), whereas ‘mature’ is defined as ‘to bring to maturity’ (*OED* 9:485-86).

44. *SOED* 1:1722.

45. D.J. Harrington, S.J. and J.F. Keenan, S.J., *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 40-45.

### *Mature*

Defining the term ‘mature’ is complicated by the fact that it can function as a noun, adjective or verb in modern language. Yet, for the purposes of this thesis, this term will be employed only for its adjectival function. Again, modern definitions can be misleading, such as ‘having the powers of body and mind fully developed, adult’.<sup>46</sup> Assigning the quality of being ‘mature’ to adulthood does not follow its more common usage as an assessment of a person’s capacities at any given age. For instance, toddlers, children and adolescents can be assessed as ‘mature for their age’ without expecting an adult level of development. Whilst this reveals that ‘mature’ is being employed here with an assumption of human development, I will demonstrate that ancient constructions of maturity conceived of similar intermediate states. However, the means by which intermediate states are either attained or advanced varied between traditions so that it can not be constrained simply to notions of development. As such, the term ‘mature’ will be employed in this thesis specifically to denote an intermediate state of human existence that in some ways approximates the final goal of maturity.

### *Maturation*

Even though this thesis has thus far resisted the language of development when speaking of the ancient discourse, it will be seen that some traditions in antiquity did construct maturity as the product of a process of growth and development. As such, the modern definition of ‘maturation’ as ‘the physical growth which, together with learning, leads to maturity’<sup>47</sup> is actually quite conducive to these particular ancient constructs. Nevertheless, two important modifications are needed. First, it is incongruous with ancient anthropology to speak of physical versus mental growth. Second, it is overly restrictive – and indeed indicative of the modern proclivity towards rationality – to claim that ‘learning’ is the only necessary additive to natural processes of human growth. As such, ‘maturation’ will be employed in this thesis using the broader definition that it is the process of growth that leads to maturity. To be sure, maturation was not an element of every construction of maturity in antiquity. This means that it will not always feature in the subsequent analyses in this thesis.

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46. *SOED* 1:1722.

47. *SOED* 1:1722.

## 1.4 Scope of Inquiry

The preceding section revealed that a wide range of biblical passages have been consulted by works on the nature of Christian maturity. It was also concluded, however, that any study of Christian maturity in the biblical texts must justify its selection. As such, the purpose of this section is to provide justification for undertaking that task at hand through reference to the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians. The basis of my selection rests upon two features: (i) the presence of the language of maturity and (ii) the development of the theology of maturity. Both of these criteria will be clarified and substantiated in order to sufficiently justify my selection of texts.

### 1.4.1 The Language of Maturity

The first requirement for my selection of texts is that they must contain maturity terminology. This criterion, however, is not intended to confuse the distinction between word and concept. James Barr<sup>48</sup> effectively dismantles the misconception that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the lexical stock and the conceptual stock of the NT. Thus, it must be clear from the onset that the concept of maturity is not linked to, or controlled by, a specific term or set of terms. The implication of this for the present task is that it opens a large number of biblical passages to the study of Christian maturity. Indeed, a text can quite easily be drawn into the study of maturity based upon its conceptual relevance rather than the presence of specific terminology. Yet, herein lays the danger for a study of Christian maturity. If the only criterion for justifying the selection of a passage is that it can be claimed to contain concepts related to maturity, then the works on the nature of Christian maturity in the biblical texts will always be constrained by the prevailing conception of maturity. In other words, contemporary notions of what constitutes maturity will govern a concept-based selection process.

Given this dilemma, I propose that if one is to determine what Christian maturity is according to the biblical material, then the most efficient means is to restrict the selection of passages to instances where maturity language occurs. However, this is potentially susceptible to the same criticism as a conceptually based selection of texts. Specifically, it begs the question of how one is to

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48. J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 206-62.

determine what terminology indicated, to the ancient mind, concepts of maturity. Nonetheless, I suggest that it is possible to identify a limited range of terminology that was commonly used to describe maturity in the ancient world. Given that I have already put forward a definition of ‘maturity’ as the goal of human existence, ancient terminology that indicated the attainment of that goal – regardless of how that attainment comes about – is relevant to the study of maturity in antiquity. Whilst this methodology of selecting texts is circular to some degree, I maintain that it is preferable to choosing passages based upon the justification that they seem relevant to the concept of maturity.

Within the NT, there are only two terms that are commonly rendered in English as ‘mature’ or ‘maturity’: τέλειος and τελειότης. To be sure, both of these terms include the broader semantic range of ‘perfection’ or ‘completeness’,<sup>49</sup> thereby making it a linguistic fallacy to associate them exclusively with the concept of ‘maturity’. The unsatisfactory conclusions that derive from this error are evident in the work Paul du Plessis<sup>50</sup> who directly equated the NT concept of ‘perfection’ with the term τέλειος. Likewise, there is other terminology in the NT with a semantic range similar to that of τέλειος, such as the term ὀλόκληρος with its sense of ‘complete’. Yet, instances where the believer’s τέλος is the primary concern routinely employ the terms τέλειος or τελειότης (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.6; 14.2; Eph. 4.13; Phil. 3.15; Col. 1.28; 4.12; Heb. 5.14; 6.1). As such, the range of texts to be considered will be drawn from these occurrences. Other instances of these terms where another sense is employed, such as that of moral perfection intended by the occurrence of τέλειος in Matt. 5.48, are relevant to the study of maturity only insofar as they raise an intriguing question of the relationship between the concepts of perfection and maturity in antiquity. This question, however, cannot be addressed in the scope of this thesis. Instead, the presence of maturity language in the passages listed above provides a range of possible texts for this thesis. As such, I will turn to the second of my criteria in order to justify my selection of Ephesians and Colossians for my analysis.

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49. *BDAG* 995-96.

50. P.J. du Plessis, *TEAEIOS: The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1959).

### 1.4.2 The Theology of Maturity

The second criterion governing my selection of texts for this thesis is that the concept of maturity must be developed theologically. This is not to imply that some of these occurrences are void of theological significance, but rather that their theological relevance is not explicit. For instance, in Phil. 3.15, Paul exhorts those who are ‘mature’ to think in a certain manner (“Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν), but does not explicate the nature of maturity understood in this statement. The result of studying passages that are not theologically developed would be, in essence, a claim that Christian maturity can only be understood through the conglomeration of isolated statements such as ‘the mature believer thinks in a certain manner’. This would be problematic in that it defines the *nature* of Christian maturity in terms of *function*, or rather what Christian maturity *does* rather than what it *is*. Indeed, Samra’s conclusions about the nature of Christian maturity from his study of isolated statements are not far from this type of result. For instance, he claims that the central motif of Christian maturity is conformity to the image of Christ, which he defines as ‘the actualization in the lives of believers of the attitudes and actions exemplified by Christ’.<sup>51</sup> In other words, mature believers are people who both think and act in a certain manner that conforms to the example of Christ. Yet, this leaves unanswered certain critical questions, such as why believers do these things, or even why Christian maturity is important.

My criterion requires that the statement about maturity in the text occurs in co-ordination with broader theological themes. The benefit of this is that it identifies passages wherein a theology of maturity is likely to be operative, and therefore is open to theological inquiry into the nature of Christian maturity. Of the passages listed above, two definitely fit this requirement. Col. 1.28 speaks of being ‘mature in Christ’ (τέλειος ἐν Χριστῷ), which relates Christian maturity to the broader theological theme of union with Christ operative in the letter. Eph. 4.13 metaphorically depicts Christian maturity as ‘the mature man’ (ἄνηρ τέλειος) in the midst of an ecclesiological consideration of themes such as unity and fullness in relation to Christ. Another potential candidate is 1 Cor. 2.6, which aligns the language of maturity with the anthropological category of the ‘spiritual person’ (2.15 – ὁ πνευματικός) that contrasts the ‘natural person’ (2.14 – ψυχικός)

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51. Samra, *Conformed*, 3.

ἄνθρωπος). Of these three, the first two are most conducive to the goals of this thesis in that they clearly relate the nature of Christian maturity to the Christology and ecclesiology of the letters.

There are further reasons, though, to restrict the selected texts to only Ephesians and Colossians. First, the scope of this thesis does not allow for three letters to be studied in the detail necessary. Second, 1 Cor. 2.6-16 has been assessed recently in Samra's work on maturity in the undisputed Pauline epistles. Even though problems were identified with this study, they have little bearing on his analysis of the passage. Thus, reproducing a similar analysis in this thesis is unnecessary. Finally, the literary relationship between Ephesians and Colossians will enable this thesis to assess a potential relationship between their constructions of Christian maturity. As a result, this thesis will explore the nature of Christian maturity with reference to Ephesians and Colossians.

### **1.4.3 Summary**

Because both Ephesians and Colossians contain maturity language, and develop it theologically, they provide the best source material in the NT for a study of Christian maturity. As such, I will conduct an analysis of each letter as a whole so that the statements about maturity will be appropriately contextualised. This will provide not only a robust appreciation of the theology of Christian maturity in either text, but also how it relates to broader theological themes. Beyond this, the literary relationship between the two letters opens avenues for exploring potential ways of co-ordinating their messages. In effect, Ephesians and Colossians both satisfy the requirements for a justified analysis of Christian maturity, and possess the added benefit of enabling an investigation into the possibility of a broader NT theology of maturity.

### **1.5 Aims of Thesis**

Having accomplished the groundwork needed in preparation for the thesis, I have formulated three specific aims that are intended to address the problems facing the study of Christian maturity in modernity. These are listed neither in terms of priority, nor in terms of the order addressed. Instead, these aims will direct the purpose of the thesis as whole.



*Aim 1: To assess the constructions of Christian maturity in both Ephesians and Colossians, co-ordinating their theological significance with the broader theology of each letter and potentially between the letters.*

The purposes of this aim are intended to address the critical shortcoming in modern studies of Christian maturity that inadequately assess the biblical texts. Therefore, having justified the selection of Ephesians and Colossians, this thesis aims to provide a careful assessment of the nature of Christian maturity from these two letters that are a part of the foundational texts of the Christian faith. Moreover, it is my intention to analyze the statements about maturity under the premise that they are not isolated or theologically insignificant features of the letters. Instead, I will explore the manner in which the theology of Christian maturity operates within the overall message of each letter. This also leads to the aim of evaluating the manner in which the relationship between these letters in turn provides grounds for co-ordinating these messages and therefore exploring a more complex theology of Christian maturity than either letter expresses on its own.

*Aim 2: To assess the constructions of maturity in antiquity, identifying any common features and situating the construction of Christian maturity within this broad discourse.*

This aim derives from the basic premise of this thesis that the manner in which modernity and antiquity construct maturity differs. Yet, this difference is not absolute so as to render ancient constructions unintelligible to the modern world. As such, the thesis aims to explore the ancient discourse about maturity in order to expose the features of ancient constructs that have been lost in the genealogy of maturity in the West. This will provide the context for the further intention of assessing the construction of Christian maturity as articulated by Ephesians and Colossians in accordance with their ancient origins. I will also assess the features that were common amongst these ancient constructs and the distinct features of Christian maturity. As such, this aim is directed at comprehending the ancient discourse on maturity and its implications for the reading of maturity in Ephesians and Colossians.

*Aim 3: To evaluate modern constructions of Christian maturity, determining the continuities and discontinuities between ancient and modern discourses and which elements of the ancient construction function as necessary correctives or additions to the modern discourse.*

Given that the previous section identified individual autonomy and progressive development as central features of the modern discourse on maturity, it is necessary to determine how ancient features of Christian maturity are to be reintroduced into the modern construct. As such, this thesis aims to assess the points between that ancient and modern constructs that are continuous, thereby providing stable ground for an evaluation of the points of discontinuity. This perspective will lead to the further aim of recovering elements from the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians. In so doing, some elements will serve as correctives to the modern construction of Christian maturity, whereas others will function as essential additions to deficiencies in our modern understanding.

## **1.6 Overview of the Argument**

The shape of the thesis naturally derives from its aims. I will outline the goals of each chapter in co-ordination with the intentions of the thesis.

This introductory chapter has already satisfied portions of *Aim 3* in that it has provided an assessment of modern constructions of Christian maturity. Beyond this, the purpose of chapter 2 is to analyze the ancient discourse about maturity in order to accomplish elements of *Aim 2*. In particular, I will assess the manner in which maturity was constructed by three traditions in the ancient world: the Hellenistic philosophical tradition of Stoicism and the apocalyptic and sapiential texts of (respectively) *1 Enoch* and *Sirach* in Second Temple Judaism. Whilst some of the elements that I will identify in the maturity constructs of each tradition are distinct, I will demonstrate that there are several common features in the way that these traditions constructed maturity. The benefit of this analysis is that it will fine tune the assessment of Ephesians and Colossians to features not commonly considered by the modern discourse.

Chapter 3, therefore, contains an exposition of the nature of Christian maturity according to Ephesians in order to fulfil aspects of *Aim 1*. I will conduct a detailed analysis of two pericopes particularly relevant to the message of Christian

maturity in the letter: 1.3-14 and 4.1-16. I will demonstrate that the attainment of the Church to its corporate maturity as it is expressed in 4.13 pertains to the intentions of divine mystery in 1.10 to unite all things in Christ. In other words, I will argue that Christian maturity in Ephesians is primarily a corporate and eschatological state of believers in Christ, and this state is commensurate with realisation of God's plans for the entire cosmos.

Chapter 4 will then conduct a similar analysis of the nature of Christian maturity according to Colossians also to satisfy elements of *Aim 1*. Whilst I will assess the message of the letter as a whole, the analysis will focus on three pericopes especially pertinent to Christian maturity: 1.15-20; 1.24-2.5 and 2.8-3.4. I will argue that the Christological hymn sets out the redemptive intentions of God to reconcile all things in, through and for Christ. I will further show that Paul's apostolic goal derives its purpose from this divine intent, and is expressed as seeking to present every believer as mature in Christ. I will demonstrate that Paul's apostolic responsibility is expressed in this manner due to an invasive error that threatens to disassociate believers from the Church. This effectively entails both detachment from the headship of Christ as the source of life, and alienation from the community that encourages perseverance until the revelation of eschatological maturity. As such, I will argue that Christian maturity in Colossians is the eschatological state of believers in Christ that is received in co-ordination with God's intentions for the cosmos.

In chapter 5, I will draw together the conclusions from the preceding chapters in order to accomplish the remaining elements of *Aim 2*. Specifically, I will evaluate the distinct features of the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians by comparing the common set of divine, social and cosmic reference points for each ancient construction. I will argue that divine referent of Christian maturity is distinct from the other traditions due to its emphasis on union with Christ, which accounts for its dynamic synthesis of comparatively separate elements in the other traditions. Likewise, I will demonstrate that the social reference point of Christian maturity is more complex than the other traditions due to somatic nature of the Church. Finally, I will show that the manner in which the cosmic referent is articulated and appropriated can vary due to the partial veiling of Christian maturity in the divine mystery.

Finally, chapter 6 will accomplish *Aim 3* by providing a constructive application of the nature of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians to the

modern discourse. I will draw from the observations already made on the modern methods of constructing Christian maturity in order to clarify the points of continuity and discontinuity between ancient and modern discourses. In turn, I will demonstrate how the points of continuity are strengthened by a proper understanding of the nature of Christian maturity, and likewise how the points of discontinuity are corrected. I will argue that the distinct features of Christian maturity inform the most radical shifts needed in the modern construction of Christian maturity. Furthermore, I will apply the implications of these distinct features to the modern context in order to appropriate the full strength of the theology of Christian maturity. The final product will be a relevant expression for the modern world of the nature of Christian maturity articulated by Ephesians and Colossians.

The plan of this thesis can be depicted as following an analytical parabola:

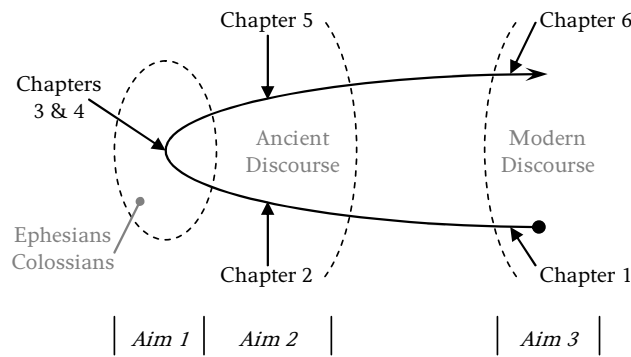


Figure 2: Analytical Overview of Thesis

This heuristic diagram shows how the next chapter will establish the ancient discourse on maturity in order to establish the context in which Ephesians and Colossians articulated their messages about Christian maturity. These constructions will be assessed in chapters 3 and 4 before moving to assessment of the common features and distinct features in chapter 5. Finally, this analysis as a whole will be brought to bear on the modern construction of Christian maturity in chapter 6.

## Chapter 2 Human Maturity in Antiquity

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore patterns in the ancient discourse on the nature of human maturity. In particular, I will assess the features of the discourse from multiple traditions in order to elucidate a common framework that governed the construction of maturity in antiquity. To be sure, there was significant diversity amongst traditions with regards to the conception of maturity and the means of fostering it. However, I will demonstrate that each tradition assessed in this chapter co-ordinated their goals for human existence with their beliefs about God/the gods, the cosmos and society. Whilst I will also outline other common features of these ancient constructs, it will be seen that this triad of reference points was the basic paradigm for understanding human teleology.

In order to assess the ancient discourse about maturity, I have selected sources from both Hellenistic and Jewish traditions for two reasons. The first is according to the intention of developing an understanding of the broad discourse on human maturity in antiquity, which necessitates that this analysis not be restricted to one major tradition. In other words, it would be fallacious to derive common features for the construction of maturity in the ancient world from a single tradition. The second reason is pragmatic in that this analysis is undertaken for the purposes of exploring the discursive context in which the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians originated. Given that scholars are divided as to whether these letters were primarily influenced by either Jewish or Hellenistic thought,<sup>1</sup> it is best to analyze traditions from both cultural backgrounds. However, this is not intended to imply a sharp dichotomy between 'Judaism' and 'Hellenism' given that it represents an inadequate view of cultural interaction and

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1. For instance, scholars find either Jewish or Hellenistic influences on the literary structure and/or cosmological understanding of the introductory eulogy (see §3.2.1) in Ephesians. Likewise, in Colossians, scholars argue for either Jewish or Hellenistic influences on the Christological hymn (see §4.2.1), or that Paul's opponents originated from either Jewish or Hellenistic backgrounds (see §4.4.1).

hybridisation in antiquity.<sup>2</sup> Instead, it arises from the need to adopt some form of categorisation in order to best select sources for the purposes of this analysis. Hence, the subsequent survey of Hellenistic and Jewish traditions will provide a historical milieu of ancient constructions of maturity in terms of which the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians may be assessed.

My study of Jewish traditions will focus on *1 Enoch* and *Sirach* because both were well known throughout the Jewish community. Both *Sirach* and major portions of *1 Enoch* are dated relatively early in the Second Temple period, which provided significant time for their messages to permeate the ancient world.<sup>3</sup> Beyond this, it is evident that *Sirach* was widely known based upon it being included in the LXX, being attested to multiple times by extant manuscripts from Qumran and Masada, and being quoted as popular proverbs in other literature.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, *1 Enoch* is attested to by multiple manuscripts throughout the ancient world,<sup>5</sup> especially the two OT apocryphal texts of *Jubilees* and *Baruch*.<sup>6</sup> This indicates that *Sirach* and *1 Enoch* had widely circulated throughout the ancient world and therefore very likely influenced the general conception of human teleology prior to the writing of the NT letters. Yet, these texts also share common motifs with Colossians and Ephesians. For instance, Esther Petrenko<sup>7</sup> argues that the soteriological framework of *1 Enoch* is similar to that of Ephesians, noting in

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2. Cf. D.B. Martin, 'Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Towards a Social History of the Question', in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 29-61.

3. Ben Sira is typically dated in the early second century B.C. Cf. J.J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 23; G.T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*, BZAW 151 (New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 19. The dating of *1 Enoch* proves more difficult due to it being a compilation of books produced over a wide range of time. However, The Book of Parables (chs. 37-71) is commonly accepted as the latest production most likely during the late first century B.C. Cf. G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, ed. K. Baltzer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 7. The other books of *1 Enoch* are generally dated from the third to mid-second century B.C. Cf. J.J. Collins, 'Journeys to the World Beyond in Ancient Judaism', in *Apocalyptic and Eschatological Heritage: The Middle East and Celtic Realms*, ed. M. McNamara (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 24; A.Y. Reed, 'Heavenly Ascent, Angelic Descent, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 1 Enoch 6-16', in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, eds. R.a.S. Boustani and A.Y. Reed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47.

4. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 42.

5. For an overview of the various extant manuscripts, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, §2.1-2.

6. P.S. Alexander, 'Enoch in Millennial Perspective. On the Counter-Cultural Biography of an Apocalyptic Hero', in *Apocalyptic and Eschatological Heritage: The Middle East and Celtic Realms*, ed. M. McNamara (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 7.

7. E.A.G.D. Petrenko, "'Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works": The Integration of Soteriology and Ethics in Ephesians' (PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 2005), 36-49.

particular the common concerns for the revelation of divine mysteries, the relating of cosmic powers to human rebellion, and the moral/social renewal of believers. Similarly, the cosmological and quasi-divine role of wisdom in *Sirach* has significant points of contact with the Christological hymn in Col. 1.15-20. Given these parallels, *Sirach* and *1 Enoch* serve as two relevant sources for the present study of the Second Temple Jewish discourse on human maturity.

The investigation of Hellenistic backgrounds will focus on Stoic philosophy. Stoicism is generally regarded to be the most prominent of Hellenistic philosophies, having originated in the third century B.C. and maintained its importance until its decline in the late second century A.D. It also has enjoyed a revived influence on the development of modern philosophy,<sup>8</sup> which suggests that this analysis may illuminate some of the features of the modern construction of human maturity. More importantly, the influence of Stoic philosophy was at its peak during the inception and development of early Christianity. Indeed, Troels Engberg-Pedersen<sup>9</sup> makes several intriguing observations about the potential influence of Stoicism on Pauline theology. As such, Stoic philosophy provides an excellent source for studying the Hellenistic philosophical discourse on human maturity.

## 2.2 Stoicism

Stoicism represents one of the most complex and influential philosophical systems of antiquity.<sup>10</sup> Yet, despite the comprehensiveness of Stoic philosophy, no specific discussion of human ‘maturity’ can be found. The expectation for explicit terminology, however, would be a reversion to confusing the difference between the lexical stock and conceptual stock of a tradition. As such, I propose that the Stoic conception of human maturity may be found in their theories of ‘agreement with nature’ (οικείωσις),<sup>11</sup> ‘making progress’ (προκοπή), and the ideal of the ‘sage’ (σοφός). These ethical doctrines are also linked to Stoic physical theory that blends cosmology and theology. Hence, this analysis will identify and develop the Stoic conception of human maturity from their physics and ethics. To be sure, Stoicism

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8. J. Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 135-157.

9. T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

10. Sellars, *Stoicism*, ix, 1-4, 31-36.

11. The term οικείωσις is difficult to render in English. See §2.2.2.1.

was not a monolithic entity in antiquity, which thereby requires that I draw upon both Stoic and non-Stoic extant sources to reconstruct their philosophical beliefs. It will be demonstrated that the concept of maturity in Stoicism, whilst never explicit, is generally agreed upon and expressed by a wide range of Stoics and sympathetic non-Stoics.

### 2.2.1 Stoic Physics

Stoic cosmology and theology were foundational to their ethics, so much so that some scholars speculate whether the eventual decline of Stoicism and the loss of crucial texts were due to the later Roman Stoic emphasis on philosophical practice over philosophical theory.<sup>12</sup> Such speculation is credible when considering that the Stoics claim the τέλος of human existence to be εὐδαιμονία ('the good life'), which is achieved through 'living in agreement with nature' (ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν).<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is necessary to explore the Stoic understanding of 'nature' (φύσις) as the study of cosmology and theology before turning to their ethics.<sup>14</sup>

Stoic cosmology derives from a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian cosmologies, yet with distinct refinements made by early Stoics.<sup>15</sup> In particular, they collapse several tenets of these two cosmologies into the belief that the cosmos is a living being created and governed by reason (λόγος). Moreover, the Stoics regard this reason to be divine:

For he [Chrysippus] says that divine power resides in reason and in the mind and intellect of universal nature. He says that god is the world itself, and the universal pervasiveness of its mind; also that he is the world's own commanding faculty, since he is located in the intellect and reason; that he is the common nature of things, universal and all-embracing; also the force of fate and the necessity of future events.<sup>16</sup>

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12. M. Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', in *The Stoics*, ed. J.M. Rist (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 184; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 25-30; J. Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 107-10, 145.

13. T. Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), 16-63; G. Striker, 'Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics', *OSAPh* 9 (1991), 2-3.

14. This agrees with the Stoic order of education. Students of Stoicism first learn logic (i.e. modern logic, rhetoric and epistemology), then physics (i.e. cosmology and theology) before finally studying ethics. Whilst this appears to subvert the claim that cosmology is crucial to their system, it is important to note that the Stoics themselves divide their philosophical system into these three *topoi* (logic, physics and ethics) for heuristic purposes. It will be demonstrated that learning logic in effect is the first step towards 'living in agreement with nature' because the cosmos is created and ordered according to reason.

15. D.E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1977).

16. *ND* 1.39.



Whilst divinity is identified with the λόγος exclusively,<sup>17</sup> the cosmos shares in its divine nature by virtue of embodying reason.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, divine reason is believed to be without its cosmic body only during the intermittent periods of the conflagration, when the cosmos is destroyed by fire. During this interval, the λόγος exists as ‘creative fire’, or pure reason, which eventually gives birth to the cosmos again in a repeating cosmo-biological life-cycle.<sup>19</sup> Whenever there is a cosmos, it is infused with divine reason in a manner similar to ancient anthropological beliefs that human bodies are infused by πνεῦμα.<sup>20</sup> Hence, Stoic cosmology necessarily entails Stoic theology, and vice versa, so that the study of one cannot proceed without the other.

The significance of Stoic cosmology and theology for their ethics rests in a derivative form of determinism. Divine reason is responsible for ‘fate’ or the ‘necessity of future events’ because it governs all events in the cosmos. Given that all things within the cosmos are regarded as parts of the whole, or members of the cosmic body, divine reason’s providence extends even to spheres normally regarded as being controlled by living beings. Whilst this might seem to undermine any ethical system, the Stoics argue that attaining εὐδαιμονία depends upon recognition of divine providence. A. A. Long argues this clearly:

At the heart of the [Stoic] system lies a theory of natural theology. The popular image of Stoicism, as an attitude of dispassionate acquiescence to all external events, rests on the doctrine that everything<sup>21</sup> which actually happens is providentially determined by immanent cosmic reason.

Because events occur according to the will of divine reason, the Stoics regard attempts to control external circumstances as futile. Instead, the attainment of εὐδαιμονία is contingent upon aligning one’s thoughts and actions with providential events. For instance, Epictetus states: ‘Do not seek events to happen as you want, but want events as they happen and your life will flow well.’<sup>22</sup>

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17. Even though the λόγος is truly divine in Stoicism, they also refer to this deity with other designations such as φύσις or πνεῦμα. See Lapidge, ‘Stoic Cosmology’, 170; A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London: Duckworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1986), 148.

18. Cf. M.V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ*, SNTSMS 137 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 46-58.

19. Hahm, *Origins*, 136. Hahm coins the term ‘cosmobiology’ to express the biological nature of the Stoic cosmos in its birth, life and destruction.

20. Stoic cosmological theory took form partially through interaction with ancient medical theory. See Hahm, *Origins*, 159-63; M. Lapidge, ‘ἀρχαί and στοιχεῖα: A Problem in Stoic Cosmology’, *Phronesis* 18 (1973), 273.

21. A.A. Long, ‘Greek Ethics After MacIntyre and the Stoic Community of Reason’, *AncPhil* 3 (1983), 196.

22. *Ench.* 8.

Fundamentally, divine reason has its own teleological intentions for all things in the cosmos. This divine teleology informs and orientates human teleology in that, as created beings that belong to the cosmic body, human persons are to align their own intentions to the superior intentions of divine reason.

## 2.2.2 Stoic Ethics

The purpose of this section is to assess the Stoic understanding of human teleology and its implications for their construction of maturity. In particular, I will show that the theory of living in agreement with nature (οικείωσις) aligns human teleology with the proper use of rationality. The goal of human existence, therefore, is to become a sage (σοφός) because it entails superlative abilities in rational thinking. However, the intermediate state prior to attaining to that status is to be making progress (προκοπή) in the use of one's reason.

### 2.2.2.1 Οικείωσις: Agreement with Nature

To understand human teleology in Stoicism, one must appreciate their belief in the ontological hierarchy of created beings. Chrysippus argues that the divine mind pervades all things in the cosmos with varying degrees of 'tension' (τόνος), and this variance accounts for differing ontological constitutions. Following a hierarchy, superior beings in the cosmos possess the tension(s) of inferior beings, but with a higher tension added.<sup>23</sup> For instance, inanimate objects are constituted by the tension of 'cohesion' (ἔξις), whereas plants also possess the biological tension of life and growth: 'nature' (φύσις). 'Soul' (ψυχή) is 'superadded'<sup>24</sup> to ἔξις and φύσις in animals, bringing with it the powers of perception, impulse and reproduction. Diogenes Laertius explains how these constitutions pertain to the Stoic theory of οικείωσις:

They [the Stoics] say that an animal has its impulse towards preserving itself, since nature from the start makes it belong to itself (οικειούσης)... for that is how things that are harmful are repelled and things that belong (τὰ οικεία) are pursued...

Furthermore, they say, nature did not behave differently with plants and with animals: plants too it manages (without the use of impulse and perception) and in human beings too certain things of a plantlike kind; and when in animals impulse has been superadded, by which they move toward what belongs, for them what is in accordance with nature is being administered in accordance with their impulse; but when reason (λόγος) has been given to rational beings as a more perfect guide, living

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23. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 91.

24. Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 16-63.

correctly in accordance with reason becomes in accordance with nature for them; for reason supervenes as a craftsman of impulse.<sup>25</sup>

Nature creates all things to act in accordance with its own individual constitution. Thus, plants are managed (i.e. live and grow) according to their nature, and even animals behave in a ‘plantlike manner’ because they also have φύσις. However, because they have ψυχή, animals act on impulse in accordance with that superadded nature. These impulses direct the animal towards self-preservation by pursuing ‘things that belong’ (τὰ οἰκεῖα) and avoiding things that are harmful. Human beings, though, are rational animals because they have λόγος superadded as a craftsman of impulses.<sup>26</sup>

The Stoics utilise the ‘cradle argument’<sup>27</sup> as justification of their principle of οἰκειώσις, claiming that any newborn animal naturally senses its constitution and therefore seeks to preserve itself.<sup>28</sup> This impulse for self-preservation initially orients a human infant towards external things (e.g. food, warmth, protection, etc.), but not reason due to its dormancy as a craftsman of impulses until the age of seven.<sup>29</sup> However, Cicero details the subsequent process of emerging rational faculties:

For man’s first attachment is to the things in accordance with nature. But as soon as he acquires understanding... and sees the order and so to speak harmony of acts, he values this far more highly than all those earlier objects of his love, and he concludes by rational argument that in this lies that something which is praiseworthy and choiceworthy for its own sake – the good of man.<sup>30</sup>

The transitional phase, therefore, begins when the child learns to subject various impulses to reason and finds satisfaction in the order and harmony deriving from their personal discoveries and use of reason.<sup>31</sup> The impetus for these incipient rational acts is the theory of οἰκειώσις, which entails ‘living in agreement with nature’.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the superaddition of reason during childhood demands a process of learning to use reason in accordance with this reconstituted nature.<sup>33</sup>

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25. *DL* 7.85-86.

26. It is unclear whether λόγος is considered to be another tension, because it is not listed amongst the other tensions (cf. *Leg. alleg.* 2.22-23). It is certainly superadded to rational animals in the same manner as other tensions (cf. *SVF* 2.634).

27. J. Brunschwig, ‘The Cradle Argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism’, in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, eds. M. Schofield and G. Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 113.

28. Cf. A.A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 250-63.

29. *Ep.* 124.9.

30. *Fin.* 3.21.

31. *Fin.* 3.17.

32. Brunschwig, ‘Cradle Argument’, 135. Also, Seneca (*Ep.* 121.8) provides an example of acting according to what nature demands: ‘A child who is trying to stand upright... falls down and gets

The Stoic theory of οικείωσις requires not only that human beings live in accordance with their rational nature, but also co-ordinate their ethic with the divine rationality of the cosmos. This dynamic can be seen in Long's studies of the reference of φύσις within the 'living in agreement with nature' paradigm. He initially argues that it refers to external 'Nature' (i.e. the divine cosmos),<sup>34</sup> but shifts the reference to the internal nature of the individual in a later analysis.<sup>35</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen agrees with this shift, but not because he regards the two options to be mutually exclusive. Instead, he argues:

Living in accordance with *horme* [impulse] is what is in accordance with Nature for animals, whereas living in accordance with reason is what is in accordance with Nature for human beings. And *therefore... if* the telos of man (no less than of animal and plants) is living in accordance with what Nature has arranged (the underlying functionalist premise, on this view) it is living in "homo-logy" with nature in the sense of letting one's reason (*logos*) follow Nature's lead, as it were by aligning it isomorphically with Nature (the "homo"-element). Nature sets the goal and the rational animal follows suit.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst the discussion is convoluted by the Stoics' own use of φύσις to denote divine reason, a specific constitutional tension, and a general ontological constitution, it nevertheless reveals that this confusion is indicative of an existing complementary relationship. Specifically, Nature creates human animals with a rational nature, so that persons are responsible to do what both Nature and their nature demands of them. As such, there is a continuing reciprocity in that human rationality is aligned with the intentions of divine reason.

The theory of οικείωσις also contains a social component in that individual human beings are intended to perceive their relationship to a greater community. The Stoics argue that parental affection towards one's own children – something that cannot be explained as an act of self-preservation – indicates an orientation towards interpersonal bonding inherent in human nature.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, because

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up again, crying, until through the pain he has managed to do what nature demands.' In other words, the child learning to walk does what is natural for, and required of, a bipedal animal.

33. For instance, Seneca (*Ep.* 121.15-16) argues that a child not yet gifted with reason cannot adapt to a reasoning constitution: 'Each age has its own constitution, different in the case of the child, the boy, and the old man; they are all adapted to the constitution wherein they find themselves. ... For nature does not consign boyhood or youth, or old age, to me; it consigns me to them. Therefore, the child is adapted to that constitution which is his at the present moment of childhood, not to that which will be his in youth. For even if there is in store for him any higher phase into which he must be changed, the state in which he is born is also according to nature.'

34. A.A. Long, 'The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 71 (1970-71), 97-98.

35. Long, 'Greek Ethics', 195-96.

36. Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 41-42 (emphasis original).

37. M.W. Blundell, 'Parental Nature and Stoic Οικείωσις', *AncPhil* 10 (1990), 221-42.

divine reason has constituted human beings as rational animals, the Stoics view all people as fellow citizens of the *cosmopolis*.<sup>38</sup> Thus, οἰκείωσις involves the process of learning not only how to control impulses through the use of reason, but also how one's actions affect other rational agents.<sup>39</sup> Whilst personal εὐδαιμονία is the τέλος of human life, social οἰκείωσις reveals that this can never be achieved through actions done at the expense of others.<sup>40</sup> Instead, seeking the common good of the *cosmopolis* in effect becomes a means of participating with divine reason.

The personal and social aspects of οἰκείωσις also account for the potential deterrents to learning to live in accordance with nature. For instance, Diogenes Laertius briefly states:

[T]he rational animal may be perverted, so they [the Stoics] claim, sometimes due to the persuasiveness of external things and sometimes due to the instruction given by one's associates. For the starting-points given by nature are unperturbed.<sup>41</sup>

These two potential means of perverting the rational animal correspond to either personal or social οἰκείωσις. With regards to personal οἰκείωσις, the temptation of external things can overcome an individual's growth in learning to exercise reason as the craftsman of impulses. Additionally, the social aspect of οἰκείωσις opens the possibility of receiving errant instruction, which will equally stunt the development of reason. In either case, 'nature' is absolved of any culpability, because both internal human nature and external Nature direct individuals towards unperturbed mutual encouragement in using reason. This construct reveals that οἰκείωσις may not be reduced to either its personal or social components. Instead, one's personal development in using reason takes place in a matrix with other developing persons, with perversion in one person producing a cascading effect of perversions in others. The reality of this emphasises the need for individuals to be surrounded by a proper social network that encourages their correct development in the use of reason.

The Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις, therefore, reveals a tacit conception of human maturation. Human growth is expected to correspond to the superaddition of a

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38. *Fin.* 3.64: 'The Stoics hold that the world is governed by divine will: it is as it were a city and state shared by men and gods, and each one of us is a part of this world. From this it is a natural consequence that we prefer the common advantage to our own.' See also K.M. Vogt, *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City: Political Philosophy in the Early Stoa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 65-110.

39. T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 154-68.

40. Lee, *Body of Christ*, 59-102.

41. *DL* 7.89.

new constitution that brings a superseding level of οἰκείωσις. This does not negate the lower-level οἰκείωσις, but rather the higher-level οἰκείωσις re-orientates the lower.<sup>42</sup> Thus, an infant or child behaves ‘according to nature’ when they desire and act towards the acquisition of food, shelter, or even friendship. These things remain relevant to the adult, but their higher-level οἰκείωσις demands that the acquisition of such things be orientated by reason in accordance with the reconstitution of their nature as rational animals. Furthermore, human maturation in Stoicism takes place in the social sphere, with other human beings influencing the development of the individual. This complex system establishes the pattern and context of human growth, but it does not explicate the goal or end-point of that growth. In other words, whilst the theory of οἰκείωσις uncovers an understanding of human maturation, it does not elucidate the goal of maturity. This end goal of the maturation process is contained in the Stoic ideal of the sage and the intermittent state of ‘making progress’.

#### 2.2.2.2 Σοφός: The Stoic Sage

According to the Stoics, individuals can be classed as either a fool (φαῦλος) or a sage (σοφός). This provokes strong criticism from Plutarch, who finds fault with the idea that a person would transition instantaneously from being bad (κακός) to perfect (τέλειος).<sup>43</sup> Whilst his criticism primarily pertains to how one becomes a σοφός, Plutarch’s terminology reveals that he understands Stoic sages to be self-perceived perfect individuals. Whether the Stoics refer to the sage in the same manner is ultimately uncertain, but the σοφός remains the ideal to which every Stoic aspires.

A proper understanding of the unique nature of a Stoic sage is found first in contrast to the activities of the fool, which Cleanthes depicts:

No deed is done on earth, god, without your offices, nor in the divine ethereal vault of heaven, nor at sea, save what bad men do in their folly. But you know how to make things crooked straight and to order things disorderly. You love things unloved. For you have so welded into one all things good and bad that they all share in a single everlasting reason. It is shunned and neglected by the bad among mortal men, the wretched, who ever yearn for the possession of goods yet neither see nor hear god’s universal law, by obeying which they could lead a good life in partnership with intelligence. Instead, devoid of intelligence, they rush into this evil or that, some in

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42. G. Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 58.

43. *Mor.* 75-76.

their belligerent quest for fame, others with an unbridled bent for acquisition, others for leisure and the pleasurable acts of the body.<sup>44</sup>

Folly belongs to the activity of bad men, the one thing that operates outside the auspices of divine reason. Their foolish living is characterised as devoid of reason in the pursuit of acquiring external things, whether it be bodily pleasure, possessions or fame. Whereas Cleanthes describes fools as wretched, Epictetus develops further that their pursuits only produce hindrance, grief, turmoil and enmity.<sup>45</sup> The basis of their folly is an ignorance of reason brought about through neglect and rejection, which are two descriptions of failed οικείωσις. Yet, Cleanthes also indicates that a good life is attainable by adherence to ‘god’s universal law’, which refers to divine reason as indicated by the parallel elaboration of ‘living in partnership with intelligence’. This contrast between a life of obedience to divine reason and that of foolish pursuits establishes the context for understanding the Stoic sage. The sage does not seek after external things, or rather, does not make external things the goal. Instead, perfect co-operation with the rationality of the cosmos is the ideal to which the sage has attained.

Two descriptions help clarify how the sage lives in partnership with divine reason. First, Chrysippus describes the sage as ‘ignorant of nothing’ (μηδέν ἀγνόειν).<sup>46</sup> G. B. Kerferd<sup>47</sup> demonstrates satisfactorily that this does not imply omniscience, some form of content-selective knowledge, or even one of the four states of Stoic knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Kerferd argues that Chrysippus has in mind the Stoic distinction between ‘right actions’ (κατορθώματα) and ‘appropriate actions’ (καθήκοντα). In the Stoic ethical system, an ‘appropriate act’ (καθήκον) entails something done correctly in terms of its objective content. A ‘right act’ (κάτορθωμα), however, is correct also with respect to the subjective state of the agent. Kerferd adopts the distinction of the *what* and the *how* of an action to describe the καθήκον/κάτορθωμα distinction. An action is καθήκον if *what* is done is correct, but only κάτορθωμα if *how* it is done is in a virtuous state. Any action that is κάτορθωμα by necessity is also καθήκον, but the reverse is not necessarily

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44. *SVF*1.536.

45. *Ench.* 1.3.

46. *SVF*3.131.

47. G.B. Kerferd, ‘What Does the Wise Man Know?’ in *The Stoics*, ed. J.M. Rist (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 125–28.

48. According to Cicero (*Acad.* 2.145), Zeno teaches that there are four states of knowledge: visual appearance (which he depicts with an open hand), assent (with partially closed fingers), comprehension (with a fist) and knowledge (with the other hand squeezing the fist).

true. Whilst any Stoic can labour to determine *what* should be done in agreement with nature, the secondary act of knowing *how* it should be done is even more elusive. Only the sage continuously knows both the *what* and the *how* of any action, and in this sense is ‘ignorant of nothing’.

Second, Marcus Aurelius depicts the sage as having adopted a ‘view from above’.<sup>49</sup> This could be rendered as having a ‘cosmic perspective’, because it implies the sage perceives events from the same vantage point as divine reason. This infers much the same as ‘ignorant of nothing’, because the cosmic perspective enables the sage to know both *what* and *how* to act. Yet, the ‘view from above’ highlights an awareness of how these actions relate to both the sage’s εὐδαιμονία and that of others. Thus, the sage is not simply concerned with personal εὐδαιμονία, though this remains the practical consequence of having a ‘view from above’. Instead, according to Engberg-Pedersen, the sage has transitioned from subjective interests to cosmic objectivity.<sup>50</sup> Of primary concern is acting in accordance with the intentions of the divine reason, which subjects the interest of any one person (including the sage’s) to the common good. To be sure, the sage is not uninterested in personal εὐδαιμονία, but rather regards that personal concern as equal with the concerns of all people in the cosmos.

The sage, then, represents the Stoic ideal of individual human development in οἰκείωσις. Having attained to the highest level of subjecting impulses to reason as a craftsman, all of the sage’s actions are κατορθώματα. Similarly, the sage’s supreme interest in the social welfare of the *cosmopolis* is evidenced by an objective concern for the common good. Thus, becoming a sage is the end goal of human maturation, because no further progress is expected or needed. It may rightly be said, then, that sagehood is the state of maturity in Stoicism.

### 2.2.2.3 Προκοπή: Making Progress

Whilst the Stoics present the sage as the ideal of human development, it is commonly recognised that few, if any, Stoics are regarded to have attained to this status. René Brouwer<sup>51</sup> demonstrates that none of the founders of Stoicism

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49. Engberg-Pedersen, *Stoics*, 59. Engberg-Pedersen derives this phrase from Marcus Aurelius (*Med.* 7.48; 9.30; 12.24.3), where he compels himself to ascend to heaven and look on earth from god’s perspective.

50. Engberg-Pedersen, *Stoics*, 60.

51. R. Brouwer, ‘Sagehood and the Stoics’, *OSAPh* 23 (2002), 181-224.



considers themselves to be sages, and only Socrates is presented consistently by Stoics as a model.<sup>52</sup> Given that the ideal of sagehood is virtually unattainable, Stoicism is susceptible to the criticism that their philosophy is essentially impractical. This problem is exacerbated by their rigid categorisation of individuals as either fools or sages, which effectively assigns all Stoics to the category of fools by their own logic. Yet, in response to this dilemma, many Stoics posit an intermediate state of ‘making progress’ (προκοπή). Whilst technically a subcategory of fools, it is an acceptable state in that the Stoic who is προκοπή is regarded as a ‘lover of wisdom’ (φιλόσοφος) that aspires ‘to become like the image of the sage’.<sup>53</sup>

Προκοπή is concerned with learning the ‘art of living’ (τέχνη τοῦ βιοῦ), which seeks to bring one’s actions (ἔργα) in line with their reason (λόγος).<sup>54</sup> Epictetus clarifies the underlying premise of this effort:

Of things, some are up to us (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν), and some are not up to us (οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν).  
Up to us are opinion, impulse, desire, aversion, and, in a word, all our actions (ἔργα).  
Not up to us are our body, possessions, reputations, offices, and, in a word, all that  
are not our actions.<sup>55</sup>

The clear distinction between what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is a matter of one’s actions.<sup>56</sup> Outside of one’s actions are things determined by the divine cosmos, namely body, possessions, reputation, and offices. Thus, the folly of bad men who pursue fame, acquisitions, and bodily pleasure is that their activities focus on things οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. In contrast, to focus on what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is to be concerned solely with one’s own ἔργα, but this is far more difficult than initially anticipated. Epictetus holds that a true Stoic not only understands the ‘theoretical principles’ (λόγοι) of Stoicism, but also weds this with ongoing practical training (ἄσκησις).<sup>57</sup> Simple reiteration of Stoic λόγοι is not enough, because philosophy is fundamentally concerned with transforming one’s way of life.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Epictetus

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52. E. Brown, ‘Socrates in the Stoa’, in *A Companion to Socrates*, eds. S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar, BCPPhil 34 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 275-77; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 29, 40-41.

53. Sellars, *Art of Living*, 64.

54. Sellars, *Art of Living*, 108.

55. *Ench.* 1.1.

56. T. Morris, *The Stoic Art of Living: Inner Resilience and Outer Results* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2004), 83-90.

57. For instance, Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.19.20-25) suggests that if his students pay close attention to their daily ἔργα, most would find themselves to be either Epicureans or Peripatetics, rather than true Stoics, in actual practice. This not only indicates his view of other schools as incomplete or inferior forms of Stoicism, but also the difficulty of aligning personal ἔργα with Stoic λόγοι.

58. M. Schofield, ‘Stoic Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 253.

views Stoicism as an art of living, because its philosophical aims resemble the nature of any craft that must be both understood and practised.

The view of Stoicism as a τέχνη τοῦ βιοῦ sets the προκόπτοι in a process of οἰκείωσις maturation originating from the initial superaddition of rationality and ending with the status of sagehood. Beyond the initial childhood efforts to subject impulses to reason, the προκόπτοι learn Stoic λόγοι and wed it with ἄσκησις in order to make their ἔργα correspond. If Stoic maturity is sagehood, then those who are at various stages of learning the art of living should be assessed to be mature to a certain degree. Their progress in the art of living can be recognised by others, which is most evident when one is accepted and followed as a teacher. For instance, the fact that Epictetus was followed as teacher implies that he was recognised to have progressed further in the art of living and therefore could lead others along the path. Thus, the Stoic theory of προκοπή is their understanding of intermediate maturity, where one's progress in the τέχνη τοῦ βιοῦ (i.e. the concordance between ἔργα and λόγοι) is the measure of how mature one is.

### 2.2.3 Summary: Human Maturity in Stoicism

This survey of Stoic philosophy reveals two important features of their conception of maturity. First, maturity in Stoicism pertains to their ethical system that is based upon their anthropology. Specifically, Stoic anthropology relates to their conception of maturity in that human development to the ideal state of sagehood depends upon the superaddition of rationality to the person, which then instigates the developmental processes of οἰκείωσις. Yet, Gretchen Reydam-Schils appropriately describes this as the natural evolution of human nature, because every human being had rationality superadded as a child.<sup>59</sup> What remains to be seen is whether an individual will co-operate with the cosmos through the use of reason, which circumscribes Stoic maturity within the ethical realm. Thus, individuals are not virtuous or vicious because they possess a nature pre-disposed towards virtue or vice, but rather because of their willingness or unwillingness to participate with the rationality of the cosmos. This pragmatic bent of Stoicism,

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59. G. Reydam-Schils, 'Human Bonding and *Oikeiōsis* in Roman Stoicism', *OSAPh* 22 (2001), 223: '*Oikeiōsis*, then, always has a history, and in human beings evolves over the course of their lives, because their "nature" evolves. The important juncture, the pivotal point, is the one between the pre-rational phase and the advent of reason.'

therefore, makes individual actions a measure of what it means to be mature in an ethical conception of maturity.

The second feature, however, is that actions are not sufficient in themselves to measure how mature an individual is. It is also necessary to assess the Stoic's disposition behind any act. For instance, Gabor Betegh correctly argues:

What makes the actions of the wise person 'good' and 'virtuous' in the strong Stoic sense of these words is not so much the action itself, but rather the intellectual disposition, the insight on which the action is grounded; this is a crucial factor in the Socratic legacy for Stoic ethics. Genuinely virtuous action requires knowledge.

Yet, the content of this knowledge, for the Stoics, is not knowledge of the Good, and not even of mathematical ratios determining the basic structure of reality, but the awareness of the rationality, teleology, and providentiality of cosmic divine rationality as it manifests itself in the constitution and functioning of terrestrial living beings, and, further, the understanding of how human rational action can be in accordance with, mirror, and promote this cosmic rationality.<sup>60</sup>

Whilst Betegh may overstate a dichotomy between disposition and action – remembering that *κατορθώματα* and *καθήκοντα* are commensurate for the sage – he satisfactorily explores the relevance of personal disposition to Stoic ethics. In particular, the disposition of the human agent is correct only when it is aligned with the providential intentions of the rationality of the cosmos. Thus, the teleological aims of the Stoic are to co-operate with those of divine reason, thereby establishing a collaborative effort to fulfil the intentions of the cosmos. Maturity, therefore, is not a static status attained at the end of a process, though it is an ideal status sought after through developmental progress. More importantly, maturity in Stoicism is dynamic in that it is continuously engaged in acting appropriately, with a good disposition to further the goals of divine reason.

Finally, this survey of Stoicism reveals that the nature of maturity is constructed with reference to the cosmos, divine reason and the society of the *cosmopolis*. Each reference pertains to Stoic anthropology and their ethics, whilst also being intricately related seeing as divine reason infuses the cosmic body of which each person is a member. Yet, each reference has its own distinct bearing on maturity. With regards to the cosmos – the world in which people experience external events – each Stoic is engaged in acts of deciphering their own circumstances and how best to respond. Yet, this features against the reality of living in the social world, in which actions affect the greater citizenry of the *cosmopolis*, and therefore requires that those actions be orientated towards the comprehensive, and not just personal, good. Furthermore, all actions are assessed

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60. G. Betegh, 'Cosmological Ethics in the *Timaeus* and Early Stoicism', *OSAPh* 24 (2003), 299.

in relation to the will of divine reason that governs all events towards its own purpose. In summary, the Stoic conception of maturity integrates their cosmology, theology and sociology into an anthropological construct of ontological and ethical development to an ideal state.

## 2.3 Second Temple Judaism

Having investigated a representative philosophy from ancient Hellenism, I will now conduct a similar study of representative texts from Second Temple Judaism. The literature of the Second Temple period was concerned with a common set of social problems in the Jewish community: domination by foreign rule, corruption in the priesthood, and/or oppression of the poor by the rich and powerful. Scholars typically classify the manner in which Second Temple texts addressed these concerns into the genres of Apocalyptic or Wisdom Literature.<sup>61</sup> The texts selected for this study, *1 Enoch* and *Sirach*, are representative of these two genres. As such, the study of these texts will reveal how the apocalyptic and sapiential traditions each uniquely contributed to a broader view of the nature of human maturity in ancient Judaism. Similar to the previous study of Stoicism, my study here will rely upon finding features of maturity that are implicit in *1 Enoch* and *Sirach*. I will accomplish this by looking at the human teleology that either text presents to its readers by exploring the relationship between its theological framework and anthropological goals.

### 2.3.1 *Sirach*

The study of maturity within the sapiential tradition of Second Temple Judaism will focus on the teachings of Jesus ben Eleazar ben Sira. Because this text is the earliest example of wisdom literature in the Second Temple period,<sup>62</sup> scholars have observed that *Sirach* was an initial and problematic attempt to synthesise Jewish theology and Hellenistic philosophy. The problems inherent in this dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism have already been noted and need

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61. These categories are not without problem. In particular, some scholars argue that the distinction is too sharply drawn. Nevertheless, there are still observable tendencies in these Jewish texts to maintain the categories of apocalyptic and sapiential traditions so long as it is not rigidly enforced. Cf. J.J. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 358-404.

62. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 23.

not be explored further.<sup>63</sup> It is enough to observe that *Sirach* is an example of the hybridisation of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Hellenistic’ cultures that took place in the ancient world. Far more important to the present study is Ben Sira’s programme for his disciples to learn wisdom and serve the Lord. Because this formative goal is the earliest production of Jewish wisdom literature, it is likely that it significantly influenced later conceptions of human teleology in Second Temple and Early Judaism. This goal of human existence laid out in *Sirach* referenced the relationship of wisdom<sup>64</sup> to God, the cosmos and Israel.

### 2.3.1.1 Wisdom and Cosmology

Indications of the cosmological nature of wisdom are found precisely from its relationship to creation. Ben Sira’s exalted poem depicts the divine origin of wisdom and its subsequent participation in the creation and ordering of the cosmos. For instance, wisdom ‘came forth from the mouth of the Most High’ (24.3, cf. 1.1), and was active in the creation of the cosmos when it covered the earth as a mist (24.3). Furthermore, wisdom’s universal activity is seen in its compassing the vault of heaven, taking course in the deep abyss, and holding sway over sea, land and every nation (24.5-6). As such, Edward Schnabel notes that ‘the activity of wisdom knows no geographical or national barriers as it includes all spaces and all nations.’<sup>65</sup> The universality of wisdom in creation also pertains to its role in the orderliness of the cosmos. God has ordered the cosmos in pairs for good purposes – good things for the righteous vs. bad things for the wicked – thereby revealing the wisdom with which he created all parts of the cosmos.<sup>66</sup> As such, both the universal presence of wisdom, and the wise ordering of creation, indicates that wisdom can be found by reflecting on the structure and events of the cosmos. For instance, Schnabel states: ‘The works of creation are thus regarded as one path to wisdom... Ben Sira presents the secrets of creation as cause of inquiry into the

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63. See §2.1.

64. Scholars debate whether wisdom is a divine hypostasis, which is supported by references to it using the feminine, third person pronoun and giving it speech in the first person (e.g. Sir. 24.3-22) but undermined by a series of poems that speak of it as non-hypostatic (e.g. Sir. 1.1-10; 4.11-19; 6.18-37; 14.20-15.10). Given the ambiguity of the text, I will employ the term ‘wisdom’ with the same ambiguity without intending to indicate a position on either side. Cf. E.J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul*, WUNT 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 19-20.

65. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 17.

66. J.L. Crenshaw, ‘The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage’, *JBS* 94 (1975), 59.

locus and origin of wisdom.<sup>67</sup> Wisdom is embedded in, and active throughout, the entire cosmic order, and therefore available to any human being.

Even though wisdom is universally present in the cosmos, it is particularly manifest in a specific space of the world of humankind. Wisdom sought for a dwelling place within the cosmos and was granted one by God in the temple of Israel (24.8). Crispin Fletcher-Louis<sup>68</sup> explores how wisdom's dwelling in the temple pertains to the cosmological perspective in *Sirach*. Beginning with the generally accepted premise that 'the Temple service was designed to complete creation and maintain the stability of the universe,'<sup>69</sup> Fletcher-Louis argues:

Israel's god's creation of the world is in a perfect, if complex, symmetrical relationship to the nation's construction of sacred space and time. Their sanctuary is a mini-cosmos; its maintenance, its liturgical drama and personnel are a 'copy' of the universe in all its parts. As such, Israel's worship brings creation towards its completion.<sup>70</sup>

This suggests that the active participation of wisdom in the ministry of the temple (24.10) is not coincidental. Indeed, Ben Sira purposefully presents the temple as the pinnacle of the created order where wisdom is especially operative. Even though wisdom can be found anywhere in the world, it is most present in the temple. Just as it was active during the creation of cosmos, so too it works to complete the intention of that creative act through the Temple liturgy.

The cosmological rootedness of wisdom already implies certain elements of Ben Sira's conception of human maturity. Specifically, wisdom is regarded not only as operative in the cosmos, but also as inviting individuals to pursue it. This accounts for the reality that human wisdom may be found, at least partially, in every corner of the known world. Yet, the special relationship that wisdom enjoys with Israel carries two significant implications. First, wisdom comes from the Lord, and therefore is perfectly manifest in his elect nation in the world. Second, Israel is consequently caught up in an ongoing completion of the original intentions of creation. In other words, eschatology recedes to the background, so that human teleology is not as much directed towards a final event as it is towards a continuous participation within the cosmological objectives of wisdom to complete creation. This cosmological completion is the subduing of chaos and

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67. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 19. Cf. Crenshaw, 'Theodicy', 52.

68. C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, 'The Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira', in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. C.A. Evans, vol. 1, *AVT*, SSEJC 9 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 69-113.

69. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 69.

70. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 112.

disorder in the created order and the directing of all creation toward the worship of God,<sup>71</sup> which takes place in the liturgy of Israel's temple as a summary of the whole cosmos in its various parts. Put simply, human teleology is aligned within an ongoing act of cosmic ordering and doxology to the Lord. This suggests that the goal of human existence is to become wise as a way of participating with God's intentions for the cosmos.

### 2.3.1.2 Becoming Wise and Human Maturity

Ben Sira's view of human maturity is related to his formative goal that his disciples become wise. He links this to natural human development, with youth being the time for instruction in the quest for wisdom.<sup>72</sup> The one who pursues wisdom as a life-long endeavour is responsible to listen to godly discourse and remember wise proverbs (6.35), as well as to work at the acquisition of wisdom (51.23, 26). If this process is adhered to rigorously, an individual can expect to become wise, and even a model of wisdom, in old age. As such, Ben Sira's work presents a pedagogical programme intended to nurture wisdom to its fullness in human beings, one concerned with both wise understanding and wise living. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to assess the implications of Ben Sira's formative programme towards becoming wise for the goal of human existence.

Not surprisingly, the significant relationship between wisdom and Israel leads Ben Sira to identify wisdom with 'the fear of the Lord'.<sup>73</sup> Re-endorsing statements in Proverbs that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov. 1.7; 9.10; 15.33; cf. Sir. 1.14), he adds that the fear of the Lord is the 'fullness' (1.16), 'crown' (1.18) and 'root' (1.20) of wisdom. The fear of the Lord entails reverence for his person and observance of his commandments (1.26-27).<sup>74</sup> Thus, the identification of wisdom with fear of the Lord requires that the truly wise person either be, or become, a faithful Israelite. Furthermore, wisdom functions as a hermeneutic for knowledge, always interpreting new understanding in light of

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71. Cf. H.-J. Hermisson, 'Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom', in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, eds. J.G. Gammie, et al. (New York, NY: Scholars Press, 1978), 35-57.

72. C. Deutsch, 'The Sirach 51 Acrostic: Confession and Exhortation', *ZAW* 94 (1982), 405.

73. P.C. Beentjes, "Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom" (*Sir. 14,20*): *Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*, CBET 43 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 87-106; A.A. Di Lella, 'Fear of the Lord as Wisdom: Ben Sira 1,11-30', in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. P.C. Beentjes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 132-33.

74. Crenshaw, 'Theodicy', 52; Di Lella, 'Fear of the Lord', 132-33.

God's commandments. Thus, Collins observes: 'If wisdom is identified so closely with fear of the Lord, it is not only a matter of understanding but also a moral disposition.'<sup>75</sup> This observation accounts for Ben Sira's criticism that the fool leads a life worse than death (22.11), because their immoral acts bring grief, anxiety and the assurance of God's judgement.<sup>76</sup> The search for wisdom, therefore, involves a positive orientation towards God and his moral character.

The nature of wisdom as the fear of the Lord with its emphasis on moral disposition also highlights the relationship between wisdom and the Law. Ben Sira states explicitly: 'All wisdom is fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom is the doing of the Law' (19.20). The activities of the wise conform to the proscriptions of God's Law, but wisdom and Torah are related asymmetrically. For instance, Jessie Rogers argues that wisdom and Torah may not be equated in *Sirach*:

Law is an actualization of the universal Wisdom in the life of Israel, but does not express Wisdom without remainder. ... Law gives expression to Wisdom, and is thus in its entirety characterized by it. But Wisdom exists before and beyond Law, and is not fully exhausted by it.<sup>77</sup>

Wisdom does not contradict obedience to Torah to the degree that any 'wisdom' that leads to transgressions is not wisdom at all. Gerald Sheppard<sup>78</sup> therefore argues that wisdom is a hermeneutical construct for the interpretation of Torah, because the narratives and traditions of the Law provide the base material for a sapiential exposition of the story of wisdom and the beneficial results of wise living. As such, Ben Sira believes that the Torah embodied wisdom, and consequently sets about the task of transmitting wisdom to his disciples by teaching them to obey the Law.

Ben Sira presents this process of becoming wise as a pursuit,<sup>79</sup> with the subsidiary benefits of wise living being a successful life founded upon the blessings of Torah obedience. However, the results of wise living in *eudaimonia*

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75. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 46-47.

76. A.A. Di Lella, 'The Life of a Fool is Worse than Death: Sir 22,9-15', in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, eds. N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeulen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 159-68.

77. J. Rogers, "It Overflows Like the Euphrates with Understanding": Another Look at the Relationship between Law and Wisdom in Sirach', in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. C.A. Evans, vol. 1, *AVT*, SSEJC 9 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 117.

78. Sheppard, *Wisdom*, esp. 19-83.

79. T. Muraoka, 'Sir 51,13-30: An Erotic Hymn to Wisdom?' *JSJ* 10 (1979), 173. Muraoka equates the type of pursuit to 'a uniquely intimate and physical association between a man and his chaste, youthful, and attractive woman.'



do not deflect the realities of trials.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the pursuit of wisdom is guaranteed to involve continuous trials: ‘My son, if you come to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for testing’ (2.1).<sup>81</sup> These testings are formative in intent, which explains why Ben Sira instructs his disciples to test their friends to see if they are worthy of trust just as wisdom accepts friends only after testing their trustworthiness.<sup>82</sup> As such, Benjamin Wright argues that ‘the book is obviously didactic; its central focus is instruction, with character formation and success in life as its central goals.’<sup>83</sup> In other words, character formation is an essential element of the student’s growth in wisdom, because it enables them to respond appropriately to external circumstances. The pursuit of wisdom, therefore, both requires and nurtures character, because it enables endurance and right action in the midst of trials with the knowledge that testing fosters the personal benefit ‘that you will grow in the end’ (2.3).

The pursuit of wisdom is also related to the special status of Israel. In an age of growing disillusionment with Israel’s rulers and priests, Ben Sira did not establish a sectarian movement. Rather, he reaffirms the unity of Israel and its vocation of mission to the nations.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the search for wisdom is most appropriately conducted within Israel because of its particular relationship with wisdom. Nevertheless, R. N. Whybray notes how Ben Sira’s statement that wisdom ‘overflows like the Euphrates with understanding’ (24.26) gives scope for the nations to contribute to the pursuit of wisdom:

Wisdom’s appeal (vv. 19-22), based on prototypes in Proverbs, is addressed to all and sundry. There is still a place for the Gentiles, who have already been acquainted with her (v. 6), to share the benefits that she has to offer. Ben Sira’s concern with history is here seen not to be rigidly restrictive. V. 6, indeed, suggests that the nations outside Judaism are not entirely without a share in wisdom. ... He pictures it [i.e.

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80. J.T. Sanders, ‘Ben Sira’s Ethics of Caution’, *HUCA* 50 (1979), 79-80. Cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 76.

81. N. Calduch-Benages, ‘Trial Motif in the Book of Ben Sira with Special Reference to Sir 2,1-6’, in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. P.C. Beentjes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 136-37.

82. J. Corley, *Ben Sira’s Teaching on Friendship*, BJS 316 (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2002), 214-17.

83. B.G. Wright, III, ‘Wisdom, Instruction, and Social Location in Sirach and *1 Enoch*’, in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, eds. E.G. Chazon, D. Satran and R.A. Clements, JSJSup 89 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 113. Cf. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 48.

84. J.G. Gammie, ‘The Sage in Sirach’, in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, eds. J.G. Gammie and L.G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 372; E. Jacob, ‘Wisdom and Religion in Sirach’, in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrein*, eds. J.G. Gammie, et al. (New York, NY: Scholars Press, 1978), 258.

Wisdom and her benefits] as a river which overflows its banks to fertilize the surrounding country.<sup>85</sup>

Because the nations share in wisdom, Ben Sira encourages travel because it enriches one's cultural treasure and increases experience, knowledge and resourcefulness so that the disciple comes 'closer to Wisdom with every journey.'<sup>86</sup> Even so, Ben Sira's encouragement to travel and learn from the nations' share of wisdom is circumscribed by his anthropological convictions. Even though the nations share in wisdom, true human wisdom can only be attained in the election of Israel that has received the divine gifts of redemption and restoration.<sup>87</sup> Thus, whilst travel amongst other nations has much to offer to the disciple of wisdom, Israel has a far greater wisdom to offer to the nations.

These observations clarify the relevance of becoming wise to the nature of human maturity in *Sirach*. Specifically, the pursuit of wisdom may not be reduced simply to epistemic or sapiential ascendancy. Rather, the individual becomes wise both by learning it, and by acting like it. Just as wisdom traversed the world in search of a home, individuals are encouraged to travel in search of wisdom. Yet, this search reveals the superiority of Israel as a resting place for wisdom, and therefore prompts association with, and participation in, this national identity. Furthermore, resting in this national identity provides resolution to 'the incomprehensibility of the world and the aloofness of the creator God.'<sup>88</sup> Specifically, by participating in the temple liturgy, the one who is becoming wise is folded into the summary and completion of creation that is directed in doxology to the God of Israel. This is an activity that no other nation can accomplish. Moreover, it directs the individual to fear the Lord through Torah obedience. In other words, the goal of becoming wise entails a process of attaining the character of wisdom. Thus, maturity in *Sirach* is becoming a wise person who had the character of wisdom. Likewise, Ben Sira's didactic programme indicates an implicit conception of maturation as a process of pursuing wisdom where individuals can be assessed as mature with respect to their progress.

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85. R.N. Whybray, 'Ben Sira and History', in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, eds. N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeylen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 144.

86. Calduch-Benages, 'Trial Motif', 145-46.

87. L. Alonso-Schökel, S.J., 'The Vision of Man in Sirach 16:24-17:14', in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrein*, eds. J.G. Gammie, et al. (New York, NY: Scholars Press, 1978), 243.

88. Hermisson, 'Creation Theology', 54.

### 2.3.1.3 Ideal Figures and Progressive Growth

Having established the nature of maturity according to Ben Sira, it is necessary to assess how he and other prominent figures foster this type of maturity. Within the text, two distinct types of ideal figures stand out: the sage-scribe and the high priest. With regards to the latter, Ben Sira's view of the priesthood is emphatically positive even though the high priest answers to foreign rule.<sup>89</sup> Whilst it is sometimes argued that Ben Sira functions a priest, it is apparent that his primary concern is to vindicate the Jerusalem priesthood, especially that of the high priest in the Phineas lineage of the Aaronic priesthood.<sup>90</sup> Wright argues that Ben Sira's method of affirmation is twofold: (i) he provides a historical and theological basis for the priesthood and (ii) he discredits the basis of criticism against the priesthood.<sup>91</sup> His theological justification of the priesthood follows a line of argument that exalts the historical examples of priestly wisdom and faults the lack of wisdom in the failed Israelite monarchy.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, one should not be concerned with the lack of a king or the rule of a foreign nation, because wisdom is embodied by the high priest who mediates Israel's relationship with God. In this sense, the high priest is a representative figure of both Israel and wisdom. For instance, Fletcher-Louis states:

The entire fund of human wisdom, in every sphere of life which is covered in the rest of Ben Sira's wisdom collection, owes its origin to the divine person Wisdom who is at once both creator and creature. ... Above all she is 'incarnate' in her avatar, Israel's high priest.<sup>93</sup>

This means that the high priest participates in the creator/creature distinction vicariously through his embodiment of wisdom in his cultic office. Anyone who wishes to see wisdom, or to justify pursuit of it, needs only to look to the high priest as he embodies it in the liturgical service.

The other figure that features highly in Ben Sira's work is that of the sage-scribe. The ideal sage fears God (39.6) and concentrates on the Law (38.34), but also

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89. M. Himmelfarb, 'The Wisdom of the Scribe, the Wisdom of the Priest, and the Wisdom of the King According to Ben Sira', in *For A Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, eds. R.A. Argall, B.A. Bow and R.A. Werline (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 99.

90. S.M. Olyan, 'Ben Sira's Relationship to the Priesthood', *HTR* 80 (1987), 285-86.

91. B.G. Wright, III, "'Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest": Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood', in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. P.C. Beentjes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 218.

92. Himmelfarb, 'Wisdom of the Scribe', 99.

93. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 112.

studies the wisdom of the nations (39.1-2).<sup>94</sup> He is also a conscientious writer,<sup>95</sup> and therefore aptly described as a scribe as well. Moreover, the sage-scribe is disciplined (31.12-29; 37.7-5; 42.12-14), generous and kind (4.1-10; 29.8-13), righteous and devout in prayer (18.27; 39.5), and cautious with words and friends (8.19; 9.18; 19.7-12; 37.7-15). Finally, he will be sought out by great men and kings for counsel (39.4). This robust depiction of the sage-scribe accounts for Ben Sira's pedagogical premise. The sage-scribe's pursuit of wisdom is rewarded not only with its fulfilment, but also with the intent that he model wisdom by gathering students and instructing them in the means of acquiring wisdom themselves.<sup>96</sup> Intriguingly, J. Liesen notes how Ben Sira presents himself as the embodiment of the sage-scribe using strategic self-references.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Ben Sira is a model to be imitated. His capacity to wisely interpret the Torah, combined with his knowledge of the wisdom of the nations, is evident in his teaching and his life as reported by his grandson.

The implication of this is that the construction of maturity in Sirach employs not only a model figure like Stoicism, but also a representative figure. Specifically, both the high priest and Ben Sira embody wisdom, but do so with radically different functions. The high priest is a distinct figure within the nation of Israel who mediates the divine-human relationship between God and his people. As such, he should not be imitated, but rather looked to as a representative who helps constitute national identity. In other words, to be an Israelite means to be represented to God by the high priest, but also to have God and his wisdom represented back to the people. Thus, the individual derives identity and purpose from the representative role of the high priest. In contrast, the sage-scribe is a model figure to be imitated, rather than looked to as a representative. In other words, Ben Sira's students should not derive their identity and purpose from him, but rather imitate his actions and pursuits. By seeing how Ben Sira was wise, his students were able to see an example of how wisdom behaved in their present world.

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94. Himmelfarb, 'Wisdom of the Scribe', 90.

95. Gammie, 'Sage', 370.

96. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 38; Deutsch, 'Sirach 51 Acrostic', 409.

97. J. Liesen, 'Strategical Self-References in Ben Sira', in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, eds. N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeylen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 63-74.

#### 2.3.1.4 Summary: Human Maturity in *Sirach*

This study of *Sirach* has shown that Ben Sira equates the goal of human existence, or maturity, with being wise. Wisdom is progressively attained through a life-long process, or maturation, from youth to old age. Thus, maturity is not only a future state that can be attained in the present life, but also a state that carries the responsibility of functioning as an exemplar and teacher of wisdom. Ben Sira functions in this capacity, having reported his own process of learning wisdom and presenting himself as an ideal of wisdom instruction. The nature of this maturity is distinctly Jewish for its focus on the fear of the Lord and obedience to his Law. This is because the ordering of the cosmos testifies to God's wisdom as creator as does the dwelling of wisdom in the temple to his gracious election of Israel. Moreover, the belief that the ministry of wisdom in the temple completes the cosmos, encourages those who sought wisdom to participate with the high priest in the liturgical drama as the pinnacle of creation. Yet, this does not preclude the role of the nations in the pursuit of wisdom, because they have their share even if it is only partial. Thus, Ben Sira's formative strategy is both to impart wisdom through his own ethical teaching and to encourage the search for wisdom primarily in Israel, but also amongst other nations. Finally, Ben Sira provides a motive for this goal of maturity in that the promised benefits of becoming wise was a good life, a good name, and the capacity to withstand and learn from the trials of life.

Similar to that Stoicism, the primary reference points for Ben Sira's construction of human maturity are a divine figure, a social (or national) group and the cosmos. Throughout the entire programme, the fundamental premise is that wisdom came from the Lord, and therefore any true wisdom will place an individual in a proper posture of reverence towards the Lord. Furthermore, God's purposes for Israel as his special people are that they minister his presence in the world and engage in mission to the nations. Similarly, the cosmos operates according to God's creative intent, with its inherent dualisms functioning to encourage righteousness and wisdom whilst at the same time chasten foolishness and wickedness. This wisdom dwells and ministers in the temple and is expressed by Torah, which thereby directs people towards the cultic service of the high priest and obedience to God. Furthermore, wisdom is not only active in the original creation process, but also in the ongoing ordering of the cosmos and completion of it in the temple liturgy. As such, the construction of maturity in *Sirach* refers

individuals to this complex relationship between God, Israel and the cosmos. If individuals are to attain maturity, they must be faithful members of Israel who participate in the cosmic drama of the temple worship of God that promotes their obedience to him and promises a good life and name.

### 2.3.2 *1 Enoch*

As apocalyptic literature, *1 Enoch* depicts the fall of the Watchers as an aetiology for the reality of human wickedness and cosmic disorder. Furthermore, it chronicles a series of revelations given to the antediluvian patriarch Enoch concerning God's initial and final judgement of the rebellious factions, whilst simultaneously exhorting the faithful to continued obedience in the intermediate period. David Halperin<sup>98</sup> argues that the ascension myth in *1 Enoch* and the Lucifer myth in Isa. 14:12-15 are positive and negative allegories (respectively) that reflect the narrators' social concern for the appropriate maturation of young boys into adulthood. Yet, not only does Halperin's argument fail to withstand critical scrutiny,<sup>99</sup> it also does not appreciate the goal of human existence that *1 Enoch* presents. Thus far, the studies of Stoicism and *Sirach* have revealed similar constructions of maturity that would be conducive to Halperin's proposal. Both present ideal human existence as a form of wise living and root individuals in a process of formation towards that goal. It will be demonstrated in this section, however, that *1 Enoch* constructs maturity in a significantly different manner from these traditions. I will argue that the goal of human existence in the text is eschatological righteousness, which is attained through present embodiment whilst awaiting divine vindication.

#### 2.3.2.1 Soteriology and Cosmology

From the very outset, *1 Enoch* roots the reality of wickedness within the very structure of the cosmos. The *Book of Watchers* depicts the fall of 200 Watchers

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98. D.J. Halperin, 'Ascension or Invasion: Implications of the Heavenly Journey in Ancient Judaism', *Religion* 18 (1988), 47-67.

99. Halperin's hypothesis fails to account for the relationship of the ascension myth in *1 Enoch* to the other themes of the book. For instance, if the function of *1 Enoch* is to make Enoch's ascension an allegory for the appropriate maturation of young boys, then the descent of the Watchers that brought about Enoch's ascension becomes either an absurdity or an allegory for paedophilia. Moreover, the hypothesis does not account for the preponderance of cosmological speculation in the text or the frequent pronouncements of God's judgement upon the Watchers, errant stars, and the wicked.

when they descend to the earth, teach human beings secret knowledge, and take wives who consequently bear giant offspring. The mayhem and destruction wrought by the giants, combined with the wickedness of humanity brought about by the Watchers' teaching, leads to the cries of the righteous on earth ascending to the good angels who mediate these complaints to God. God condemns the Watchers for behaving like the children of men even though they were immortal heavenly beings. Their actions are understood as rebellion against, and frustration of, the divinely intended cosmic order. The gravity of their offence is further revealed by the wayward activities of certain heavenly luminaries. Thus, the immorality of angels, giants, and human beings within the earthly realm affects 'morality' in the heavenly sphere.<sup>100</sup> This suggests that morality is believed to be rooted within the entire structure of the cosmos, so that immorality in any part necessarily affects the whole.

The relationship between morality and cosmology in *1 Enoch* is further confirmed by the exhortations to righteousness. George Nickelsburg<sup>101</sup> argues that the social concerns of the text suggest that the Enochic community identifies themselves as those who correctly interpret the Torah in contrast to the religious leaders of Israel who use deceitful interpretations to lead others astray. Nevertheless, obedience to the Torah is not the basis of the exhortations to righteousness in *1 Enoch*. Instead, appeals are made to the order of the cosmos as the basis for righteous living. For instance, Nickelsburg observes:

Pervading 1 Enoch's understanding of law... is a sense of cosmic order. Thus, while the Book of Luminaries does not contain commandments to be observed by humans, it describes the 'laws' and order that the Creator has built into the structure of the cosmos to regulate the movements of the sun and moon, which along with the stars are responsible to their Lord. A similar notion is embodied in the heart of the collection's introductory oracle.<sup>102</sup>

In other words, cosmic observation reveals the way in which the cosmos itself obeys the Lord, which reflexively encourages personal obedience to the divine will. Hence, an important function of cosmological speculation in *1 Enoch* is the promotion of righteousness as obedience within the Enochic community.

Cosmology has another function, however, in its preponderant concern with divine judgement.<sup>103</sup> The visions given to the patriarch Enoch reveal the places of

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100. Alexander, 'Millennial Perspective', 7.

101. G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'The Epistle of Enoch and the Qumran Literature', *JJS* 33 (1982), 334-39.

102. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 51.

103. G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in *1 Enoch*', in *Mysteries and Revelation: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, eds. J.J. Collins and J.H.

judgement hidden within the very structure of the cosmos. Carol Newsom<sup>104</sup> proposes that Enoch's guided tour of the heavenly realm and places of judgement resemble ancient practices of diplomacy, where a king demonstrated his power and wisdom to visitors by displaying his treasures and the orderliness of his kingdom. Hence, Enoch's cosmic tour serves as a vindication of God's wisdom in that there are 'places structured into the cosmos that guarantee the coming reality of judgement and the consequent rewards and punishments.'<sup>105</sup> The demonstration of God's power leads the Watchers to despair that their impending judgement is already a present cosmological reality, and simultaneously invites the reader to participate in Enoch's awe at the revelation of God's creation and judgement.<sup>106</sup> This implies that judgement, whilst typically understood as an eschatological category, is expressed through the medium of cosmological speculation. The primary function of cosmological judgement is to forewarn those who receive the revelation about the realities that await the righteous and the wicked.

The issues of morality and soteriology, therefore, are addressed from a cosmological perspective in *1 Enoch*. This is evident by the way that 'history and eschatology are related to the structure of the universe.'<sup>107</sup> To be sure, historical and eschatological features can be seen in the text, but these temporal concerns are subsumed by cosmological speculation. Thus, John Collins notes:

The comprehensive tour of the cosmos is designed to show that the destiny of humanity is not left to chance but is built into the structure of the universe. The eschatological focus is shown by the climactic location of the prison of the Watchers in chaps. 18-19 and the amount of space devoted to eschatology in chaps. 21-27. It is true that eschatology is only one component in the comprehensive view of the cosmos, but it is an essential component, and fully integrated with the cosmological speculations.<sup>108</sup>

The import of these observations about cosmology in *1 Enoch* for a discussion of maturity is that human teleology is related to cosmic morality and soteriology. The fall of humanity is presented as a historical subversion of cosmic order, and

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Charlesworth, *JSPseudSup 9* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 53: 'There is scarcely a page in *1 Enoch* that is not in some sense related to the expectation of an impending divine judgement that will deal with human sin and righteousness, and the angelic rebellions that are in one way or another related to them.'

104. C.A. Newsom, 'The Development of *1 Enoch* 6-19: Cosmology and Judgement', *CBQ* 42 (1990), 310-29.

105. Nickelsburg, 'Apocalyptic Construction', 56.

106. J.J. Collins, 'The Apocalyptic Technique: Setting and Function in the Book of Watchers', *CBQ* 44 (1982), 108.

107. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages*, 330.

108. Collins, 'Apocalyptic Technique', 108.



similarly, the salvation of humanity is presented as an eschatological resolution of these cosmic tensions. Human activity in the present is also related to the cosmos through the observation of, and conformity with, its order. As a consequence, every aspect of human life finds a reference point within cosmology. It is necessary, therefore, to determine how this cosmological referencing relates to a construction of maturity within *1 Enoch*.

### **2.3.2.2 Steadfast Righteousness and Human Maturity**

An intriguing feature of *1 Enoch* is that the Enochic community is consistently referred to as 'righteous' by the text. For example, the introduction states: 'Concerning the children of righteousness and concerning the elect of the world and concerning the plant of righteousness' (1.1). The Enochic community regards themselves as the true Israel, having inherited Abraham's righteousness and election,<sup>109</sup> in contrast to the rest of Israel that has fallen into wickedness through the corruption of foreign influences. Whilst the sharp dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked is hyperbolic, the text nevertheless presents the righteousness of the Enochic community as a present reality. I propose, therefore, that *1 Enoch* not only conceives of human maturity as righteousness, but also presents that maturity as an eschatological reality presently manifested in the Enochic community. By virtue of their election, the members of the community are assured of their eschatological vindication through the hidden, but nevertheless real, places of reward structured into the cosmos. Thus, the promise of eschatological righteousness is proleptically confirmed upon members of the community in their present life. Because the text sets out the eschatological state of righteousness as the goal of existence, eschatological righteousness is the nature of maturity in *1 Enoch*. Whilst this may seem problematic in that it equates a moral-psychological concept (i.e. maturity) with a moral-theological one (i.e. righteousness), it is my working definition of maturity as the goal or ideal of human existence that enables the equation. Moreover, I suggest that the actual obstacle to accepting this equation rests with our modern construction of maturity that requires some form of development towards an existence in the present life. However, instead of exhorting the Enochic community to develop its

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109. L. Hartman, 'The Functions of Some So-Called Apocalyptic Timetables', *NTS* 22 (1976), 12; Nickelsburg, 'Epistle of Enoch', 341.

righteousness, *1 Enoch* compels them to remain steadfast in it. In other words, the community is viewed through the proleptic lens of their eschatological righteousness, which therefore entails that they persevere in that state rather than develop in it.

The primary means by which *1 Enoch* promotes steadfast righteousness within the Enochic community is through the transmission of knowledge. Annette Reed<sup>110</sup> argues that the Enochic writings present two differing approaches to the revelation of heavenly secrets. One is expressly negative, which is represented by the fallen Watchers who subvert cosmic epistemological boundaries by revealing heavenly secrets to humanity. The other is positive, which is represented by Enoch who receives and transmits heavenly knowledge in accordance with God's approval and purposes. Furthermore, God's denunciation of the fallen Watchers and elevation of Enoch confirms his righteous status as the necessary condition to receive and transmit revelations. The content of these revelations pertains primarily to the cosmological speculation detailed in the previous section, namely the orderliness of the cosmos and the hidden places of judgement. Thus, it is the reception and comprehension of such cosmological knowledge that encourages the steadfast righteousness of the Enochic community.<sup>111</sup> As recipients of Enoch's revelation understand of the cosmological secrets, they understand that their righteous status is worthy of adherence and preservation.

Directly related to the reception and comprehension of heavenly knowledge is the fostering of hope within the Enochic community. Scholars have noted how such knowledge provides assurances to the community that their perseverance is eschatologically justified. For example, Collins notes the general hope instilled by the reality of 'another dimension to the world'<sup>112</sup> that guarantees the alleviation of human suffering. He also attaches this hope to the promise of eternal life in righteousness that has been structured into the cosmos.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Lars Hartman<sup>114</sup> argues that the lack of specificity as to times and dates in apocalyptic

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110. Reed, 'Heavenly Ascent', 47-66.

111. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages*, 332-33: 'Understanding rather than obedience is the key to salvation because God does not address humanity directly but through the fixed order of the cosmos and history which he allows to follow its own course.'

112. Collins, 'Apocalyptic Technique', 108.

113. Collins, 'Journeys', 26-27; Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages*, 331-32.

114. Hartman, 'Apocalyptic Timetables', 1-14, esp. 12.

timetables, such as that found in the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, suggests that these texts have a more practical and exhortative function. Specifically, he states:

About the anxiety on account of the times the redactor has two things to say: first, God will certainly reward righteousness and let sin perish; secondly, God has history in his hand.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, the establishment and growth of hope within the Enochic community was a further means of encouraging steadfast righteousness.

Three implications for the construction of maturity in *1 Enoch* derive from this analysis. First, human maturity in *1 Enoch* is eschatological righteousness, which implies that the ideal state of maturity is not something attainable in the present life. Second, however, the text's affirmation that the members of the Enochic community are righteous implies an intermediate state where they are considered to be mature. Third, this status of being mature does not imply a developmental process of personal maturation. Rather, the dynamic attainment of maturity is a redemptive-historical process in which the community awaits the confirmation of their ideal state of maturity in the eschatological revelation of the cosmic places of judgement and reward. Thus, the attainment of maturity occurs 'external' to the individual and community in the sense that it is dependent upon divine agency. In summary, maturity in *1 Enoch* is the eschatological righteousness, which is presently embodied by the mature – the steadfast righteous ones of the Enochic community – who await the divine resolution of cosmic unrighteousness.

### **2.3.2.3 Representative Figures and Eschatological Embodiment**

*1 Enoch* presents several figures as negative and positive representatives of steadfast righteousness to the Enochic community. As negative representatives, the *Book of Watchers* reveals the activities of the fallen Watchers as a failure to remain steadfast in righteousness.<sup>116</sup> Even though they know that their actions will bring about judgement, the Watchers still pledge to one another to carry out their plans. Their disclosure of heavenly secrets to humanity, far from producing righteousness, leads instead to the increase of wickedness in the world. Furthermore, their actions reveal disdain for God's law structured into the cosmic

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115. Hartman, 'Apocalyptic Timetables', 13.

116. Cf. Jub. 7.21-25.

order. David Sutter<sup>117</sup> has shown how this myth of the fallen Watchers served as a paradigmatic example for the eventual corruption of the priesthood. Just as the Watchers made themselves impure by taking wives of flesh and blood, the Jerusalem priesthood rendered themselves impure by taking foreign wives. According to Sutter:

Evil arises at both the cosmic and the human level as the result of rebellion against the divine will expressed in the laws that regulate the order of the cosmos or of society. ... The relationship in the myth between cosmos and society is analogical: each represents a totality in which the sacrality of the whole is destroyed when one element does not keep its place in the sacred order of things.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, the fallen Watchers and the Jerusalem priests function as representative figures of wickedness. Their pursuits corrupt not only themselves, but also the whole of creation. As such, members of the Enochic community are justified in their disassociation from Israel, because identification with the Jerusalem priesthood would bring the cosmic and social consequences of not remaining steadfast in righteousness.

In contrast to the negative representation of the fallen Watchers are the good angels, who obey God by interacting with human beings appropriately and reveal divine knowledge only when commanded. However, the prominent representative figure is Enoch who holds a multifaceted role within the text. He functions as a scribe by recording the revelations received in visions as well as the intercession of the fallen Watchers before the Lord. Yet, his intermediary role is often noted by scholars to be priestly in nature.<sup>119</sup> Collins argues that Enoch's function as an intercessory scribe was intended to justify the ascendancy of the scribal tradition within the implicit critique of the priesthood.<sup>120</sup> In other words, Enoch is the new and superior intermediary between God and man, and the revelation given to him is superior to the knowledge mediated by the corrupt priesthood. To some degree, this places Enoch in tension with the biblical figure of Moses with regards to the revelation of the Torah.<sup>121</sup> Enoch, as revealer of divine truths embedded in the

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117. D. Sutter, 'Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6-16', *HUCA* 50 (1979), 115-35.

118. Sutter, 'Fallen Angel', 117.

119. Collins, 'Journeys', 25; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 20.

120. Collins, 'Journeys', 25-26; R.A. Horsley, 'Social Relations and Social Conflict in the *Epistle of Enoch*', in *For A Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, eds. R.A. Argall, B.A. Bow and R.A. Werline (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 111-15.

121. Alexander, 'Millennial Perspective', 8.

cosmic order, constitutes a new community that observes the Torah, but also interprets it through a new paradigm. Thus, his readers are not encouraged to model his actions and attempt to ascend into the heavenly sphere. Rather, individuals are intended to identify with him by becoming members of his community who learn about the revelation given to him through his written accounts.

Another positive representative figure in *1 Enoch* is the enigmatic Son of Man. Scholars have debated at length whether this figure is simply Enoch, but have yet to reach a consensus on the subject.<sup>122</sup> Leaving the question of identification aside, it is apparent that the Son of Man does possess a representative role to the Enochic community much like the figure of Enoch, but with distinct differences. His representation of the community is not constitutive, but rather one of correspondence. The *Similitudes* describes the Son of Man as the 'Righteous One' and the 'Chosen One', which associates him with his earthly counterpart, the Enochic community, that is similarly described as the righteous and the chosen. Moreover, his present hiddenness and future revelation stand parallel to the present suffering and future exaltation of the Enochic community. This parallelism leads Collins to the following conclusions about the role of the Son of Man:

The fact that he is preserved from their sufferings makes him a figure of pure power and glory and an ideal embodiment of the hopes of the persecuted righteous. The efficaciousness of the "son of man" figure requires that he be conceived as other than the community, since he must possess the power and exaltation which they lack. In short, the "son of man" is not a personification of the righteous community, but is conceived, in mythological fashion, as its heavenly Doppelgänger.<sup>123</sup>

It is important to note that the Son of Man is only initially 'revealed to the chosen' (62.7), which lends greater strength to Collins' depiction of him as the embodiment of community hope. The reality of the Son of Man's existence fortifies the hope of the community already instilled through the cosmic promise of future judgement of wickedness and exaltation of righteousness. Thus, he is both a representative of the community in the heavenly sphere and a source of hope for them in the present ordeal.

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122. For an assessment of the various scholarly opinions, see J.J. Collins, 'The Heavenly Representative: The "Son of Man" in the Similitudes of Enoch', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, eds. J.J. Collins and G.W.E. Nickelsburg, SBLSCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 113-14, 119-24.

123. Collins, 'Heavenly Representative', 116.

This analysis of representative figures in *1 Enoch* suggests that they do not function as exemplars of wickedness or righteousness, but rather as representatives of these realities. Hence, the rhetorical function of these figures within the text is to promote the construction of community identity. To accept Enoch's revelation was commensurate with joining the community of the righteous who looked towards the revelation of the Son of Man as their vindication. In contrast, to reject the knowledge conveyed by Enoch was to remain identified by the corrupt Jerusalem priesthood whose actions paralleled those of the fallen Watchers in its disregard for God's righteousness. Identification with one group necessarily precluded identification with the other.

The issue of community inclusion is ultimately relevant to the concern of maturity as eschatological righteousness. Remarkably, the Enochic community is an open one, as evident in the eventual summons to the sons of the earth to join the group in the paths of righteousness (105.1-2).<sup>124</sup> Yet, the community is simultaneously referred to as chosen by God.<sup>125</sup> Thus, God's election is set as a prevenient action prior to inclusion within the Enochic community. This has two implications for the present discussion on maturity. First, maturity has a corporate aspect, because the righteous life and reception of Enoch's revelation occur within that community.<sup>126</sup> As such, the primary means by which individuals came to be regarded as one of the righteous who awaited their eschatological maturity was their incorporation into the Enochic community. Second, the agency of maturity in *1 Enoch* is complex. Human agency is made secondary to God's prevenient will of election, which suggests that righteousness is dependent upon that election. It is only after this prevenient act that human agency is engaged in a life of steadfast righteousness that is encouraged through the reception and comprehension of divine secrets.

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124. Nickelsburg, 'Epistle of Enoch', 343-44.

125. J.J. Collins, 'Pseudepigraphy and Group Formation in Second Temple Judaism', in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. E.G. Chazon and M. Stone (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 45.

126. G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'The Nature and Function of Revelation in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and Some Qumranic Documents', in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. E.G. Chazon and M. Stone (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 98-99.

#### 2.3.2.4 Summary: Human Maturity in *1 Enoch*

This study of *1 Enoch* has sought to identify the paraenetic concerns of the text and their implied view of human teleology. Whilst Nickelsburg correctly identifies an underlying concern for the proper interpretation of, and obedience to, the Torah within *1 Enoch*, this is nevertheless only alluded to in the text rather than set out as the primary paraenetic function. Instead, the focus is on the revelation of divine knowledge in both its negative (i.e. through the fallen Watchers) and positive (i.e. through Enoch) counterparts. The negative is rebuked and judged for its promotion of wickedness and cosmic disorder, whereas the positive is affirmed and exalted for its capacity to promote perseverance and hope in obedience to the correctly interpreted Torah. Thus, it is the transmission of knowledge about God's role in creation, election and judgement, with its pertinence to the structure and order of the cosmos and its implications for the community of the righteous, which is most relevant to the teleological goal of maturity in *1 Enoch*.

This goal, then, is referenced to a framework similar to that in Stoicism and *Sirach* in that maturity is constructed in *1 Enoch* with respect to the God of Israel, the cosmos and the community of the righteous. Just as with the previous constructs, these three reference points of human maturity in *1 Enoch* are interactive. God has structured and ordered the cosmos and constitutes the righteous through their election according to his purposes. Reflexively, the cosmos reveals the orderliness of God's law and his impending judgement as both reinforcement of, and encouragement to, obedience in the community. Finally, the community is obedient to God's revelation of the Torah and the divine secrets communicated through Enoch that encourages their observation of the cosmic order.

Unlike either Stoicism or *Sirach*, however, which made maturity an ideal developmentally attained through personal progress, the attainment of maturity in *1 Enoch* is not a function of human effort. The proposal that maturity is eschatological righteousness entails that the members of the Enochic community lived in an intermediate period between the redemptive revelation of cosmic secrets and the eschatological resolution of cosmic immorality. As such, this intermediate period confirms upon them a corresponding intermediate status of being mature in that they await their eschatological maturity through the mature activity of steadfast righteousness. To be sure, this engages human agency in that

the righteous ones were to live a righteous life. Steadfastness is something proven over time, thereby confirming the final verdict of maturity within the eschatological judgement. Moreover, the emphasis on heeding the teaching of the wise in *1 Enoch* indicates that the community regularly interprets and applies Enoch's revelations and the Torah to their lives. Nonetheless, these activities maintain their intermediate status as mature ones, rather than develop that intermediate status towards the final goal. Instead, maturity remains the ideal state of eschatological existence that is attained through God's final vindicating and redemptive actions.

#### **2.4 Conclusion: Human Maturity in Antiquity**

The purpose of the chapter was to explore the way in which various ancient traditions understood human maturity. It can be seen that whilst the nature of human maturity varies between these ancient traditions, the manner in which it is constructed has some common features. Specifically, the analysis of each tradition revealed that a common framework is employed when constructing human maturity. Additionally, there are several features of the formative strategy of each text that closely resemble one another. Whilst I will outline the implications of these commonalities in greater detail later in this thesis, what follows is a brief summary of the import of this common framework.

Most apparent in the preceding studies is the manner in which each tradition constructed human maturity using divine, social and cosmic reference points. The reference of maturity to a divine figure accounts for human origins and constitution, which thereby establishes human teleology as the act of participating with the divine being's intentions for the cosmos. The cosmic reference point provides the theatre for this participation by claiming that the cosmos is created by the divine figure with specific structures or principles that prompts human teleological participation. Finally, the social reference point claims that the divine figure has established a particular community or nation that recognises him and the truth of these cosmic realities, thereby affirming and guiding individuals in the attainment of their maturity.

Thus, Stoicism regards human beings as uniquely constituted within the cosmos as rational agents, which therefore orientates them teleologically towards participating with divine reason's intent for the whole cosmos within the scope of



the *cosmopolis* by using their rationality. Similarly, *Sirach* presents human beings as constituted by God for wise faithfulness to him, so that the pursuit of God's wisdom that is operative throughout the whole cosmos reveals its special manifestation in Israel where the temple liturgy completes the act of creation and prompts obedience in the wise. Finally, *1 Enoch* regards humanity as created by God for the purpose of being righteous in the world. However, because humanity fell from that divine intent, the Enochic community needs the cosmic secrets of judgement and reward revealed to them as a means of promoting and promising eschatological righteousness. The divine figure, social group and cosmos, therefore, may be viewed as providing, in ancient thought, a complex triad of reference points for human maturity. Whilst the particular content of these reference points varies between traditions, all three are still operative in, and informative for, the construction of maturity in antiquity.

In addition to these three reference points of human maturity, it may be concluded further that there are several other common features informing the attainment of maturity in each tradition. In particular, all three texts operate with the notion that human beings must appropriate a divine quality. Within Stoicism, the divine quality is rationality, whereas it is wisdom in *Sirach* and knowledge in *1 Enoch*. The manner in which this quality is appropriated differed from the ontological constitution of persons in Stoicism, the human pursuit of wisdom in *Sirach* or the revelation of divine secrets in *1 Enoch*. Also, each tradition treats maturity as an ideal state of existence, whether it is attainable (*Sirach*), virtually unattainable (Stoicism) or eschatological (*1 Enoch*). What does differ is that Stoicism and *Sirach* make this ideal state something attained through a process of maturation, whereas *1 Enoch* regards it as something embodied in the present life and received/confirmed in the eschaton. Finally, all three traditions employ some type of ideal figure that promotes the attainment of maturity. This varies from model figures who guide growth into maturity (Stoicism), representative figures who identify those who are or can be mature (*1 Enoch*), or both (*Sirach*). Again, there is a great deal of variance amongst the traditions assessed with regards to the content of these features, but they still maintain a common structure.

It is important to note, however, that I do not intend to imply that all ancient traditions utilised this basic reference system, or drew the same significations from them. In other words, this chapter does not claim to have identified a general framework that governed all ancient thought about human teleology. However, the

texts assessed in this chapter were selected not only for their ability to represent different ancient traditions, but also for their historical precedence and influence beyond their originating communities. This suggests that the conclusions reached here demonstrate a significant, and perhaps prominent, manner of understanding and constructing maturity within the ancient discourse. Therefore, I propose that these observations provide a sufficient cross-section of the ancient discourse to proceed into an informed analysis of the construction of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians.

## Chapter 3 Christian Maturity in Ephesians

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the theology of Christian maturity in Paul's<sup>1</sup> letter to the Ephesians against the backdrop of the broader ancient discourse. Unlike the studies of the previous chapter that assessed the implicit conceptions of human maturity in Stoic philosophy or Second Temple Jewish texts, the present analysis will focus on an explicit statement about the nature of Christian maturity in Eph. 4.13. Numerous scholars have argued that the term τέλειος in this verse is employed with the sense of 'mature', but nevertheless fail to develop how the topic of maturity relates to the theology of the letter.<sup>2</sup> I will demonstrate that the nature of maturity expressed in Ephesians is integrally related to the letter's multiple theological motifs. Whilst maturity is by no means the main theme of Ephesians, its theological significance is related to the ecclesiology, cosmology and Christology of the letter. As such, I will argue that the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians fits well within the basic ancient framework established in the previous chapter.

It will be demonstrated that maturity in Ephesians pertains to other motifs in the letter, especially those of unity (ένότης) and fullness (πλήρωμα). Moreover, I will argue that these motifs are also related to the ecclesiology and cosmology of letter. Thus, I will substantiate my proposal that the theology of maturity in Ephesians is integrated into the principal concern that governs these theological themes: the disclosure of the divine μυστήριον (1.10), which is God's plan to unite

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1. Whilst I maintain the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, it is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a defence of this position. Moreover, the authorship of Ephesians is not a crucial element of the subsequent analysis. As such, readers who dispute Pauline authorship may substitute 'the author' for 'Paul' where appropriate.
  2. E.g. E. Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: SPCK, 1955), 141-42; H.W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 554-56; A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, *WBC* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 256-57; P.T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 307-308.

the cosmos in Christ through the Church.<sup>3</sup> Given that I will develop a theological understanding of maturity in Eph. 4.13 as related to the divine plan in 1.10, it is necessary that I conduct a study of the passages in which these two verses are found. As such, I will assess the message and implications of both the introductory eulogy (1.3-14) and introductory paraenesis (4.1-16) whilst making reference to other portions of Ephesians as needed. It will be concluded that these two passages present a theology of Christian maturity that is primarily corporate in nature and stands as the eschatological realisation of the divine μυστήριον.

### **3.2 Eulogy (1.3-14): Disclosure of the Divine Will**

The following analysis of Eph. 1.3-14 will determine the scope of the divine mystery presented in 1.10 as well as the means set forth for its realisation. In order to accomplish this task, the comprehensive message of the eulogy must be identified and the themes relevant to maturity appropriately situated within it. It is necessary, therefore, to engage with the ongoing debate surrounding the structure and background of the eulogy, which is frequently used as the means of entry into an exposition of its purpose and message. In particular, I will argue that the coherence of the eulogy is found in the rhetorical compilation of theological themes. This moves towards the climactic statement of the μυστήριον, which is the divine plan to ‘unite for himself all things in Christ’ (1.10 – ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ). Hence, I will explore the redemptive programme entailed by the term ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, the scope of τὰ πάντα, and the implications of the disclosure of the μυστήριον. The conclusions from these analyses will establish the theological contours of Ephesians upon which the theology of Christian maturity may be mapped.

#### **3.2.1 The Message of the Eulogy**

Any attempt to discover the message and purpose of the introductory eulogy in Ephesians is a convoluted task. The pericope possesses neither an apparent structure nor a logical sequence, which led J. T. Trinidad to state that ‘St. Paul

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3. For the sake of brevity and simplicity in this thesis, references to the universal/corporate membership of believers in Christ will be noted using ‘Church’, whereas references to a local congregation of believers will be denoted by ‘church’.

seemed to have poured his mind all at once into these few verses.<sup>4</sup> This observation lends credence to J. Armitage Robinson's observation that the eulogy presents a 'kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours' of various theological themes.<sup>5</sup> The complexity of the Ephesian eulogy is compounded by the relative lack of comparable eulogies in the NT. Only 2 Corinthians and 1 Peter contain introductory eulogies, but neither approaches that of Ephesians in terms of sophistication or length. Given this, it is not surprising that no single interpretation of the passage has gained a consensus amongst scholars despite the wealth of attention given to the task. To be sure, there have been popular trends in analytical method and partially consistent findings across the range of these approaches. As such, this analysis of the eulogy must assess these prominent interpretations before proceeding to articulate its message and purpose.

One common approach to the eulogy, popular in the historical-critical movement, was to conduct a form-critical analysis in order to discover the original form behind the present one. Given the uniqueness of this eulogy, scholars argued that it must have been familiar to the original recipients and therefore was based upon an element of their liturgical services. The structure of the original form was derived from various strophe markers, such as the prepositions *κατά* and *καθώς*, the aorist participles, and/or the repeated phrases *ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ/ἐν αὐτῷ/ἐν ᾧ* or *εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δοξῆς* (with variants), which then informed the original purpose of the passage. For instance, Martin Dibelius<sup>6</sup> argued that the eulogy was derived from a liturgical hymn with Semitic influences and should be divided into an introduction (1.3) and three strophes (1.4-6, 7-10, 11-14). Jules Cambier<sup>7</sup> similarly regarded the eulogy as drawn from an original hymn, but argued for a different division of the last two strophes (1.7-12, 13-14). Karl Fischer, followed by Michel Bouttier,<sup>8</sup> also varied this ending partition (1.11-12, 13-14). In contrast, John Coutts<sup>9</sup> regarded the eulogy as based upon a liturgical prayer that was divided into three strophes (1.3-6, 7-12, 13-14). However, the diversity of these divisions and

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4. J.T. Trinidad, 'The Mystery Hidden in God: A Study of Eph. 1,3-14', *Bib* 31 (1950), 2.

5. J.A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: MacMillan, 1903), 19.

6. M. Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, An Philemon*, HNT 12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1927), 42-45.

7. J. Cambier, 'La Bénédiction d'Eph 1:3-14', *ZNW* 54 (1953), 58-104.

8. M. Bouttier, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Éphésiens*, CNT 9b (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991), 58; K.M. Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 111-18.

9. J. Coutts, 'Ephesians I.3-14 and I Peter I.3-12', *NTS* 3 (1957), 115-27.

functions of the eulogy proposed by form-critical scholars suggests that there are no methodological controls to govern this enterprise. Hence, it is prudent to agree with the doubts of Ernest Best and Rudolf Schnackenburg<sup>10</sup> that any original form may be unearthed from the present passage.

Another popular trend in the study of the eulogy is the attempt to identify it with a form of Jewish *berakah*. Noting that LXX typically translated the Hebrew בְּרִיךְ into the Greek εὐλογητός, scholars have argued that the message of the eulogy may be derived from comparisons with historically contemporary Jewish blessings. Nils Dahl<sup>11</sup> compares the eulogy with various forms of Jewish *berakah* and concludes that it functions as a congratulatory benediction of the letter's recipients for the blessings they have received, with the further prayer that they may fully comprehend the privileges that this entails. Heinrich Schlier<sup>12</sup> argues that the eulogy is a hymn of blessing that functions as the *summa* of the entire letter's purpose to disclose the divine mystery. Chrys Caragounis<sup>13</sup> also finds similarities between the eulogy and Jewish blessings, but notes a substantial difference: the contents of Jewish *berakoth* were distinctly nationalistic whereas that of the eulogy in Ephesians held a universal scope. Similarly, Dahl<sup>14</sup> acknowledges that the 'spiral' progression of thought from the initial statement of εὐλογητός through the use of compounding subordinate clauses leaves the eulogy without analogy. Consequently, Harold Hoehner rightly concludes that 'the eulogy of Eph. 1:3-14 is somewhat unique in that its roots are in the OT and in keeping with the Jewish-Hellenistic style, and yet its content goes beyond them.'<sup>15</sup>

Because the message of the eulogy has not been found conclusively from historical backgrounds, other methods of analysis have been proffered. One such approach is to find a 'trinitarian' structure. Hoehner<sup>16</sup> argues that the eulogy moves

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10. E. Best, *Essays on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 54-57; R. Schnackenburg, 'Die große Eulogie Eph 1,3-14: Analyse unter textlinguistischen Aspekten', *BZ* 21 (1977), 72. Indeed, Schnackenburg argues that form-critical analysis does not supply a valid approach to the eulogy.

11. N.A. Dahl, *Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions, Text- & Edition-Critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes*, eds. D. Hellholm, V. Blomkvist and T. Fornberg, WUNT 131 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 279-314. Cf. C.H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 42-43.

12. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1957), 38-74.

13. C.C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mystery: Meaning and Content*, ConBNT 8 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1977), 39-44.

14. Dahl, *Studies*, 308.

15. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 159.

16. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 159. Cf. C.L. Mitton, *Ephesians* (London: Oliphants, 1976), 44.

through a progressive discussion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of which is demarcated by the concluding refrain 'to the praise of his glory' (1.6, 12, 14). This partially aligns with his conclusion that a redemptive-historical programme is articulated in the eulogy: divine praise (1.3), redemptive acts (1.4-12), and application to believers (1.13-14). Similarly, Trinidad<sup>17</sup> provides a reading of the eulogy along a trinitarian track: the plan of God (1.4-6), its enactment in Christ (1.7-10) and its application to the faithful through the Spirit (1.11-14). To be sure, this approach has merit in its ability to recognise that all three divine agents are active in the redemptive-historical programme of the eulogy. Yet, trinitarian readings of the eulogy are undermined by their rigid structural division. The emphasis on one person of the Trinity in each section leads scholars to relativise the agency of the other two in the same pericope. For instance, focusing the initial portion of the eulogy (1.3-6) on the plan of God enables one to neglect the agency of Christ or the Spirit in God's acts of blessing.<sup>18</sup> Thus, whilst recognition of the work of the Trinity in redemptive history provides some means of appropriating the message of the eulogy, it nevertheless renders an inadequate interpretation.

Another theological approach to the eulogy is the attempt to find a doctrinal emphasis on the sacraments underlying its message. Coutts<sup>19</sup> argues that the original prayer upon which the eulogy is based was drawn from a baptismal liturgy, thus making Ephesians a homily about baptism. Similarly, Dahl<sup>20</sup> proposes that the eulogy is modelled after a benediction said before the baptism of new members, which made Ephesians a letter of instruction on the meaning of baptism for new churches in Asia Minor. J. C. Kirby<sup>21</sup> has produced the fullest argument for a baptismal reading of Ephesians by arguing that the eulogy is contained within an entire section of prayer (chs. 1-3) that was most likely used in a liturgy of the Eucharist. He suggests that the baptismal implications of Ephesians are found in its close connections with Jewish and Christian traditions

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17. Trinidad, 'Mystery', 1-26.

18. E.g. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 19-20. Robinson's redemptive-historical reading of 1.3 distinctly relativises the work of the Spirit to a secondary role.

19. Coutts, 'Ephesians 1.3-14', 115-18, 124-25. Cf. W.A. Meeks, 'In One Body: The Unity of Humankind in Colossians and Ephesians', in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, eds. J. Jervell and W.A. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 214.

20. Dahl, *Studies*, 315-34, 413-39; N.A. Dahl, 'Adresse und Proömium des Epheserbriefes', *TZ* 7 (1951), 250-64.

21. J.C. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost: An Inquiry into the Structure and Purpose of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: SPCK, 1968), 127-72.

of Pentecost, which indicates that statements such as being ‘sealed in the Spirit’ (1.13) are indirect referents to baptism. Thus, for Kirby, the eulogy has a sacramental thrust towards both the Eucharist and baptism. As with trinitarian readings of the eulogy, there is significant merit to finding sacramental motifs within the passage. Yet, rendering the eulogy within a liturgical context of baptism and/or the Eucharist neglects other motifs of the passage, which in turn leads to an even more narrow reading of the letter as a whole.<sup>22</sup> Given this weakness in a sacramental approach to the eulogy, another means of appropriating its message must be found.

Given that historical-critical and theological/doctrinal approaches to the eulogy have proven unsuccessful, scholars have more recently turned to literary analysis of the eulogy. Several proposals have been advanced with regards to the literary function of the eulogy. Edgar Goodspeed and C. Leslie Mitton<sup>23</sup> both regard the eulogy as a summary of Pauline theology, drawing from the authentic Pauline letters and condensing their main concerns into a compendium within twelve verses. Schlier and Cambier<sup>24</sup> also argue that the eulogy is a summary, but only of Ephesians without particular regard to the other letters of the Pauline corpus. Yet, whilst the summative capacity of the eulogy may certainly be appreciated in the light of the whole message of Ephesians and the greater Pauline corpus, these proposals nevertheless fail to account for the selectivity of this summary. For instance, with regards to the Pauline corpus, the eulogy fails to summarise several theological matters that Paul devotes considerable space to in his letters.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, nothing is mentioned of several elements of Ephesians, such as the exaltation of Christ (1.20-23), reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2.1-10), or the concern with spiritual powers and authorities (1.21; 6.12). Given that the eulogy is not a summary, but is certainly germane to the letter, the alternative proposal that it is preparatory for the letter merits approval. Noting that eulogy pre-empts an introductory thanksgiving normally anticipated in a Pauline letter, Peter O’Brien argues that it ‘introduced and prefigured many, though by no means

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22. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 18; P.T. O’Brien, ‘Ephesians I: An Unusual Introduction to a New Testament Letter’, *NTS* 25 (1978), 510.

23. E.J. Goodspeed, *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 20-24; Mitton, *Ephesians*, 43-45.

24. Cambier, ‘Bénédiction’, 58, 61; Schlier, *Epheser*, 72.

25. E.g. Paul’s concern with salvation by faith, the centrality of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection to the gospel, or the role of the apostles as the stewards of the authoritative message of Christ.



all, important theological and paraenetic themes.<sup>26</sup> The eulogy, therefore, establishes the main theological motifs to be taken up in the following discourse and paraenesis.

If literary analysis of Ephesians helps establish the function of the eulogy, then its intent may be drawn from rhetorical analysis. Andrew Lincoln<sup>27</sup> explores the use of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric in Ephesians and finds that the eulogy's introductory function is to engender a positive response from the original recipients of the letter. In particular, the liturgical rhythm engenders participation with its acclamation of praise and blessing. Moreover, the transition from first person to second person plural forms in 1.13-14 engages the readers by aligning their own experiences with the blessings identified throughout the eulogy. Further rhetorical implications of the passage can be seen in Caragounis' remarks that the eulogy conveys the temporal implications of God's blessings to the letter's recipients. The blessings that they have received in the past (election, predestination, adoption) have present implications (redemption, forgiveness, grace, wisdom and knowledge). These past and present blessings also hold the future implication of an inheritance. Thus, the eulogy engenders not only participation in its readers, but also anticipation.

Having reached a conclusion about the function and intent of the eulogy within Ephesians, it is now profitable to uncover its message by means of syntactical analysis. In particular, Caragounis presents a detailed analysis of each clause of the eulogy and concludes that 1.10, with its articulation of the mystery as the divine intent to unite all things in Christ, stands in the climactic position:

The eulogy pronounces God praiseworthy on the ground that He has lavished on 'us' manifold blessings and then in a series of five statements exemplifies the various acts which make up God's blessings: election, predestination, redemption, the giving of wisdom and the revelation of His *mysterion* to gather together all things in Christ... within these five statements the eulogy has spanned the great temporal gap from eternity past to eternity future and has portrayed the *mysterion* as God's great end in view embracing the destiny of all creation in relation to His exaltation. This is the purpose, the intention.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that Caragounis derives these 'five statements' from 1.3-10 only and concludes that 1.11-14 do not properly belong to the category of eulogy. This truncation is certainly problematic in light of the fact that this passage constitutes one sentence in the Greek. Thus, Caragounis' argument that the subject matter of

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26. O'Brien, 'Unusual Introduction', 512. Cf. Dahl, 'Adresse und Proömium', 262.

27. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xli-xlii, 18.

28. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, 61.

1.11-14 shifts the focus from the God who blesses to the recipients who are being blessed proves too rigid for this eulogy, seeing as a similar division occurs at 1.7 when the focus has already shifted to what ‘we’ have in Christ. Ultimately, the concern to maintain the climactic position of 1.10 does not need to segregate off 1.11-14, but rather may recognise that there are propositional ‘resolutions’ in these later verses evident in the overflow of vocabulary from the climactic moment. That several other scholars have arrived at similar conclusions about the climactic moment of 1.10 without discarding 1.11-14 indicates that the latter portion of the eulogy functions as a denouement to the climax.<sup>29</sup> As such, any reading of the eulogy must account for God’s intent ‘to unite for himself all things in Christ’ as the climactic moment of the passage.

The conclusions drawn from literary, rhetorical and syntactical analysis of the eulogy combine to reveal its function, intent and message. As an introduction, it establishes the main themes to be considered throughout the course of the letter. These themes are presented in a multi-faceted depiction of divine blessings bestowed upon the Ephesians through the agency of the three persons of the Trinity. Beyond this, the eulogy encourages the Ephesians to participate in its acclamation of praise to God for his glorious work in and amongst them. Yet, the eulogy also fosters hope of a further eschatological inheritance. In this way, the temporal trajectory of its message evokes its readers to a state of participatory anticipation of eschatological events. I suggest that the eulogy intends this dual response in expectation of a later discourse on the eschatological realisation of the divine plan in which the theology of maturity is operative. Yet, before turning to this later discourse, it is necessary to assess the climactic moment of the eulogy wherein God’s mystery is revealed to be the eschatological plan to unite all things in Christ.

### 3.2.2 The Climax of the Eulogy

The purpose of this section is to explore the primary theological themes of the climactic moment of the eulogy. Specifically I will assess what is signified by the terms ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι and τὰ πάντα, and their implications for the divine

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29. E.g. J.-N. Aletti, *Saint Paul Épître aux Éphésiens*, Ebib 42 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 2001), 69; J. Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001), 75-76; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 58-65, 111-15; Schlier, *Epheser*, 62.

μυστήριον. Each of these elements will be discussed separately, with consideration of their development throughout the whole of Ephesians. From this analysis, it will be shown that the redemptive intent of the divine mystery to unite all things in Christ will be realised through the redemption of the Church. Thus, the function, intent and message of the eulogy are intended to elicit the Church's redemptive participation with God's plan for the cosmos.

### 3.2.2.1 Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις: Unity in Christ

The question of what is entailed by the term ἀνακεφαλαίωσασθαι has been addressed by numerous scholars, most of whom agree that the meaning is derived from its root verb κεφαλαίω in relationship with its cognate noun κεφάλαιον.<sup>30</sup> The verb carries the meaning 'to sum up', and the noun denotes a 'summary' or 'statement of the main point'.<sup>31</sup> These scholars also rely upon the patristic argument that the prefix ἀνα- adds the sense of repetition or renewal. As such, the compound verb ἀνακεφαλαίω follows the common meaning used in the ancient rhetorical contexts as summing up or recapitulating an argument. It is frequently noted that this general definition is employed when Paul states that love 'sums up' the second table of the Decalogue (Rom 13.9 – ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται). Thus, with respect to its meaning in 1.10, the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις of all things entails the summation of the cosmos in Christ. Lincoln adds that this involves either 'the unifying of the cosmos or its direction toward a common goal'.<sup>32</sup> Yet, this statement is indicative of the primary problem confronting the definition of ἀνακεφαλαίω as 'to sum up'. Specifically, the rhetorical sense of the verb is partially ambiguous in a redemptive setting where the cosmos is the object. As such, insufficient consideration has been given to this aspect of rendering ἀνακεφαλαίω as 'to sum up'.

To address the deficiency, John McHugh<sup>33</sup> argues that an appreciation of the sense of ἀνακεφαλαίωσασθαι as 'to sum up' may be drawn from a consideration of Irenaeus' theology of recapitulation. Irenaeus drew from the meaning of the noun

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30. E.g. Bouttier, *Éphésiens*, 69-70; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 32-33; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 111; R. Schnackenburg, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, EKKNT 10 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1982), 58-59.

31. *BDAG* 541.

32. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 33.

33. J. McHugh, 'A Reconsideration of Ephesians 1.10b in the Light of Irenaeus', in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, eds. M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 302-309.

οικονομία and the verb ἀνακεφαλαιοῦσθαι that God had a coherent design underlying all of redemptive history. This design was progressively revealed through four divine covenants (Adamic, Noahic, Mosaic, and the New Covenant), with the last covenant bearing the capacity to renew man and recapitulate all that preceded it. According to McHugh, Irenaeus ‘wants us, when we hear the word ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, to think not of one precisely defined concept but several interrelated notions.’<sup>34</sup> These notions can be assessed under four main themes: (i) Christ’s virgin birth, (ii) his experience of human life, (iii) his victory over death in the resurrection and ascension, and (iv) his future Parousia. Thus, the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις accomplished by Christ is the giving to humanity a fresh start (i), by successfully re-enacting the drama of human life (ii), restoring to mankind their immortality lost in the fall (iii) and inaugurating a New World (iv). Hence, McHugh argues that the two Latin translations of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι as either *restaurare* (i.e. ‘restoring things to their original state’) or *instaurare* (i.e. ‘establishing and inaugurating something new’) appropriately grasp the sense of the original verb when taken together. This presentation of Irenaeus’ theology of recapitulation is sound, especially for its capacity to apprehend the sense of his Latin translations. Nevertheless, McHugh’s analysis proves to be only a history of interpretation seeing as he does little to argue that this is the intended meaning of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι in Eph. 1.10. Given the lack of appreciation for the verb’s sense in its own context, arguments drawn from later interpretation must be regarded with caution.

In contrast to arguments that focus upon the sense of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι as recapitulation, some scholars contend that its meaning should be drawn from the noun κεφαλή. Schlier<sup>35</sup> suggests that whilst the meaning of the verb is normally derived in relation to its cognate noun κεφάλαιον, Paul appreciated a different meaning as indicated by the statement in 1.22 that αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ. Thus, the sense of the verb in 1.10 is to unite all things under a ‘superordinate’ head. Similarly, Markus Barth<sup>36</sup> argues for a sense of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι that draws from statements of Christ’s headship throughout

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34. McHugh, ‘Reconsideration’, 305.

35. H. Schlier, ‘κεφαλή, ἀνακεφαλαιόομαι’, *TDNT* 3:680-81; Schlier, *Epheser*, 65.

36. M. Barth, *Ephesians 1-3: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 34, *AB* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 91-93; M. Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Collins, 1960), 54, 107.

Ephesians. Considering the philological links with κεφάλαιον to be an insufficient method of determining the meaning, and simultaneously rejecting the recapitulation translations as unwarranted within this letter, Barth argues that context must determine its meaning. As such, he concludes that the verb takes on the sense of ‘to make Christ the head’, which he attempts to combine with the philological arguments to produce a translation of ‘to comprehend under one head’. To be sure, the effort to derive the sense of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι from its context is commendable. Yet, this line of reasoning supplies a peculiar definition based upon an etymologically linked noun that occurs later in the letter.

Since a strict linkage between ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι and either κεφαλή or κεφάλαιον proves inconclusive, some scholars attempt to derive a sense of the verb through a conglomeration of the preceding arguments. For instance, Hoehner<sup>37</sup> suggests that no single view may be accepted exclusively and therefore opts for the common theme of unity under a single head (κεφαλή) or main point (κεφάλαιον). Thus, he reads the ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι with an appreciation of the middle voice and renders the verb with the sense that ‘God’s purpose in Christ is to unite all things for himself under one head.’<sup>38</sup> John Muddiman<sup>39</sup> favours a reading of the verb with an emphasis on recapitulation, but nevertheless acknowledges that the other options of analysis provide further potential illumination. To this, he adds that the proximity of the managerial term οἰκονομία to ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι lessens the rhetorical nuances of the meaning and heightens a sense of accountancy where all of the resources of the universe are summed up in Christ. Martin Kitchen<sup>40</sup> provides the most extensive treatment of a multi-faceted reading of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι. By exploring the sense derived from the history of interpretation, links with κεφαλή and κεφάλαιον, and the prefix ἀνα-, he concludes that the verb holds a wide range of meaning: to re-enact, to repeat, to sum up, to rule, to unite, to bring to a conclusion, to crown, and to start again. Kitchen argues that the acceptable procedure for reading this verb is ‘to recognize the pleonastic and allusive style of Ephesians, and say that the whole range of senses plays some part in the meaning of the word.’<sup>41</sup> Whilst this line of reasoning

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37. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 220-21.

38. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 221.

39. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 75-76.

40. M. Kitchen, *Ephesians* (London: Routledge, 1994), 36-42.

41. Kitchen, *Ephesians*, 41.

more fully appreciates the semantic range of ἀνακεφαλαιοῦσθαι in the context of Ephesians, the danger of deriving the sense of the verb in this manner is to expect the reader to take a comprehensive appreciation of its meaning. Yet, the initial act of reading rarely involves an appreciation of a word as the summary of its many senses, but rather anticipates a particular meaning.

Given the shortcomings of philological approaches for determining the meaning of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, Cambier's<sup>42</sup> analysis of the eulogy merits closer attention. Cambier questions the attempts of scholars to derive a meaning from etymological links with either κεφαλή or κεφάλαιον, stating that it in effect adopts a false problem. Instead, he argues that its meanings may be derived from an appreciation of the fact that it is situated in the eulogy as a theological summary of the entire letter. Thus, one should not expect to find within a summary the essential meaning that will be born out in successive developments throughout the letter. These successive developments actually take place through Paul's use of the term κεφαλή, which provide nuance to any original sense of the verb. This is perhaps most evident from Paul's statement in 1.20-22a which describes Christ's sovereignty over all things as related to his role as head of the Church (1.22b). As such, the original sense of the statement is that 'Dieu a résumé, repris toutes choses dans et par le Christ,' but the nuances afforded by attention to later κεφαλή statements provide the fuller sense: 'reprendre toutes choses dans et par le Christ, Chef de toutes choses.'<sup>43</sup> Cambier's position that the eulogy is a doctrinal summary has already been shown to be unwarranted, and this undoubtedly raises questions as to the plausibility of his present argument. Nevertheless, his attention to the functional setting of the eulogy and its rhetorical implications is essentially correct. As a consequence, further analysis of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις is needed in the light of the eulogy's function as a preparatory statement for the rest of the letter.

Attention to the rhetorical situation of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι necessitates the simple observation that its occurrence in the eulogy is the first time the reader encounters it. Nothing that precedes necessitates the expectation of its usage. Thus, contrary to Hoehner's assertion that the verb potentially carries the concept of headship,<sup>44</sup> there is no evidence to suggest that the reader would initially make

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42. Cambier, 'Bénédition', 58-104, esp. 86-88.

43. Cambier, 'Bénédition', 87.

44. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 220.

such a linkage. Instead, the sense of the verb would likely be drawn from its common usages in the realm of oratory, and potentially from its implications in a managerial setting. Both contexts would supply the already noted sense of ἀνακεφαλαιούσθαι as the summation of multiple rhetorical points and/or combination of many resources into a singular whole. That the object of this ἀνακεφαλαιώσις is τὰ πάντα... τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, however, would be striking in its removal of the verb from its normal context and placement in a cosmological setting. Thus, some initial sense of the verb's meaning here would be that the multifarious parts of the cosmos will somehow be conjoined in Christ to become a unified entity. As such, the term ἀνακεφαλαιούσθαι in 1.10 may be interpreted without having to think in terms of aspects introduced later in the letter. Yet, ambiguity remains as to how the cosmos is 'summarised', 'combined' or 'united', which suggests that its presence in an introductory passage requires subsequent development.

The next statement germane to this ambiguity occurs in 1.22, when Paul's exposition of Christ's exaltation includes the statement that God αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. The remark that Christ is ὑπὲρ πάντα, combined with the etymological link between κεφαλή and ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, would remind the reader of 1.10. Yet, the interpretation of this passage is far from straightforward, which is evident in the varying interpretations of κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα. For instance, Schlier argues 'daß Gott dem All in Christus ein übergeordnetes Haupt gibt, unter dem es geeint und aufgerichtet wird.'<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Cambier suggests that Paul's use of head-body imagery incorporates a universal scope from its reliance upon Greek allegory and the Jewish term *שׂרף*.<sup>46</sup> Because of this, both scholars conclude that Christ is head of the Church and all things, so that the two are caught up together as his body. Yet, these arguments disregard the immediately preceding allusion to Ps. 8.6b (8.7b LXX) that depicts the dominion of man (or the Son of Man) with the image of all things being under his feet.<sup>47</sup> As

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45. Schlier, *Epheser*, 65.

46. Cambier, 'Bénédiction', 88.

47. Compare Eph. 1.22a (πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ) with Ps. 8.6b (πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ) That Paul interprets Ps. 8 in the context of Christ's resurrection, as he also does in 1 Cor. 15, suggests that he regards the proper referent of the Son of Man to be the resurrected Christ as the Psalm's fulfilment. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 66. Lincoln further argues that whereas Ps. 8 presents the dominion of man extended only to the creation below him in the hierarchy, Ephesians now extends the scope of Christ's dominion to the entire cosmos.

such, Best and Wesley Carr<sup>48</sup> correctly observe that Christ's position ὑπὲρ πάντα entails his supremacy and authority over them (cf. 1.20-21). That Christ is given as head ὑπὲρ πάντα to the Church<sup>49</sup> therefore signifies that his headship involves supreme authority over every part of the cosmos. This further indicates that Christ's headship is relevant to the ἀνακεφαλαίωσασθαι of 1.10, since it links his intentions for all things with his relationship with his body. The Church now becomes the primary medium through which the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις will take place. As such, a consideration of the nature of the Church by attending to the implications of ἐν αὐτῷ<sup>50</sup> and κεφαλή language is needed.

The eulogy has already established several events that have taken place in Christ: blessing (1.3, 6), election (1.4), predestination (1.5), redemption (1.6), obtainment of an inheritance (1.11), and the sealing with the Spirit (1.13). Whilst these acts are certainly relevant to the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, they are presenting the multitude of blessings that believers have received rather than elaborating on the nature of the Church. In contrast, such an elaboration does take place with the ἐν Χριστῷ propositions in ch. 2. Namely, being ἐν Χριστῷ involves being made alive, raised up and seated with him in the heavenly places (2.5-6), as well as being God's workmanship created ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ for good works (2.10). Moreover, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ those who were far off have been brought near by his blood (2.13), because he has broken down the dividing wall of hostility ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ (2.14)<sup>51</sup> and created one new man out of the two ἐν αὐτῷ (2.15). Furthermore, Christ is the one ἐν ᾧ the Church becomes a building that is progressively joined together to grow into a temple ἐν κυρίῳ (2.21-22). These statements reveal two distinct aspects of being ἐν Χριστῷ. First, the Church is composed of believers who have

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48. Best, *One Body*, 146-47; W. Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai*, SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 98. Best argues for a reading of ὑπὲρ πάντα as 'above all things' in an attempt to alleviate confusion.

49. The dative case of τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, when used with the transitive verb δίδωμι, functions as a simple indirect object denoting reception.

50. Drawing out the implications of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις through attention to its realisation ἐν Χριστῷ is a neglected task. Nevertheless, it is a valid and necessary exercise to ascertain what actually takes place in Christ in relation to the divine goal.

51. The unique construction 'in his flesh' is most likely an allusion to the crucifixion. Whilst this is a past event, its placement here suggests that it has abiding implications for being in Christ. Specifically, those who are not 'in Christ' do not enjoy the benefits of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles as well as between God and humanity. Cf. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 234-36; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 159-60.



been ontologically reconstituted from death to life in Christ (2.5, 10).<sup>52</sup> This new existence ensures not only a present spiritual exaltation in Christ (2.6), but also a future exaltation in him through the eschatological establishment of the Church as the temple of the Lord (2.21-22). The new life also entails that believers now possess the capacity for righteous behaviour (2.10). Second, being in Christ establishes a unity and equality amongst God's people.<sup>53</sup> This involves not only the restoration of the Gentiles to God's presence (2.13), but also the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2.14) that creates a new singular corporate humanity (2.15).<sup>54</sup> It also entails a continuing unification amongst believers in the Church as it grows into the eschatological temple.

In addition to the implications drawn from ἐν Χριστῷ statements, an appreciation of the nature of the Church may be derived from two further statements that employ κεφαλή language. The first occurs in 4.15-16, where Christ's headship involves his role as the goal of corporate edification as well as the source of cohesion and growth.<sup>55</sup> The second occurs in the Haustafeln (5.22-33) during the metaphorical interchange between Christ's headship over the Church and that of the marital relationship between husband and wife. In the latter passage, Christ's role as head implies that he nourishes and cherishes the body of the Church.<sup>56</sup> This is not radically different from 4.16 in that Christ protects and cares for the Church, all the while providing what it needs for its growth. Furthermore, whereas the nature of corporate growth 'into Christ' in 4.16 is ambiguous, 5.26-27 indicates that this growth occurs distinctly with respect to the quality of its righteousness through the reference to sanctification and the allusion to the 'washing of water with the word.'<sup>57</sup> Yet, this growth is not simply an

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52. Pace C.E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting*, SNTSMS 63 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 134-45; T.-L.N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, SNTSMS 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58-69. Unfortunately, both scholars miss the implications of being 'made alive' in Christ. Arnold focuses on transference between dominions, whereas Yee addresses the elimination of boasting. Cf. Best, *Essays*, 139-55.

53. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 33-45.

54. Pace Best, *One Body*, 152-54. Best argues that this does not entail corporate categories, but rather individuals who become new creatures in Christ. Cf. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 126; E.K. Lee, 'Unity in Israel and Unity in Christ', in *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. F.L. Cross (London: Mowbrays, 1956), 38, 48.

55. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 569-74.

56. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 108.

57. Pace K. Usami, *Somatic Comprehension of Unity: The Church in Ephesus*, AnBib 101 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983), 186. Usami argues that Church growth is essentially quantitative

attainment to Christ's ethical standard, since he presents the Church to himself in 5.27. Given this, the growth 'into Christ' entails both attainment to his righteousness and movement into his presence. Thus, four implications can be drawn from Christ's role as head of the Church: (i) the goal and standard of corporate Church growth is its head, Christ; (ii) this growth 'into Christ' involves the sanctification of the Church until it is righteous and enjoys his presence; (iii) the source of this growth comes from Christ as head; and (iv) Christ's headship is the source of the Church's being and the cohesive force that holds her together as a body.<sup>58</sup>

The implications drawn from Paul's use of κεφαλή and ἐν Χριστῷ language point to the establishment and maintenance of unity as God's fundamental goal for the Church. This goal is realised in three distinct ways. First, the Church has been constituted as a unified corporate entity. This is depicted through the imagery of members of one household or the unified structure of the temple, but most comprehensively as a somatic entity. The physical body provided Paul with an attractive image of organic unity, and he uses this as a model that appreciates the diversity of individuals within a unified organic structure.<sup>59</sup> Yet, the diversity of individuals within the Church is potentially threatening to its unity. As a consequence, the second means of realising God's goal for the Church is that it has been equipped with the capacity to grow in unity through righteous activity. The Church is not constituted simply of individual members, but rather with members who are alive in Christ and possess the capacity for good works. Thus, unity is fostered by the common goal of growth into Christ, which 'takes place in a harmonious working together of the several constituent members.'<sup>60</sup> Hence, most of the ethical instructions in Ephesians are internally orientated towards the Church, where members move from seeking to bear with one another towards the capacity to benefit each other. Most of all, love is encouraged because 'love in

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as the Church grows outwards into the world. Whilst quantitative growth is not unrelated to the programme of Ephesians, there is little in the letter that suggests it is an essential concern.

58. S.F.B. Bedale, 'The Theology of the Church', in *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. F.L. Cross (London: Mowbrays, 1956), 72. Cf. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 108.

59. J.D.G. Dunn, "'The Body of Christ' in Paul", in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, eds. M.J. Wilkins and T. Paige, JSNTSup 87 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 148-50. Cf. R.H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, SNTSMS 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 217-44; Usami, *Somatic Comprehension*, 185-86.

60. Dahl, *Studies*, 125.

action within the community of believers fosters unity... Love is the central ingredient for true unity, laying the foundation for internal and external unity.<sup>61</sup> Finally, this unity of the Church body is also moving on an eschatological trajectory of the Church becoming united with Christ metaphorically depicted by the union of a marital relationship. The Church, therefore, is presently constituted as a somatic unity that will continue to grow in its solidarity until it is completed in a final union with Christ.

This analysis of the nature of the Church makes it possible now to provide a comprehensive picture of what is entailed in the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. Namely, the identification of the Church as the locus of the divine plan justifies the translation of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι as ‘to unite for himself’.<sup>62</sup> To be sure, this would not necessarily be the initial sense a reader would take, but it is within the normal semantic range of the verb. Moreover, I suggest that this meaning evolves and can be applied retrospectively as the discourse of the letter develops within the climactic theme of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. Yet, the divine plan to bring all things into unity in Christ is specifically accomplished through his redemptive activity in the Church. Certainly, the focus of divine plan on humanity makes Christian maturity (i.e. the attainment of the goal of Christian existence) a relevant theme within the realisation of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. As a consequence, it should be expected that the nature of Christian maturity pertains in some manner to unity in Christ. However, this certainly requires an investigation of the relationship between the redemption of the Church and the divine intent for cosmic scope of τὰ πάντα.

### 3.2.2.2 Τὰ Πάντα: Cosmic Redemption

The terminology of τὰ πάντα has caused a considerable amount of confusion for interpreters of Ephesians. With regards to the term itself, seven occurrences in the letter clearly hold a cosmic scope.<sup>63</sup> The occurrence of τὰ πάντα in 1.10 is already understood to have cosmic implications through its amplification in the subsequent clause τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Immediately following this is the statement that God works τὰ πάντα in accordance with his will (1.11),

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61. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 105.

62. Because the verb occurs in the active voice in classical literature, and the passive voice in Rom. 13.9 (ἀνακεφαλαιούται), there are sufficient grounds to recognise the middle voice of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι in the translation.

63. Eph. 1.10, 11, 22, 23; 3.9; 4.6, 10.

which indicates that not only is the ontological makeup of the cosmos circumscribed by the term, but also its temporal events.<sup>64</sup> Three occurrences note that τὰ πάντα is subject to God and/or Christ: Eph. 1.22 states that all things have been placed under Christ's feet; 3.9 notes that all things are derived from God as their creator; and 4.6 presents God as over, through and in all things. The last two references to the cosmological scope of God's plan occur in nebulous statements of Christ's 'filling' activity. The first is 1.23 where the Church's role as the body of Christ is described as τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου. The second occurs in the context of the ascending and descending description of Christ's work in 4.9-10 with the goal of this activity being ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα. Whilst these last two occurrences require further investigation into the relevance of 'fullness' and 'filling' in Ephesians,<sup>65</sup> it is clear that the scope of this programme is cosmic through the use of the neuter form τὰ πάντα. This in itself is not what confuses scholars. Rather, it is that this cosmological programme is presented but never developed, with Ephesians focusing upon the redemption of the Church in the midst of opposing spiritual powers. Thus, scholars are presented with a conundrum of having to choose between limiting the scope of τὰ πάντα to the human sphere that obfuscates subsequent cosmological statements or accepting the cosmological scope that possesses a disconcertingly ambiguous relationship to the predominant focus on human redemption.

Given the dilemma of the scope of τὰ πάντα, it is not surprising to find that some scholars restrict its meaning completely to the human realm. Coutts<sup>66</sup> argues that 'all things' refers to all races, both Jew and Gentiles. Thus, the union achieved in Christ is that between Jew and Gentile, as well as that between the apostolic bearers of God's message and the Ephesian converts (i.e. the 'we' and 'you' groups). Similarly, John Allan<sup>67</sup> argues that Ephesians has no cosmological interest, which makes τὰ πάντα a 'rhetorical flourish' that refers to the Church. Such positions are virtually insupportable, however, because their exclusively human focus fails to account for the elaboration of τὰ πάντα as 'things in heaven and on earth'. G. B.

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64. Cf. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 91.

65. See §3.3.2.2.

66. Coutts, 'Ephesians 1.3-14', 120.

67. J.A. Allan, 'The "In Christ" Formula in Ephesians', *NTS* 5 (1958), 58.

Caird's<sup>68</sup> proposal resolves this oversight whilst still maintaining an exclusively human scope. Caird suggests that τὰ πάντα entails reconciled humanity as the things on earth and the things in heaven refer to political, economic, social and religious power structures. He argues that Paul does not use οὐράνιος to denote an eternal abode for God or a Platonic idealised realm, but rather as a reference to the invisible social forces that compete for human allegiance and govern their destinies. These powers are as much in need of being united to God's purposes as human beings. Caird's reasoning, whilst coherent, cannot be reconciled with the evidence of Ephesians. Even if the references to the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (1.21; with variants 3.10; 6.12; possibly 2.2) and τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας (6.12) could perhaps be interpreted as non-personal social forces in the human world, the references to the διαβόλος (4.27; 6.11, 16; the more likely referent of 2.2) as a personal entity undermines such an interpretation. In other words, Caird's conclusions fail to appreciate the distinctiveness of the spiritual realm. Hence, restricting the scope of τὰ πάντα to the human realm cannot stand critical scrutiny.

Barth<sup>69</sup> explores the history of scholarship that influences some interpreters towards a restricted scope for τὰ πάντα and ultimately credits Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann for this trend. Bultmann argued for a restricted sense through the theological argument that Christ's death is existentially efficacious for people only. He also provided a historical-critical argument that τὰ πάντα draws from the Gnostic-redeemer myth, which necessitates that interpreters demythologise NT soteriology communicated through cosmic-naturalistic terms in order to focus on the actual victims of the fall. Dibelius compared the use of τὰ πάντα with the 'Stoic omnipotence formula' that all things were sustained by divine reason. He argued that the Christianised version of this formula presupposed a narrowing of its scope to the Church, thereby making redeemed humanity the referent of τὰ πάντα. Barth counters these arguments through a threefold process. First, he presents evidence from the NT that does not support the restriction of τὰ πάντα to humanity. Second, he suggests that the motives for such a restriction derive from

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68. G.B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 39-40; G.B. Caird, *Principality and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 82-85.

69. M. Barth, 'Christ and All Things', in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, eds. M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 160-72.

an Enlightenment dichotomy between the spiritual and the natural. Finally, he argues that an appreciation of the themes of kingship, wisdom and eschatology in the OT provides the means for comprehending the NT inclusion of the cosmos within the scope of redemption. Barth's arguments, whilst by no means comprehensive, do provide a further basis to reject the restriction of τὰ πάντα to the human sphere. Yet, this necessitates that a plausible argument for the relationship between the human and non-human spheres of τὰ πάντα be found.

Some scholars attempt to provide room for a cosmological scope of τὰ πάντα, but fail to explore the way in which this actually relates to human redemption. Within this group of scholarship is a spectrum, with one pole placing the emphasis of τὰ πάντα predominantly on the human sphere. For instance, Cambier<sup>70</sup> argues that τὰ πάντα refers specifically to all people and only indirectly includes the celestial and terrestrial spheres. Likewise, Kitchen<sup>71</sup> states that τὰ πάντα is a clear reference to human beings, though this does not rule out the whole of creation. At the other end of the spectrum is the pole that gives little mention of the human scope. Robinson, for example, describes the statement in 1.10 as the Gospel of the Universe, where 'the heavens and the earth are in some mysterious manner brought within its scope.'<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Muddiman<sup>73</sup> simply notes that τὰ πάντα entails both the temporal and spatial aspects of the cosmos, and further suggests that the union in Christ encompasses both these aspects. In the midst of this spectrum, some scholars attempt to link the cosmological and human aspects. S. M. Gibbard argues that the union of Gentiles and Jews has now been actualised, which Paul sees 'as part of yet a wider reconciliation of all things, indeed of some wonderful re-integration of the whole universe.'<sup>74</sup> Bouttier<sup>75</sup> also links the 'pacification' of the cosmos to the reconciliation of the nations to Israel. Whilst these latter arguments are more plausible, it is evident that little effort has been expended to determine the connection between human redemption and the unification of all things in Christ. As a consequence, such readings leave the pertinence of the cosmic scope of τὰ πάντα in a state of ambiguity.

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70. Cambier, 'Bénédiction', 85-90.

71. Kitchen, *Ephesians*, 49.

72. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 22.

73. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 76.

74. S.M. Gibbard, 'The Christian Mystery', in *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. F.L. Cross (London: Mowbrays, 1956), 111.

75. Bouttier, *Éphésiens*, 69.

Another line of interpretation attempts to address the relationship between human redemption and the cosmological scope of τὰ πάντα via reference to the unique role of the Church in creation. Schnackenburg and Lincoln<sup>76</sup> both argue that the unification of the cosmos is a past event accomplished in the exaltation of Christ over all things. Yet, because ongoing spiritual opposition reveals that this was not comprehensive, the unification of all things is progressively realised to a greater degree through the redemption of the Church. Schlier<sup>77</sup> articulates a similar version of this when he argues that the unification of all things is a past event. Ongoing spiritual opposition, however, indicates that there are spiritual forces still attempting to rebel against this present reality. In contrast to these powers, the Church is the sphere in the created order where the unification is recognised and maintained. The strength of these interpretations lies in their attempt to bridge the gap between human redemption in the Church and the divine plan to unite all things. Yet, their weakness can be seen in the confusion between the unification and subjugation of all things with reference to Christ. Whereas all things have been subjugated under Christ so that he currently holds supreme authority, they are not yet united in Christ. Thus, the unification of all things stands as a future event and not a past one.

Given the strength of arguments that emphasise the role of the Church in relation to τὰ πάντα, the work of Caragounis, followed by O'Brien,<sup>78</sup> merits attention. Both scholars argue that whilst the scope of τὰ πάντα is indeed the whole of creation, the predominant focus of Ephesians on the human sphere engages the non-human by means of representative figures. Thus, the divine act of redemption that deals with humanity and rebellious spiritual powers has broader implications for the cosmic scope of heaven and earth that they represent. Moreover, these two representative groups constitute the primary obstacles to the unification of all things.<sup>79</sup> Humanity in its disunited and idolatrous state must be redeemed, united and restored to a proper relationship with God. As this proper relationship is understood as one between creature and Creator, humanity will adopt a posture of praise commensurate to that relationship. Moreover, the unity

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76. A.T. Lincoln and A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34-35; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 59-60.

77. Schlier, *Epheser*, 64-65.

78. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysteryion*, 134-46; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 112-13.

79. Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 89.

of the Church in its ascription of praise to God is a signal to the wayward angelic powers. Even though they know their relationship as creatures before the Creator and still rebel, the Church's existence reveals that their future subjugation is unavoidable because it indicates that all things will be united in Christ.<sup>80</sup> The strength of this argument is that it sufficiently addresses the relationship between human redemption and the divine intention towards the entirety of creation. It also presents a plausible construction for the overtly antagonistic stance of God towards the spiritual powers throughout the letter. Thus, an appreciation of the representative role of humanity and the spiritual powers provides a tentative means for grasping the message of Ephesians.

Nevertheless, two problems with this reading of Ephesians are also apparent. First, the nature of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις depicted by this argument conflicts with what Caragounis describes as the ἐν-dimension,<sup>81</sup> which is the new dimension of existence ἐν Χριστῷ that comprehensively redefines the manner in which believers live and conduct themselves. Yet, the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις envisioned by Caragounis is the removal of barriers between heaven and earth, or in other words the unification of the heavens with the earth. Thus, whilst believers exist and operate in the ἐν-dimension, the cosmos itself is distinctively left outside this sphere. Any potential implications for the unification of all things ἐν Χριστῷ are neglected. Second, the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις is fundamentally accomplished through human representatives recognising their creaturely position before the Creator and adopting a posture of unified praise. Thus, human beings are instrumental to the divine plan insofar as they praise God. Yet, if this is the programme of Ephesians, little explanation can be made for the relative dearth of explicit exhortations to ascribe praise to God. Only implicit encouragements occur in the fostering of a participatory doxological posture through the elements of the eulogy (1.6, 12, 14) and Paul's doxology (3.20-21). Instead of focusing on the Church's doxological response, Paul's intercessory prayers emphasise the Ephesians coming to know more about the implications of the divine plan for their present lives. Likewise, the paraenetic materials focus on the ethical conduct of believers towards one another rather than their doxological response to God. Consequently, the programme of unified praise that Caragounis and O'Brien present for the realisation of the

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80. Best, *One Body*, 148; Lee, 'Unity', 36-50.

81. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysteron*, 136-37.



ἀνακεφαλαίωσις oversimplifies the message of Ephesians by reading the whole through the lens of doxology in 1.3-14 and 3.20-21.

Therefore, I propose that the best means of appropriating the full scope of τὰ πάντα is to retain the strength of a representative model but situate it within a broader Pauline cosmology and soteriology. In particular, significant insights may be drawn from passages often noted for a correspondence in thought, namely those of 1 Cor. 15.20-28 and Rom. 8.19-22.<sup>82</sup> The correlation between 1 Cor. 15.27-28 and Eph 1.22-23 is apparent in that both quote Ps. 8 to indicate Christ's authority over all things as a consequence of his resurrection. Furthermore, 1 Cor. 15.27-28, like Ephesians, recognises that all things are not yet subject to Christ, and this engenders an eschatological expectation of completed subjection. Additional parallels with Ephesians may be derived from the fact that this programme is presented in the context of conflict between spiritual powers and the participation of believers in Christ's resurrection. Yet, significant to this correspondence is that 1 Cor. 15.20-28 operates with an Adamic Christology, where Adam's failure results in the entrance of death into the world and Christ's success results in the defeat of death and the subjection of all things to God. This Adamic Christology of 1 Cor. 15 merits a consideration of Rom. 8.19-22. According to this passage, the whole of creation has been subjected to futility and now eagerly awaits the redemption of the children of God that will entail its own freedom from bondage and decay. James Dunn notes that 'God subjected all things to Adam, and that included subjecting creation to fallen Adam, to share in his fallenness.'<sup>83</sup> Eddie Adams further argues that the mutual experience between believers and the creation of suffering and hope entails that 'there is a solidarity between believers and creation in the future: the destiny of the κτίσις is bound up with, and is indeed contingent upon, that of the children of God.'<sup>84</sup> Thus, these two passages reveal that, in Pauline theology, the redemption of humanity and the unification of all things are not separate acts, but rather bound together.

I suggest that this premise provides the essential means for appreciating the scope of τὰ πάντα in Ephesians. The unification of all things in its cosmic scope is

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82. Cf. T.K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 19; Caird, *Letters*, 39; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 224-25.

83. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, vol. 38a, *WBC* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 471.

84. E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 181.

bound to the redemption of the Church via the role of humanity as representative of the world. The creation was given to Adam as its steward, and through Adam's fall the creation was subjected to the curse of futility, bondage and decay. This is described by E. Kenneth Lee<sup>85</sup> as the disruption of the world as an ordered unity governed by the divine will, because it is no longer subject to God due to human disobedience, idolatry and segregation. The curse still exists so long as Adam's progeny continues in their fallen state. Thus, Christ's triumph over the consequences of Adam's sin has established him as the second Adam under whom all things have now been subjected. But this does not pre-empt the representative role of humanity. Instead, Christ's redemptive work provides the *ἐν*-dimension for human existence, in which believers are transferred from the federal headship of Adam to that of Christ. Through this transference, believers now participate in Christ's authority over creation as the fulfilment of what was declared in Ps. 8. As they are progressively built up in righteousness, the representative role of believers entails a commensurate counteraction against the consequences of the fall for the creation. Thus, the unification of all things takes place in Christ specifically through the redemption of the Church.<sup>86</sup> As believers become united together in Christ, the creation is, as it were, brought along with them into the *ἐν*-dimension.

Hence, contrary to Caragounis' argument, the unification of all things is not simply a removal of obstinate barriers between the heavenly and earthly realms because of the instrumentality of Christ's work. Yet, this does raise the question of how the redemption of humanity relates to the other representative group of the hostile spiritual powers. This too, I propose, may be appreciated through the lens of Pauline theology. That these spiritual powers are to be opposed and defeated, rather than redeemed, suggests that they take up the role common amongst Paul's letters and the Jewish tradition as provocateurs of wickedness amongst humanity.<sup>87</sup> This is most apparent in 6.11ff, where the battle between believers and

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85. Lee, 'Unity', 36-39.

86. N.A. Dahl, 'Christ, Creation and the Church', in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, eds. W.D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 434. Dahl notes the role of the Church in the 'reconciliation and re-creation' of the universe, but claims that these events have already been realised with the establishment of the Church. This is partially correct. To be sure, elements of the Church's role are presented by means of realised eschatology, but this does not preclude a future aspect. The eschatological outlook of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις necessitates that the Church's role is fundamentally orientated towards the future.

87. Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 104-10.

the spiritual powers takes place in an ethical context.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the powers, amongst whom the devil stands pre-eminent, seek to encourage and maintain humanity in the wickedness inherent to its fallen state.<sup>89</sup> As a consequence, the divine plan to unite all things through the establishment of a righteous people stands in opposition to the intentions of hostile spiritual powers. Moreover, the growth of the Church in its unified righteousness reveals to these powers their own inferiority and foolishness. Thus, Caragounis' proposed role for the Church as a signal to the spiritual powers is correct but incomplete. The Church not only reveals to the powers the absurdity of their rebellion against their creaturely status, but also the futility of their ethical goals for humanity. Furthermore, I suggest that the raising and seating with Christ in the heavenly realm stated in 2.6 shows that believers have been granted a superior position over these hostile powers. As such, believers now take on responsibility in the spiritual realm, which may be significant in light of Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 6.3 that 'we are to judge angels'. The spiritual realm, then, will also be brought into union in Christ through the representative role of humanity.

I have therefore presented an argument that accounts for the relationship between the cosmic and human aspects of τὰ πάντα. The cosmic scope of the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις is addressed through the focus on human redemption because humanity is the representative steward of creation. Thus, all things are brought into the ἐν-dimension by virtue of their relationship with and dependence upon human stewardship. This linkage necessitates that the establishment of a righteous people is the foremost goal of the divine programme, because all else depends upon it. The divine plan to unite all things in Christ is to be one that operates distinctively within the human realm, which (as I will develop later) co-ordinates the attainment of Christian maturity with the realisation of the cosmic scope of God's redemptive intentions. Yet, this suggests that it would benefit believers to apprehend, on some level, the import of Christian maturity within the divine plan. As such, it is necessary that the revelation of divine mystery be considered in the light of this redemptive programme.

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88. Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 105: 'The battle that is described is a religious and moral contest.'

89. Lee, 'Unity', 39.

### 3.2.2.3 Μυστήριον: Divine Mystery

Having established the significance of ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι and τὰ πάντα for the divine plan in 1.10, the present task is to develop how this relates to the revelation of God's mystery. The term μυστήριον occurs seven times in Ephesians with a variety of references. In 1.9-10, the mystery is described as God's intent 'to unite for himself all things in Christ'. Yet, the μυστήριον is later described in 3.6 as the reconciliation of Gentiles and Jews in the Church. Further still, the mystery is given exclusive reference to Christ in 3.4 (μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) and to the gospel in 6.19 (μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). The mystery is also described as hidden in God (3.9), revealed to Paul specifically (3.3) and to the prophets and apostles in general (3.5), understood by Paul (3.4) and in need of further proclamation (6.19). Finally, the term occurs during Paul's exhortations to husbands and wives (5.32), so that the μυστήριον encompasses both the relationship of human marriage and that between Christ and the Church. Because of the numerous articulations of μυστήριον in Ephesians, Trinidad suggests that this epistle unveils Paul's 'doctrine on Mystery in all its sublimity and grandeur.'<sup>90</sup> He prioritises the reference of the mystery to Christ (3.4), which he argues accounts for the repetitive use of ἐν Χριστῷ and its variants throughout the letter. Furthermore, the wisdom and insight that God grants to believers (1.8-9) refers to Christ because it is the knowledge and insight about the mystery. Therefore, with regards to the individual Christian, 'the more wisdom he has, the greater knowledge he has of the mystery, the greater knowledge he has of Christ.'<sup>91</sup> Trinidad's exposition of the mystery in this work is undermined by its individualistic anthropocentrism. Specifically, he neglects statements about the μυστήριον that refer to the Church (i.e. 3.6; 5.32) as well as Paul's use of first person plural adjectives to denote the corporate reception of wisdom (e.g. 1.8-9). Additionally, Trinidad's association of the μυστήριον, Christ and individual believers relegates the scope of the mystery exclusively to the human realm.<sup>92</sup> As such, the reference of the mystery to any divine intentions for the Church and cosmos is lost.

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90. Trinidad, 'Mystery', 1.

91. Trinidad, 'Mystery', 17.

92. Trinidad, 'Mystery', 20-26. In each of these summaries, Trinidad links the nature of mystery to God's redemptive activity amongst humanity without considering any potential cosmic implications.

Gibbard<sup>93</sup> explores the background of mystery in Ephesians through a comparison with the LXX, noting that eight occurrences of μυστήριον in Dan. 2 are all linked to God's plan for the nations concealed in the past but now revealed through his servant. He provides a similar overview of the Gospels to identify the μυστήριον with the actualisation of God's kingdom as the Church undertakes the suffering mission of her redeemer. From this brief survey, Gibbard argues that Paul's own usage of μυστήριον follows the same line of thought in that it entails divine intentions previously hidden and now made manifest to the faithful. The actualisation of the mystery takes place through the union of the Gentiles with the Jewish people as part of a greater scheme for the reconciliation of the whole universe. Moreover, all this takes place as a result of Christ's redemptive work, making his passion the key to the whole mystery. Thus, the apostolic work is regarded as a stewardship of the divine mystery to be proclaimed with expediency. Gibbard's proposal has considerable merit, especially for its effort to situate the nature of the μυστήριον within the broader scope of a biblical theology of mystery. Yet, this endeavour simultaneously undermines the distinct voice of Ephesians and its articulation of the mystery. Whilst valid in a biblical theology of mystery and certainly relevant in Ephesians,<sup>94</sup> Christ's passion is nevertheless not the central feature of μυστήριον in this letter.

Dahl<sup>95</sup> provides a study on the μυστήριον in Ephesians that links its referent to the reconciliation of the Gentiles with the people of God. Focusing specifically on the statement of the mystery in 3.8-10, Dahl argues that its revelation to the Gentiles is dependent upon their incorporation into the body of Christ. This becomes paradigmatic: the mystery is hidden in God and only revealed to the Church, thereby necessitating that anyone be united to the Church prior to the reception of knowledge about the μυστήριον. Dahl further argues that not only is the revelation of the mystery made to the Church, but it also is made through the Church to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realm. Though the mystery is not directly revealed to the spiritual powers, the wisdom of God manifested by the Church discloses that, in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are made one. According to Dahl, this divine programme fits within the rhetorical thrust of the

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93. Gibbard, 'Christian Mystery', 109-13.

94. Cf. Eph. 1.20-2.16.

95. Dahl, *Studies*, 350-60.

letter that exhorts its readers to consider themselves as a changed society, one that has a hope attached to their calling that consequently redefines their ethical conduct. The strength of this study lies in its regard for the corporate nature of the Church as the recipient and vehicle of revelation. Yet, Dahl's concern to emphasise the Church undermines his exposition of the reference of the mystery itself. Given that he recognises the cosmic role of the Church in 3.10 and a rhetorical link between 3.8-10 and the eulogy, it is surprising that Dahl does not make any reference to the mystery from its statement in 1.9-10. This oversight accounts for the neutering of the μυστήριον of any cosmic implications.

Divisions amongst scholars over the reference of the μυστήριον in Ephesians are due to variations in the description of the term throughout the letter. The initial statement in 1.9 expresses that the mystery pertains to God's will to unite for himself all things in Christ. This divine purpose is expressly described as ἦν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ, which indicates that both the 'basis and goal'<sup>96</sup> of God's mystery are located in Christ. Thus, it is not surprising that the mystery is later described in 3.4 as the μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Contrary to Trinidad's and Gibbard's arguments, this does not associate the mystery with Christ to the exclusion of the divine plan to unite all things. Rather, by being the principal figure in which the divine plan is established and executed, Christ in his very person epitomises and summarises the mystery. Furthermore, given the preceding conclusions that the cosmic scope of the divine plan is realised through human redemption, it is not surprising to find a further statement of the mystery as the divine plan to unite the Gentiles with the people of God (3.6). A primary indicator that the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις is now taking place is that the Church has become an inclusive rather than an exclusive people. In Christ, anyone may now become a fellow heir and partaker of the promise that was originally given only to the Jewish people.<sup>97</sup> As such, the varying descriptions of the mystery are actually consistent within the overall framework of the divine plan. Yet, whilst the referent of the mystery is easily

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96. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 216.

97. Pace Meeks, 'One Body', 215. Meeks argues that the unity of Jews and Gentiles is an effective symbol only so long as there were believers who were conscious of their Jewish origins. This argument fails to recognise that the unity of Jews and Gentiles is bound up in the divine mystery. Therefore, the significance of this unity rests not in the believer's capacity for appreciation, but rather in the reality that has ushered in a new stage in God's redemptive-historical plan.

ascertained, the more pressing concern is to determine the reason why the mystery is now being revealed.

Caragounis<sup>98</sup> study of the μυστήριον in Ephesians provides an initial means of assessing this concern. His syntactical analysis of 1.3-10 and 3.1-13, which he assesses against the biblical and historical context, leads Caragounis to identify five features of the divine mystery. Four of these have already been discussed: (i) the ἐν-dimension; (ii) the divine triumph over the cosmic obstacles to unity; (iii) the cosmic scope addressed through representative figures; and (iv) the supreme end of this divine plan is that God intends to glorify himself. Yet, with specific regard to the revelation of the mystery, Caragounis adds that it is primarily the author's role in declaring the μυστήριον to the Gentiles that establishes the Church in history as the instrument of the divine plan. The resulting incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God, which he labels as the σύν-state, is the decisive indicator of unity amongst human beings that subsequently renders a decisive blow to the spiritual powers. To be sure, this is an effective exposition of the apostle's prominent role in the revelation of the μυστήριον, especially when considering that Paul deemed his reception of the mystery worthy of being mentioned twice (3.3, 9). Yet, Caragounis neglects to determine why the mystery must be proclaimed to the Church at all. This analysis assigns to the apostle an active role of proclamation, whereas the Ephesians themselves are relegated to a passive state. Gentile believers are passive insofar as they have accomplished their purpose by being united to the Church. Jewish believers are even more passive in that they are referred to only implicitly through terms such as συγκληρονόμα, σύσσωμα, and συμμετόχα as recipients of their fellow Gentile believers. Given the overt passivity of the letter recipients in this programme, one might ask if there was any positive value in their reception of knowledge about the divine mystery.

Since the disclosure of the μυστήριον is important to Paul (3.1-5, 9; 6.19), the role of the Church within the divine revelation in 3.10 requires analysis. The passivity of the Church is intensified when scholars focus the statement ἵνα γνωρισθῆ νῦν... διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἢ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ upon Paul's apostolic activities. A variety of positions exist as to the reference of this purpose clause. Hoehner<sup>99</sup> argues that it references Paul's statement in 3.7 that he was made

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98. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, esp. 136-46.

99. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 459. Cf. Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 141-42.

a minister of the gospel. Hence, Paul's calling as apostle had as its purpose that he proclaim the mystery of God to everyone with the ultimate intention that the mystery would be made known through the Church to spiritual powers. Similarly, Best<sup>100</sup> argues that the connection is to be made with the finite verb ἐδόθη in 3.8, so that the purpose of the grace given to Paul was to empower him in his apostolic work towards the ultimate aim of God's mystery being made known in the heavenly realm. Lincoln and O'Brien<sup>101</sup> both argue that the two preceding infinitives, εὐαγγελίσασθαι and φωτίσαι, are the appropriate reference of the purpose clause. Thus, Paul's activity of preaching and making plain the mystery of God was teleologically directed towards the manifestation of God's wisdom to the powers. It should be apparent that whilst these arguments vary in terms of the reference, there is little, if any, difference in the consequent reading. All eventually arrive at the basic conclusion that the divine intent to make known God's wisdom in the heavenly realm is specifically linked to Paul's apostolic reception of the μυστήριον. Yet, this still does not provide an answer to the lingering question of why it is important that Paul disclose the divine aim to the Ephesians.

Over against these attempts to link the purpose with Paul's ministry, some scholars focus on the divine intention itself. T. K. Abbott and Muddiman<sup>102</sup> both argue that the referent of the purpose clause is the preceding statement that in ages past the mystery was hidden in God who created all things. This is valid for its contrast between hidden/revealed and then/now as well as the cosmological setting. Nevertheless, such a reading renders the divine decision as somewhat arbitrary, since the mystery was hidden in the past only so that it could be revealed now. Furthermore, that such a statement is situated in the context of Paul's apostolic ministry only proves to emphasise his active role in the revelation and not the purpose for that activity. Numerous other scholars<sup>103</sup> disregard the referent of the purpose clause altogether and focus on the significance of its message, that the Church is to be the medium through which God's wisdom is made known. Yet,

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100. E. Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 322.

101. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 185; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 244-45.

102. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 88; Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 159-61.

103. Caird, *Letters*, 66-67; Goodspeed, *Meaning of Ephesians*, 43; Kitchen, *Ephesians*, 32; Mitton, *Ephesians*, 126; T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians*, NovTSup 85 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 85; Robinson, *Ephesians*, 80; E.K. Simpson and F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1957), 75-76.



none of these arguments offers any active role to the Church and instead all emphasise God's purpose underlying this programme. As such, Paul's role as apostle and the Church's role as the medium of divine proclamation to the spiritual powers are both secondary features of the more pressing issue that it is God who authors these events. Whilst such a reading fits with the doxology at the end of the passage, it cannot fully account for the extended discussion of Paul's apostolic role or the subsequent intercessory prayer for the Church.

Hence, some question of the reason for the disclosure of the mystery to the Church still remains. The lack of concern to discover an answer to this is striking in light of the unsatisfactory conclusions that derive from the previous readings. If God is prioritised as the agent behind this purpose, little can be said for his revelation of the mystery to Paul or the Church. If Paul is to be prioritised, then his discourse on his ministry may be appreciated in the light of his further statement that the Ephesians should not lose heart over his suffering for their glory (3.13). In other words, if Paul is the crucial figure for the realisation of the divine plan, some reassurance would be needed for the fact that his role, and consequently the fulfilment of God's purposes, are in jeopardy. Yet, it is not immediately clear how Paul's discourse would provide such reassurance to his readers, nor does it proffer any valid explanation of his intercessory prayer for them. Instead, I suggest that the reason God purposed to disclose the mystery to the Ephesians through Paul can be determined if an active role for the Church in 3.10 is adopted. This by no means undermines the activity of Paul and/or God in this verse. Instead, it can be seen that there is a complexity of agencies at work to bring the divine plan to completion. Thus, Paul's apostolic role was granted to him by God, and that entailed the proclamation of Christ to the Gentiles so that they might be incorporated into the people of God. Furthermore, his apostolic activity extended also to his making plain the mystery of God to everyone (cf. 6.19). This was because the mystery hidden in God in previous ages may now actually be disclosed, because the proper vehicle for its reception, namely the Church, has been established by Christ's work. The Church's comprehension of the mystery implies therefore that it is to take on an active role in making known God's wisdom in the heavenly realm. Contrary to O'Brien's comment that the passive voice of  $\gamma\omega\rho\iota\sigma\theta\eta\eta$  suggests divine agency, the indication is that the Church will be

the responsible agent.<sup>104</sup> As such, the disclosure of the divine mystery has been made for the purpose of engaging the Church to participate with its intentions.

The revelation of the μυστήριον, therefore, is rightly included as one of the many blessings that believers receive (1.9), because it entails that they have been drawn into the divine plan as participatory agents. The role of the Church is not that of a passive divine instrument, but rather one that actively engages in the realisation of God's purpose through its own organic growth. Given this premise, Paul's discourse on his apostolic work and subsequent reassurance to the Ephesians with regards to his own suffering may be understood. The apostle deemed it important that they understand his role as essential to the incorporation of the Gentiles into the Church, but this by no means meant it was essential to the final completion of the Church's purpose. Instead, Paul's own suffering was not something that should discourage the Ephesians, but rather be viewed as a way of life inherent to the gospel message he proclaimed. Specifically, Paul's revelation of the mystery to the Ephesians discloses how God in Christ has entered into the human story and has created 'a new people with a new set of standards and hopes.'<sup>105</sup> Within a human predicament of divisions and hostilities, Paul's suffering was an inevitable consequence of participating with the intentions of God's mystery.

This reading explains Paul's intercessory prayer for the Ephesians that they be empowered and grounded in love. Dahl persuasively argues that Paul's prayer for the Ephesians to comprehend the cosmic dimensions is in fact a rhetorical device intended to prepare for the main request: 'He wants his readers to understand everything worth understanding, all mysteries, even the dimensions of the universe. But the one thing that matters is to know the love of Christ.'<sup>106</sup> For the Church to undertake a participatory role in God's plan, it will need empowerment as well as a rooted love that fosters unity, and even the capacity to comprehend together God's wisdom.<sup>107</sup> Yet, even more important is that the

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104. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 246 n. 101. God is in fact not a personal agent in this verse, since the object of what is made known is ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ. Thus, the Church is the only present agent in the verse, which indicates responsibility.

105. L.A. Jarvis, 'Accepting Affliction: Paul's Preaching on Suffering', in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. W.P. Brown (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 298.

106. Dahl, *Studies*, 381.

107. Cf. Dahl, *Studies*, 379-80. According to Dahl, the cosmic dimensions 'symbolize the utmost maximum of what the human mind is able to investigate or, more often, what is beyond

Church comprehends something that exceeds the barriers of human comprehension: the love of Christ. Thus, the most stabilising and empowering force that the Church can know and possess is Christ's loving devotion.

The incomprehensibility of Christ's love for the Church also draws to attention one final occurrence of *μυστήριον* in 5.32, where the union between man and woman in the marital relationship models the union between Christ and the Church.<sup>108</sup> Caragounis asserts that this is a special use of the term that does not engage the redemptive-historical significance of the preceding occurrences in chs. 1 and 3.<sup>109</sup> Yet, Paul's use of *ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω* implies that he has presented an interpretation of Gen. 2.24 in opposition to the dominant views,<sup>110</sup> and this interpretation reads the OT passage as revelatory of Christ's relationship to the Church. The *μυστήριον*, therefore, has in view the incomprehensibility of the union between Christ and the Church, which certainly pertains to the divine programme of uniting all things in Christ through the Church.<sup>111</sup> Whilst the previous articulations of the mystery unveil the implications of this plan, this statement conveys that the revelation of the mystery is not exhaustive. This is certainly in keeping with the concept of mystery as divine knowledge that human beings cannot attain through their own insight or ingenuity.<sup>112</sup> As such, it stands to reason that the revelation of the mystery neither involves nor requires full comprehension in the present. Some things still lie beyond the human cognitive grasp, and this entails that it be learned via relationship with, and experience of, Christ's loving care for the Church.

The comprehensive significance of mystery in Ephesians inherently engages believers in their present lives and future hope. Whilst the full implications of the divine mystery for the Church will become known through ongoing relationship with Christ, its partial revelation does indicate to believers their significance and

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human comprehension. Only God, or a godlike man, or a visionary recipient of revelation, is able to measure or comprehend their vastness.'

108. Cf. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, 30; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 777-78.

109. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, 59 n. 15.

110. J.P. Sampley, *'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33*, SNTSMS 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 88-89.

111. J. Cambier, 'Le Grand Mystère Concernant le Christ et Son Église. Éphésiens 5,22-33', *Bib* 47 (1966), 85-86. Pace Sampley, *'One Flesh'*, 96. Even though Sampley argues that Paul's interpretation of Gen 2.24 'has to do with Christ and the church', he then argues that its relevance to the unification of all things is that it extends only so far as man and wife becoming one flesh.

112. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 775.

role within the divine plan to unite all things. Indeed, this revelation is in keeping with the rhetorical intent of the introductory eulogy. Having evoked believers to a state of participatory anticipation, the eulogy directs the activity of believers towards the climactic revelation of the divine mystery. The reason for this is because it is God's plan for the Church to actively participate in the realisation of his redemptive intentions for all things. As such, because the revelation of the divine mystery sets out the final state of existence of believers within the cosmos, it effectively calls them to an active participation in the attainment of their maturity.

### 3.2.3 Summary

This analysis has developed the implications of the climactic statement of the eulogy: γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ... ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. The ἀνακεφαλαιώσις of τὰ πάντα entails that the entire cosmos will be brought into union in Christ. This, however, is realised through the redemption of the Church, with human beings serving as representative stewards of the whole creation. Thus, as believers become united in Christ, through inclusion of individuals into the body as well as progressive realisation of corporate unity, the non-human creation is representatively incorporated. As stewards of creation, human beings function as intermediaries between God and the non-human sphere of the cosmos in that their ethical conduct impacts the entire cosmic order. As the Church grows in unity through their righteous activity, the cosmos is not only drawn into Christ with them but also watches as the consequences of its curse are curbed. As such, the redemption of humanity is of pre-eminent concern to the realisation of the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις. Moreover, the revelation of this plan entails that human beings can now comprehend it, though this comprehension does not exhaust the mystery. Therefore, human participation is not only possible, but indeed necessary. It carries with it the hope of experiencing Christ's love and power, whilst simultaneously esteeming human beings as necessary agents in realising the Church's glory. This establishes the theological context of Ephesians in which the nature of Christian maturity operates.

### 3.3 Hope of Calling (4.1-16): Participation with the Divine Will

The preceding section established that the disclosure of God's mystery provokes believers to active participation in realising the divine plan to unite all things in Christ. The purpose of this section is to take up how that participation is directed through the paraenetic material in Ephesians. This requires that I first assess the significance of the embedded discourse (4.4-16) shortly after the transition into paraenesis (4.1-3). Furthermore, I will assess theological themes that are significant to the development of a theology of maturity. Within the paraenesis and embedded discourse, the themes of unity (ένότης) and fullness (πλήρωμα) are particularly important. The separate threads of these analyses will then be woven together with final study of τέλειος in order to present the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians.

#### 3.3.1 The Basis of Church Growth

The transition to the paraenetic section of Ephesians is clearly demarcated with the statement παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγώ, and the exhortation itself – to walk worthy of one's calling – establishes the main thrust of the entire paraenesis.<sup>113</sup> This is seen initially in the lack of specificity as to how the comprehensive virtues of humility, gentleness, patience and love are to be manifested in actual practices. Whilst these virtues do not all reappear in the subsequent περιπατήσαι commands,<sup>114</sup> they are reinforced by the much more specific instructions pertaining to the interaction of believers in the Church. Likewise, the general exhortation to be eager to maintain unity can certainly be seen to be the underlying motif of much of the later paraenesis. Yet, the strongest indication that this pericope is intended to be introductory to the whole paraenetic section is the presence of an embedded discourse (4.4-16).<sup>115</sup> That Paul shifts back to discourse so shortly after the beginning of his exhortations indicates that he has introduced a subject in need of further exposition. Indeed, this topic was the first to be listed

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113. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 273.

114. The περιπατήσαι commands provide a general structure to the paraenesis. Given the embedded discourse, the first command to walk worthy of calling sets out the general programme that the subsequent commands (i.e. no longer as the Gentiles do, as beloved children, in love, in wisdom) develop in greater detail. However, this structuring of the paraenesis should not be applied rigidly given that the command to put on the armour of God also informs the structure. Cf. Kitchen, *Ephesians*, 70-111.

115. Cf. Best, *Ephesians*, 354.

during his initial intercessory prayer (1.15-19a): (i) the hope of God's calling, (ii) the glorious inheritance in the saints, and (iii) the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards those who believe.<sup>116</sup> Paul, however, addresses these topics in reverse order, with topic (iii) being taken up in 1.19b–2.10<sup>117</sup> and (ii) in 2.11-22,<sup>118</sup> but does not immediately speak to topic (i) when he transitions to an exposition of his apostolic goals and intercessory/doxological prayer in ch. 3. Thus, when Paul exhorts the Ephesians to unity 'because of the one hope that belongs to your call' (4.4), it stands to reason that the common terminology is intended to recall that of topic (i).<sup>119</sup> This linkage entails that the 'hope of calling' identified in the initial intercessory prayer is that of the Church becoming a unified body. Furthermore, by placing the exposition of this topic within the paraenesis, Paul signifies that it is learned as much by its ethical conduct as it is by cognitive comprehension. Hence, the building of unity amongst believers requires simultaneously a comprehension of the reason for diversity amongst the body as well as the practice of solidarity within that diversity so as to realise the hope of calling.

The presence of a confessional statement (4.4-6) leads to disagreement amongst scholars as to where the exact division between Paul's exhortation and the embedded discourse takes place. Some<sup>120</sup> prefer to view the confession in 4.4-6 as part of the exhortation, whereas others<sup>121</sup> see it as the beginning of the

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116. Cf. Best, *Ephesians*, 166; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 263; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 58. Pace Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 75. Schnackenburg argues that the three clauses have a cascading force: 'Hoffnung, die aus dem Ruf Gottes entspringt (vgl. 4,4b); Reichtum an Herrlichkeit, die im himmlischen Erbe bereitliegt und in der sich diese Hoffnung erfüllt; Gewißheit, dieses Erbe zu Erlangen aus der schon erwiesenen überwältigenden Macht Gottes, die er an uns, den Glaubenden, wahr machen will (V 19).' However, the three topics are identified by the interrogative pronoun τίς, each of which refers back to the purpose clause εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς. This is further distinguished as a non-cascading list by the use of the conjunction καὶ before the last clause.

117. The intercessory prayer for a knowledge of God's power at work in believers transitions seamlessly into discourse about that power. Paul depicts the paradigm of God's power at work in Christ during his resurrection and exaltation, which he then reproduces in the soteriological experience of believers who are raised and exalted via participation with Christ (2.6, cf. 1.20).

118. It is not immediately apparent that this passage is related to the topic of inheritance, especially since there are no occurrences of κληρονομία or κληρῶν. Yet, the riches of the glorious inheritance in 1.18 are specifically located *in* the saints (ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις), and the concern of this passage is to unpack the implications of the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles through Christ into the one citizenship of the saints. Moreover, the inclusion of the Gentiles is later described as that of becoming συγκληρονόμα (3.6). Cf. M. Turner, 'Ephesians', in *New Bible Commentary*, eds. D.A. Carson, *et al.* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1994), 1228.

119. Cf. Dahl, *Studies*, 350.

120. Aletti, *Éphésiens*, 206; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 501; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 225; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 273-74; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 161-63.

121. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 104; Best, *Ephesians*, 354.

discourse. Whilst a position on the demarcation between paraenesis and discourse is by no means crucial, I agree with the determination that the break occurs at 4.4. This is preferable due to the widespread recognition that the confession already establishes the basis and/or motivation for the exhortation to unity. Best attempts to identify an original creed that Paul draws upon and modifies to produce this confession, and argues for the reduction of 4.4b to 'one hope' so as to attain a seven-fold statement of unity.<sup>122</sup> Yet, this is unlikely given the unusual trinitarian titles and order of Spirit, Lord, God that is quite distinct from early creeds of Father, Son, Spirit.<sup>123</sup> More important to the use of this confession is that the unity of the Church is embedded within a trinitarian frame,<sup>124</sup> which suggests that the basis of unity in the Church is bound up with the unity of the Godhead. The trinitarian grounding of unity in the confession is reinforced by the subsequent reinterpretation of Ps. 68 to refer to Christ's ascent and descent as significant for his role of gift-giver.<sup>125</sup> Whereas Jewish tradition associated the meaning of Ps. 68 with the giving of the Torah to Moses that was then celebrated at the Feast of Pentecost, Christian reinterpretation of Pentecost and Ps. 68 involved the replacement of Moses with Christ and the Torah with the Spirit. As such, W. Hall Harris<sup>126</sup> argues that the descent of Christ in 4.8-10 is performed through the Spirit who bestows gifts on believers and mediates God's power to them. These divine gifts also pertain to the greater purpose of Christ's intention to fill all things (4.10). Thus, the Trinity has been called upon in two distinct ways for the establishment of solidarity in the Church, being at the same time the basis (4.4-6) and means (4.7-12) of unity and fullness.

The purpose of the divine gift-giving is to equip the Church towards the building up of the body, and the ultimate goal of this growth is disclosed in 4.13 with the introductory statement *μέχρι καταντήσομεν οί πάντες*. Barth<sup>127</sup> argues that

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122. Best, *Ephesians*, 357-59; Best, *Essays*, 64-66. The creed would therefore be:

One body, one Spirit, one hope,  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.

123. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 281.

124. Cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 513.

125. Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 56-86.

126. W.H. Harris, III, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7-11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery*, AGJU 32 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 143-97.

127. M. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 34a, *AB* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 484-87; M. Barth, 'Die Parusie im Epheserbrief: Eph 4, 13',

this phrase should be read as ‘until we all meet’ and proposes that the verse envisages the meeting between Christ and believers at the Parousia. Yet, this not only provides an odd meaning for *καταντήσομεν*, but also renders the verse incongruous with the context of Church growth. Instead, it is rightly seen as articulating the idea that the Church strives towards the attainment of the goal that is set out with a threefold statement. Scholars diverge on how to treat the relationship between the three elements of this goal. Lincoln argues that this verse presents three separate goals for the growth of the Church, with the first goal being the unity to be attained whereas the last two goals ‘describe the Church in its completed state.’<sup>128</sup> Similarly, Best and Hoehner<sup>129</sup> regard 4.13 as articulating three aspects of one goal, making each clause a separate part of the aspired final state. These two positions are ultimately unsustainable on two grounds. First, if these clauses were intended to be distinct from each other, one would expect to find the conjunction *καί* separating each clause or at least the final clause. Second, the relative ambiguity of the middle clause, *εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον*, makes it difficult to sustain the view that this is setting out a distinctly new goal for Church growth. Hence, the position held by several scholars<sup>130</sup> that this verse presents three parallel clauses is preferable. In this way, 4.13 articulates one goal, but does so through compounding descriptions that embellish the image of what the Church is striving towards. It is therefore necessary to develop what each of the statements reveals about the goal of Church growth.

The subsequent statements of this pericope elaborate the attainment of this goal by contrasting negative (4.14) and positive images (4.15-16). The negative image is that of unstable children who are susceptible to being led astray. The juxtaposition with the *ἄνθρωπος τέλειος* in 4.13 is significant in the developmental disparity between child and adult, as well as the contrast between a plurality of children and the singular adult man. Also pertinent to this contrast is the susceptibility of the child to a host of wayward doctrines and human scheming

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in *Neues Testament und Geschichte : Historisches Geschehen und Deutung im Neuen Testament*, eds. H. Baltensweiler and B. Reicke (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 239-50.

128. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255.

129. Best, *Ephesians*, 399; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 553.

130. Aletti, *Éphésiens*, 222; Bouttier, *Éphésiens*, 190-91; Schlier, *Epheser*, 200; Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 115. Cf. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 305. O’Brien’s position is ambiguous in that he describes these clauses as ‘similar descriptions’, yet his subsequent exegesis appears to fit this group of scholarship.



that stands directly in contrast with the unified confession of 4.4-6 and the beneficent leaders of the Church in 4.12. The positive image of attaining the goal presents a context of loving embodiment of the truth amongst believers that leads to Church growth. This context provides members with the opportunity to manifest the grace given to them according to Christ's gift so that they participate with the cohesive force of Christ's headship in the building up of the Church. Yet, this image contains a provocative statement that the Church's growth is 'into Christ'. Whilst some scholars<sup>131</sup> have taken this as a statement of goal so that Christ becomes the model for the completed state of the Church, Lincoln<sup>132</sup> treats it as a statement of direction so that by being in Christ the Church now grows towards him. Yet, I suggest that either reading inadvertently misconstrues the significance of the prepositional clause. Hence, it will be necessary to consider the significance of these contrasting images of the nature of Church growth.

Given the preceding analysis, it is apparent that 4.13-16 demand careful analysis in order to determine the nature of Christian maturity. I propose that 4.13 unveils the dimensions of Christian maturity. The initial exhortation (4.1-3) and discourse (4.4-12) align Christ's intention to fill all things with the realisation of Church growth through the united and proper use of his gifts. Thus, the goal of the Church in 4.13 encompasses the dimensions of maturity insofar as it presents the completion of this cosmic programme in co-ordination with the internal workings of the Church. As a consequence, my analysis of 4.13 will explore these dimensions through an exegetical analysis of each of the three parallel clauses. With this established, I suggest that it will be possible to determine the quality of maturity through a subsequent analysis of 4.14-16. The contrasting images of positive and negative interaction between members of the Church reveal how the goal of 4.13 is and is not to be attained. As such, these images indicate how Christian maturity pertains to both corporate and individual aspects of human existence.

### **3.3.2 The Goal of Church Growth**

The purpose of this section is to explore the dimensions of maturity expressed in 4.13. I will analyze the three parallel clauses of the goal separately,

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131. Best, *Ephesians*, 408; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 566; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 312.

132. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 261.

proceeding from the most unambiguous clause (τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) to that of the most ambiguous (ἄνδρα τέλειον). In this way, the implications of unity in faith and knowledge, as well as that of the fullness of Christ, may be brought to bear on the nebulous ἀνὴρ τέλειος and a theology of Christian maturity.

### 3.3.2.1 Ἐνότης: Internal Unity

An analysis of the clause τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ<sup>133</sup> is immediately confronted with exegetical questions about the genitive construction. Does τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ modify τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως only, or does it encompass τῆς πίστεως as well? Additionally, does it function as an objective or subjective genitival clause? Indeed, the answer to the second question is dependent on the first, since τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ could not modify both nouns whilst functioning differently. The majority of scholars<sup>134</sup> contend that only τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως is modified by τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. The ambiguity in their subsequent interpretation of τῆς πίστεως, however, reveals that this position neither aids a reading of the clause nor precludes references to faith in Christ. Barth<sup>135</sup> argues that the clause functions as a subjective genitival clause that modifies both τῆς πίστεως and τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως. The attainment of the Church is to that of Christ's faith in God and faithfulness towards his people as well as his knowledge of both God and his bride. This reading is indebted to Barth's rendering of καταντήσομεν as 'meeting' Christ, thereby equating the attainment of these virtues to being made like him when believers meet him. Yet, it has been shown that Barth's reading of this verse as meeting Christ is unwarranted, which consequently undermines the subsequent rendering of τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ as a subjective genitival clause. Abbott<sup>136</sup> also argues that both nouns are modified by the phrase, but differs in treating τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ as an objective genitival clause. The Church is to attain to a unity of faith in Christ and knowledge of him. In my estimation, Abbott's position is defensible given the juxtaposition of 4.13 with the instability of the νῆπιοι in 4.14 that derives from their susceptibility to aberrant teachings. In other

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133. Only two manuscripts, F and G, contain the textual variant that omits τοῦ υἱοῦ. Since these two texts originate in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, there is sufficient reason to accept the earlier and majority witness that includes τοῦ υἱοῦ.

134. E.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255-56; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 306-307; Schlier, *Epheser*, 200.

135. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 487-89.

136. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 120. Cf. Aletti, *Éphésiens*, 222; Robinson, *Ephesians*, 100.

words, the corruption of their knowledge leads to an instability that I will demonstrate is contradictory to faith in Christ. Given this, it is necessary to explore the nature and content of both τῆς πίστεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ and τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ in this clause before arguing how these two virtues pertain to unity in the Church.

The goal to attain to the unity of the faith in the Son of God is confounding for its lack of elaboration. Most scholars argue that the clause is particularly concerned with the objective content of faith. Disagreement exists, however, as to what content is implied by the statement. Some scholars<sup>137</sup> argue that the content is Christ, and that the unity envisaged occurs when believers recognise the solidarity that comes from this shared faith. Similarly, Muddiman and Schnackenburg<sup>138</sup> link the content of faith with the knowledge of the Son of God, which means that the unity of the faith entails the knowledge that Christ is the Son of God. Yet, these two options oversimplify the content of faith by disregarding that this clause occurs shortly after the confessional statement of one faith (4.5) and shortly before the contrast of instability due to variant teachings (4.14). In contrast, Lincoln and O'Brien<sup>139</sup> leave the content of faith vague, stating that unity of the faith entails appropriating all that is contained in the one faith. Whilst this rightly recognises that the content of faith embraces a set of beliefs, it avoids exploring the content itself. This perhaps indicates that the question of objective content is altogether one-sided. Whilst the definite article before πίστεως would seem to indicate that a content is implied, this is not a necessary conclusion. Indeed, it is difficult to find the distinction between the objective content and subjective activity of faith within the text itself, seeing as any act of faith requires a content and vice versa.

Recognising that πίστις can encompass not only an objective content, but also the subjective act, allows for a more nuanced appreciation of what is entailed by the present clause. The activity of faith in Ephesians is distinctly directed towards Christ, in that believers are said to have believed in Christ (1.13) and have faith in him (1.15). Furthermore, faith functions as the grounds and medium of relationship between believers and the Godhead (2.8; 3.12, 17). Yet, the inclusion of

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137. E.g. Best, *Ephesians*, 400; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 553.

138. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 202-203; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 187.

139. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 306.

μία πίστις in 4.5 indicates that there is a distinct content to this faith, given that an exclusively subjective reading does not fit the confessional context. To this can be added the observation that what led to the act of faith was hearing the ‘word of truth, the gospel of your salvation’ (1.13). Thus, faith involves the assent to the truth of the gospel, which reveals the danger of the doctrinal instability expressed in 4.14. If believers are susceptible to being carried along by every and any wayward doctrine, they will find themselves moving away from the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, this description of faith accounts for the ‘shield of faith’ in 6.16 as a counter to Satanic attacks. Whereas a subjective reading of this verse would make the ‘shield’ an essentially fideistic resistance, and an objective reading assumes that these attacks are only doctrinal, a combined reading recognises that the act of faith involves a steadfast resolution in the face of opposition that is grounded in a system of belief. As such, the unity of the faith in the Son of God envisaged in 4.13 encompasses both a unity of theological adherence and a solidarity brought about by a common means of salvation for all, namely Christ.

The second element of this programme for unity in the Church, the knowledge of the Son of God, also requires analysis. Similar to the discussion surrounding the nature of faith, scholars disagree as to the exact content of knowledge in this verse. Hoehner argues that it entails ‘not an abstract but a concrete knowledge of Christ,’<sup>140</sup> which he then obscures by contrasting this with the deceitful doctrines in 4.14. Lincoln, followed by O’Brien, holds that the unity of knowledge addressed here is concerned with ‘appropriating all that is involved in the salvation which centers in Christ.’<sup>141</sup> Yet, just as with his description of the unity of the faith, Lincoln’s argument here is vague. The attempts of these scholars to relate the content of this knowledge to Christ is valid. With regards to the term ἐπίγνωσις, Robinson argues that the compounding of the preposition ἐπί to γνῶσις adds direction rather than intensity.<sup>142</sup> Hence, ἐπίγνωσις is fixed to a definite object, and in this occurrence that object is Christ. Given that knowledge has involved a variety of objects in Ephesians, however, the specific orientation of knowledge towards Christ in this verse as the ultimate goal for the Church requires that it make sense of the other objects in the letter.

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140. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 554.

141. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255. Cf. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 306-307.

142. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 249.

An assessment of the references to knowledge in Ephesians reveals that there is a common footing for all human knowing. The term ἐπίγνωσις occurs twice, both times having a divine person as its object. In 1.17 the person is the Father of glory, whereas in 4.13 it is the Son of God. Despite the differing personal objects, both cases extend the attainment, or completion of attainment, of this knowledge into the future. Yet, this is not the only type of knowledge that Paul would have for the Ephesians. Three times, he uses the verb γνωρίζω to articulate the revelation of the divine mystery to the Ephesians (1.9), to Paul (3.3),<sup>143</sup> and not to other generations (3.5). The verb is used again to describe the revelation of God's wisdom to the spiritual powers (3.10). In 3.18-19, Paul prays that the comprehension (καταλαμβάνω) of the Ephesians would give way to knowing (γινώσκω) the love of Christ that actually surpasses knowledge (γνώσις). Furthermore, Paul employs the verb οἶδα numerous times to refer to a content of knowledge that he wants the Ephesians to understand. That content is the three aspects of the divine mystery to be comprehended more fully (1.18), an assurance to slaves and masters of the Lord's authority and justice (6.8-9), or even a solemn confidence that wickedness has no inheritance in Christ's kingdom (5.5 – ἵστε γινώσκοντες). Common to all these statements about knowledge is that their content is rooted within the persons of Christ and/or God. This is seen not only in the personal objects of ἐπίγνωσις, but also in the knowledge of God's mystery entailing his power, the inheritance of him, and a hope of calling that drives towards Christ. Moreover, Christ's love, authority, justice and kingdom are elements of the Ephesians' knowledge.

Given the preceding analysis, it can be argued that the knowledge of the Son of God encompasses both a personal knowledge of him and an objective comprehension of the truths inherently rooted in his person. This is perhaps most provocatively presented when Paul states in 4.20 that the Ephesians have 'learned Christ' (ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν). In contrast to Gentiles who are darkened in their understanding and alienated from God, believers have 'heard about' and were 'taught in Jesus' because the truth is 'in him' (4.21). Furthermore, the knowledge of Christ in this verse does not contradict or undermine Paul's initial prayer that the Ephesians come to a knowledge of God. Whilst the referent in 1.17 is likely to be 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory', Paul's use of αὐτοῦ as the

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143. Paul subsequently refers to his knowledge of the divine mystery as 'insight' (σύνεσις).

object of ἐπίγνωσις is slightly vague given the dual reference to God and Christ. Moreover, that 1.17 refers to the Father and 4.13 names Christ as ‘the Son of God’<sup>144</sup> elicits a sense of relationship between these two personal objects of knowledge.<sup>145</sup> This epistemic relationship is reminiscent of Jesus’ statement in John’s gospel that to know the Son is to know the Father (e.g. Jn 14.7). In addition to this, it is evident that the Spirit is distinctly active in the imparting of this knowledge. Whereas the knowledge of God in 1.17 derives from believers receiving ‘a spirit of wisdom and of revelation’,<sup>146</sup> the knowledge of Christ in 4.13 is developed through Church growth that is instigated by the gifting of the Spirit.<sup>147</sup> Thus, the type of knowledge articulated in 4.13 necessarily expands beyond the boundaries of either a personal knowledge of Christ or an objective appreciation of salvation. The whole of the Godhead and the redemptive plan may appropriately be said to be known through Christ.<sup>148</sup>

The unity described by this clause, therefore, entails a corporate solidarity brought about by a common faith and knowledge. Unity in faith involves the singular set of beliefs that is shared by all believers as they stand before Christ as the object of that faith. Unity in knowledge involves the personal knowing of Christ together and the truth that is found in him. Furthermore, the confluence of these two elements, faith and knowledge, accounts for the transition from unity being a present reality in 4.1-6 to it being a future state that is progressively attained in 4.13. Namely, unity has been established through Christ’s work that has brought together Gentile and Jew, far and near, and reconciled them as one to God (2.11-17). Moreover, this unity that is found in Christ is appropriated through the Spirit (2.18; cf. 4.3). As such, the reality of unity is fitting within the *already*, or realised eschatology, of Ephesians. However, just as the *already* gives way to the *not yet* in 2.19-22, there remains in this world the task of progressively manifesting the unity already realised in the ἐν-dimension. The practice of unity now lies before believers, as seen in the virtues of 4.1-3 and the subsequent

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144. This is the only occasion in Ephesians of this title being used in reference to Christ.

145. Cf. Eph. 4.19.

146. The referent here is likely to be ‘the Spirit’, given that Paul usually depicts human reception of divine wisdom, revelation and knowledge as an act mediated by the Holy Spirit. Yet, I have opted to translate the clause as such given that there is no definite article.

147. Cf. Eph. 3.5.

148. J.L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, SNTW (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 89-110.

paraenesis of 4.17–6.20.<sup>149</sup> Any division, deception, hostility, impatience or selfishness amongst believers is a rejection of that unity. It rejects the beliefs and solidarity brought about by the one faith and it rejects the knowledge of Christ that is learned in him. In other words, the practice of unity amongst believers is their participatory right and obligation, because unity is fundamentally a realised and prospective internal goal of the Church. Once this goal is eschatologically achieved, practice will no longer be prescribed as it will be a permanent disposition. Given my previous conclusions that the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις indicated unity pertains to the nature of Christian maturity in Ephesians,<sup>150</sup> it should be expected that it is developed parallel to the eschatological depiction of maturity. However, there is another parallel theological theme in the verse, namely fullness (πλήρωμα). The analysis of this motif was postponed during the study of τὰ πάντα, which necessitates that I assess both its import within 4.13 and its relevance throughout Ephesians before proceeding to a discussion of Christian maturity.

### 3.3.2.2 Πλήρωμα: Cosmic Fullness

The third prepositional clause of 4.13, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, presents numerous difficulties for interpreters. One must consider what sense of ἡλικίας is being used, namely whether it be ‘age’ or ‘size’. This decision must also determine the relationship between ἡλικίας and μέτρον, whilst bearing in mind two other occurrences of the latter word in 4.7 and 4.16. More problematic is the occurrence of πληρώματος, since the idea of ‘fullness’ and ‘filling’ has occurred repeatedly throughout Ephesians (1.10, 23; 3.19; 4.10; 5.18). Finally, once some plausible reading of μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος is provided, it still needs to be determined how that relates to τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Hence, it is not surprising to observe amongst scholarly arguments many of the possible various readings of this one clause. Given this, it is necessary that I survey the strengths and weaknesses of these various readings. With these in mind, it will then be appropriate to determine the significance of πλήρωμα from the whole of the letter before positing a plausible reading of the present clause.

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149. S.C. Barton, ‘The Unity of Humankind as a Theme in Biblical Theology’, in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. C. Bartholomew, *et al.*, ScrHerm 5 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), 248–50; Best, *Essays*, 179–88.

150. See §3.2.2.1.

In terms of interpretative positions, scholars may broadly be categorised into two groups: those who take πλήρωμα to entail an ethical standard and those who do not. Amongst the former category, scholars<sup>151</sup> opt to treat πληρώματος as an exegetical genitive, which renders the clause essentially as ‘the measure of the full stature of Christ’. Despite minor variations in translation, these scholars accept that Christ’s ‘full stature’ is his perfection and the Church as ‘the corporate Christ cannot be content to fall short of the perfection of the personal Christ.’<sup>152</sup> Schnackenburg and Mitton<sup>153</sup> differ in that they treat πληρώματος as a genitive of apposition. Schnackenburg further varies his reading by treating μέτρον ἡλικίας as a pleonastic expression in relation to πληρώματος, so that it becomes the ‘Vollmaß der Fülle Christi’. However, these variations proffer little to their later interpretations of the clause as Christ’s perfect ethical standard placed before the Church. The strength of an ethical reading of πλήρωμα is that it relates the corporate growth of the Church in unified righteousness to the standard of Christ’s own righteousness. Yet, this is also a weakness in that Christ is reduced to an exclusively ethical paradigm, which does an injustice to the significance of πλήρωμα in the letter as a whole. In 1.23 and 4.10, Christ’s filling activity is given a cosmic scope through the use of the technical term τὰ πάντα. This cosmic scope is entirely lost when πλήρωμα is granted no more sense here than the entirety of moral perfection. This ultimately impoverishes Christ’s relationship to the Church by stripping his redemptive purposes of any cosmic implications.

Allowing for a potentially broader scope of πλήρωμα than simply an ethical goal, however, only serves to increase the complexity of the clause. Both Lincoln and Best<sup>154</sup> argue for a sense of ἡλικίας as ‘size’ and treat πληρώματος as a genitive of apposition, which provides a reading of the clause as ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’. Whilst this rendering provides the opportunity to explore the significance of πλήρωμα, both scholars struggle to present a coherent understanding. Lincoln provides a nebulous interpretation that this standard is

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151. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 556-57; Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 204; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 307-308.

152. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 350-51. Cf. Simpson and Bruce, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 96.

153. Mitton, *Ephesians*, 154-55; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 188-89.

154. Best, *Ephesians*, 402-403; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 256-57. Best is unclear when discussing the meaning of ἡλικίας, because he argues for a comprehensive appreciation of both ‘age’ and ‘size’ but translates the term as ‘size’.



‘the mature proportions that befit the Church as the fullness of Christ.’<sup>155</sup> Best obscures the meaning of the passage even further when he states that the ‘goal to be attained is the measure... of the maturity or stature of what Christ fills.’<sup>156</sup> This suggests that even when there is potential to include the broader sense of πλήρωμα from Ephesians, these scholars are unable to incorporate the material so as to produce an intelligible interpretation. Only Caird comes close to providing some cosmic intent for a reading of this clause: ‘Christ, filled himself with the full being of God, is to communicate that fullness first to the church and through it to the world.’<sup>157</sup> Yet, whilst this interpretation enjoys the benefit of reading πλήρωμα in the light of 1.23, it is observable that it is now overpowered by that reading. Caird’s interpretation is unsupportable because the clause in 4.13 presents the Church as attaining to the fullness of Christ rather than Christ communicating fullness to the Church.

Abbott is distinct in his interpretation of this clause in that he refers the fullness of Christ to ‘the full possession of the gifts of Christ.’<sup>158</sup> The strength of this reading is found in its reference to the surrounding occurrences of μέτρον. According to 4.7, gifts are given to each member of the Church according to the measure of Christ for the edification of the corporate body. Similarly, the Church only grows when each member is working according to its ‘measure’ (4.16). Hence, Church growth towards the ‘measure’ of Christ’s fullness occurs through the co-operative working of individual ‘measures’. Yet, Abbott’s interpretation of 4.7 overlooks that the grace given to each member is according to the μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, which is distinct from the μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Thus, it is the proper operation of grace in individual members, measured according to ‘Christ’s gift’, that is at work in 4.16. This proper functioning produces growth towards a different measure: not that of Christ’s gift, but rather that of the stature of his fullness. As such, Abbott’s interpretation confuses two different measures in the passage and neuters the sense of πλήρωμα of its cosmic scope in the process. Hence, it is apparent that an interpretation of this clause must address the implications of πλήρωμα from the whole of the letter.

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155. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 257.

156. Best, *Ephesians*, 402.

157. Caird, *Letters*, 77.

158. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 121.

The significance of πλήρωμα in Ephesians may be developed from its multiple attestations in relation to divine filling, the first of which occurs in 1.23.<sup>159</sup> This verse has received considerable attention due to the complexities of identifying the sense and referent of πλήρωμα, the meaning of the phrase τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, and most importantly the voice of πληρουμένου.<sup>160</sup> Arguably, the first two concerns are more easily addressed. The term πλήρωμα stands in apposition to τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ and not to αὐτόν in 4.22. This position is justified by both the common neuter gender of σῶμα and πλήρωμα as well as the immediate proximity of these two terms as opposed to the relative distance of αὐτόν. Additionally, the term has a passive, and not active, sense of ‘fullness’ seeing as this is the consistent meaning used throughout the letter. The embedding of the phrase τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν between the participle and its definite article make it best to view this as an adjectival clause rather than as adverbial. Moreover, given that τὰ πάντα is a technical term in Ephesians, it is unlikely that Paul would have used it here with an adverbial sense.

The true difficulty of this phrase derives from the participle πληρουμένου, because it raises the question of whether this is intended to be passive, middle or middle form with active voice. Arguments for the passive voice are based upon later statements of God’s filling activity in 3.19 as well as references to Col. 1.19; 2.9. Yet, this not only neglects to observe that God fills the Church and not Christ in 3.19, but also that the ‘fullness of deity’<sup>161</sup> already dwells in Christ rather than actively fills him in the Colossian passages.<sup>162</sup> Given this, the acceptance of a middle form is not possible, seeing as it requires that Christ fills all things (active) whilst being filled by God (passive) or convolutedly filling all things and himself (reflexive). Some scholars<sup>163</sup> object to rendering the middle form of πληρουμένου

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159. Two occurrences will not be considered at length. Whilst the use of πλήρωμα in 1.9 may indicate that ‘fullness’ has not only cosmic but temporal indications, it is by no means clear if this theological significance may be attached to it. Additionally, Paul’s exhortation in 5.18 to be filled with the Spirit is concerned primarily with human agency opening itself to the influence of the divine agency of the Spirit. This is seen both through the use of a passive imperative as well as the juxtaposition of this positive command with the prohibition against being filled with wine.

160. For a survey of scholarly conclusions, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 294-99.

161. It is important to note that Col. 2.9 specifies the πλήρωμα as τῆς θεότητος rather than as τοῦ θεοῦ. Furthermore, it is problematic to treat the similar phrase in 1.19 as a periphrastic form of that in 2.9. See §4.2.2.3.

162. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 76-77; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 81.

163. Best, *Ephesians*, 184-85; Best, *One Body*, 143-44; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 298; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 150-51.

with an active sense because Paul uses an active form of πληρώω in 4.10. Yet, it is important to note that the form in 4.10 is a finite verb, whereas this participle with a definite article functions as a substantive noun to describe Christ. Furthermore, given the ambiguity of πληρουμένου, it is prudent to interpret it in the light of later clarification. In 4.10, Christ's exaltation entails the goal that he might fill all things. Moreover, the exaltation leads to his bestowal of gifts on believers so that through their proper functioning the Church might attain to the fullness of Christ. The corresponding concern of both passages to relate Christ's exaltation with his filling activity and the fullness of the Church justifies this conclusion that πληρουμένου in 1.23 has an active sense. A literal translation of the clause would then be 'the fullness of the all in everything filling one', which may be glossed as 'the fullness of him who fills all in everything'.<sup>164</sup>

The significance of 1.23 may now be understood: the Church is the fullness of Christ, and this 'fullness' is connected to Christ's intent to fill all things.<sup>165</sup> Given the relationship between Christ, the Church and all things, it can be seen that πλήρωμα and divine filling correlates with the mysterious plan of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the completion of the divine plan entails commensurate activities. All things are being united in the ἐν-dimension via reference to the representation of the Church. Yet, Christ is simultaneously filling all things as this takes place. The image is then one of all things being drawn into Christ through the Church whilst he simultaneously fills all things with his presence.<sup>167</sup> Thus, the

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164. G.H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology*, WUNT 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 157-59. Van Kooten notes the pre-Socratic and Stoic philosophical traditions behind the phrase τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν in order to demonstrate that it holds cosmological significance.

165. Pace J. Ernst, *Pleroma und Pleroma Christi: Geschichte und Deutung eines Begriffes der paulinischen Antilegomena*, BibU 5 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1970), 114; Usami, *Somatic Comprehension*, 133-34. Both authors argue that the context of the Head-Body relationship governs the meaning of τοῦ πληρουμένου. The Church is 'the fullness which itself fills all things in every way', because the body is fundamentally what grows. Yet, this does not completely neglect Christ since this growth is governed by the Head. Whilst there is merit to this interpretation, making the Church the referent of τοῦ πληρουμένου is questionable seeing as Christ is specifically described as filling all things in 4.10.

166. Pace M.Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, ed. D.J. Harrington, SP 17 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 221-22, 293. MacDonald argues that the implications of 1.23 cannot be pressed for doctrinal clarity, which is evident from the fact that she does not inquire into its relevance for the divine plan or 4.13. Cf. C.A. Evans, 'The Meaning of πλήρωμα in Nag Hammadi', *Bib* 65 (1984), 264. Evans argues that Paul's use of πλήρωμα does not represent a pre-Christian gnostic meaning, but does claim that later gnostic uses of πλήρωμα highlight an aspect of the term as reconciliation/restoration which he sees at work in Paul's thinking.

167. Cf. M. Bogdasavich, 'The Idea of Pleroma in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians', *DRev* 83 (1965), 127-28.

fullness of Christ is specifically the eschatological state when the entire cosmos is united in him through the Church and he simultaneously fills all things.<sup>168</sup> This conclusion further explicates the familiar eschatological tension between descriptions of the Church as Christ's fullness being a present reality in 1.23 but a future state in 4.13. In terms of being raised and seated in the heavenly realms with Christ, the Church may be described as *already* his fullness. Yet, Christ's ongoing filling activity indicates that this is not actually complete. Hence, the Church is also *not yet* the fullness of Christ, but must attain to this state via participation with the divine plan.

Given this analysis, one final instance of πλήρωμα in relation to divine filling requires attention. The occurrence of πλήρωμα in 3.19 is distinct in that it identifies the filling activity with God. Whilst this would appear to contradict or diverge from the idea of the Church as Christ's fullness, it in fact fits within the divine plan by its relation to the idea of inheritance. The eschatological inheritance of the Church has briefly been shown to be God's presence with his people in 2.11-22. In Christ, Gentiles are reconciled to, and included amongst, the saints, and this corporate body of God's people is built into his temple. Paul's intercessory prayer in 3.14-19 specifically refers back to this reality when he includes the Ephesians within the community of saints (3.18). It is as the community of saints come to know the love of Christ that they are filled with the fullness of God. This programme has been interpreted by equating the love of Christ and the fullness of God,<sup>169</sup> or as taking God's filling as the imparting of ethical perfection.<sup>170</sup> Yet, these attempts to define the πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ unnecessarily restrict its scope. Given the eschatological tension of the prayer, it is more likely that to be filled with God's fullness entails his indwelling of the Church as a temple. To be sure, this includes the crowning virtue of love and ethical perfection for believers. Yet, bearing in mind that God intends to unite all things in Christ for himself elicits the expectation that he will impart his very presence to them when the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις is complete.

In light of this analysis, the meaning of this clause can now be made lucid. The sense of ἡλικίας takes on the fullest scope as both 'age' and 'size' because

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168. Cf. Turner, 'Ephesians', 1222-23.

169. E.g. Best, *Ephesians*, 348; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 490-91.

170. E.g. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 265-66.

πλήρωμα is inherently an eschatological and cosmological term. Moreover, the term μέτρον is taken as a ‘measure’ against Christ, which encompasses the eschatological state when all things are united in him and filled by him. Thus, to attain to ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ is for the Church to grow into its eschatological state as his fullness where all things are united in him. Whereas the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God may be described as the assessment of the internal workings of the Church in its final state, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ may be described as a cosmic assessment. The Church as the fullness of Christ encompasses the whole of creation within its scope. Thus, it is appropriate that some portions of the subsequent paraenesis are concerned with the conduct of believers in the world. They are to expose the unfruitful works of darkness rather than participate in them (5.7-11). Moreover, they are to make the best use of their time in these evil days (5.15-16). These admonitions reveal again that Church growth is fundamentally a qualitative one, with quantitative growth being of subsidiary import.<sup>171</sup> In other words, the Church does not attain to the fullness of Christ simply by absorbing more members into the body and thereby drawing more of the cosmos in with them. Much more, the Church attains to the fullness of Christ by functioning as righteous representatives in the world. Through that righteous activity of the Church, the cosmos is progressively drawn into Christ and he fills it. Thus, whilst the Church is in some sense already the fullness of Christ in this world, it is only at the eschaton that it will attain to this state at the completion of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις.

### 3.3.2.3 Τέλειος: Corporate Maturity

The preceding analyses of the first and last prepositional clauses of 4.13 now make it possible to assess the statement of Christian maturity in the middle clause: the Church is to attain to the ἄνδρα τέλειον. It is the terseness of this statement that frequently confounds scholars. The semantic range of the term τέλειος by itself provides opportunity for divergent interpretations.<sup>172</sup> Additionally, Paul’s use

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171. Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 203-205; Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 490.

172. The proximity of this term to the imagery of children (4.14) and statements of Church edification and growth (4.12, 16) suggests that τέλειος in 4.13 should be rendered as ‘mature’.

of ἀνὴρ here and nowhere else in the letter causes speculation as to its referent.<sup>173</sup> Finally, the position of this clause as the second of three prepositional clauses raises the question of its relationship to the other two. As such, the variety of interpretations will be assessed. From this analysis, it will become apparent that scholars consistently underestimate what is signified by this clause. I will argue that the interpretation of the ἀνὴρ τέλειος is governed by the bracketing descriptions of the Church. The descriptions of internal unity and cosmic fullness lend signification to this anthropomorphic metaphor of the Church. With this in place, I will then assess the significance of maturity for the message of Ephesians.

Scholarly assessments of this prepositional clause diverge most prominently on the question of whether the preceding or subsequent clause provides clarification. Hoehner and Muddiman<sup>174</sup> argue that it is the initial clause, the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, that elucidates the second. Muddiman contends that the knowledge of the Son of God is particularly in view, because ‘the revelation of God in Christ is also the revelation of perfect humanity through him.’<sup>175</sup> Alternatively, Hoehner suggests that the whole of the preceding clause is in view, so that the mature state of the Church is the corporate unity of its members. In contrast, several scholars<sup>176</sup> argue that clarification of the ἄνδρα τέλειον comes from the subsequent clause. Namely, the goal of Church growth towards maturity is to be measured against ‘the stature of the fullness of Christ’. Yet, either alternative unnecessarily restricts the potential clarification that the surrounding clauses provide for the ἀνὴρ τέλειος. Appeals to the initial clause endow maturity with a significance of internal unity, whilst neglecting to determine how the final clause about the fullness of Christ pertains to this unity. Similarly, references to the final clause are helpful in that they provide a measure of corporate maturity, but nevertheless can say nothing about its internal quality. Hence, any preference for one clause as the means of clarification relegates the other clause to a secondary goal.

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173. Matters pertaining to the masculine gender of this term will be deferred until §5.4. The purpose of the present analysis is to determine the referent and significance of ἀνὴρ.

174. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 554-56; Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 203-204.

175. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 203.

176. E.g. Best, *One Body*, 141-42; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 256-57; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 307-308.

Unlike the previous group of scholars, several scholars rightly recognise that both the initial and final clause bear upon the ἀνὴρ τέλειος. Mitton<sup>177</sup> argues that the quality of maturity is unity amongst individual believers and that the measure of maturity is the stature of the fullness of Christ. Yet, his analysis is partially incoherent in that the mark of maturity is one's 'ability to hold diversity within a harmonious unity',<sup>178</sup> whereas the measure of Christ's fullness is perfect ethical conduct. The only point of continuity between the mark of maturity and its measure is that this perfect manhood exemplified by Christ includes loving concern for others. Thus, Mitton establishes a measure of maturity that is only tenuously related to its nature and fails to recognise that Christ's ethical perfection has broader implications than simply fostering unity amongst individuals. Also problematic is his conclusion that all three clauses have the individual and not the corporate community in view.<sup>179</sup> To support this, he presents an invalid argument that the ἀνὴρ τέλειος cannot refer to the community because it is a 'very personal phrase.'<sup>180</sup> F. F. Bruce<sup>181</sup> allows for the corporate nature of maturity and defines it in terms of unity, but presents the measure of maturity as the fullness of Christ which is his perfect ethical standard. Yet, unlike Mitton, Bruce does not provide any means for finding a coherence between the nature and measure of maturity. Maturity is the unity of the Church but it is measured against Christ's perfection. Hence, it is apparent that even when both clauses are referenced, a coherent understanding of the ἀνὴρ τέλειος is not immediately available to scholars.

Barth's<sup>182</sup> analysis of this clause is quite distinct in that it renders ἀνὴρ τέλειος as 'the perfect man' in reference to Christ. Hence, the Church is to meet the perfect man, i.e. Christ, at his Parousia. Whilst Barth argues that the interpretation of 4.13 rests on the reading of the second and third clauses, he nevertheless makes reference to the first clause. As already noted, he reads 4.13a as the unity brought about by Christ's faith and knowledge of his bride, which occurs at the meeting. Similarly, 4.13c is governed by the meeting of the perfect man, because it entails meeting 'the perfection of the Messiah who is the standard of manhood.'<sup>183</sup> As

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177. Mitton, *Ephesians*, 154. Cf. Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 187-89.

178. Mitton, *Ephesians*, 154.

179. Allan, "'In Christ' Formula', 60-61; Usami, *Somatic Comprehension*, 146.

180. Mitton, *Ephesians*, 154.

181. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 350-51.

182. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 487-91.

183. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 490-91.

such, instead of clarifying the meaning of 4.13b by reference to the surrounding clauses, Barth instead interprets the surrounding clauses by reference to the ἀνὴρ τέλειος. Whilst this is coherent, it is unsupportable within its context. It is unlikely that if μέχρι καταντήσομεν is to be read as ‘until we meet’ that the person who is to be met would be deferred to the second element of three clauses. Furthermore, this would also be the only occurrence in the letter where Paul referred to Christ in the abstract. Barth’s rendering of 4.13c in the light of 4.13b also requires the addition of a relative pronoun and verb to the original Greek. Finally, if believers are to be perfected in the meeting of Christ, little sense can be made of the statement in 4.15-16 that the Church is to grow up into him. Given these problems, it is not possible to maintain Barth’s attempt to give 4.13b supremacy over the other clauses.

The significance of the ἀνὴρ τέλειος must therefore account for its relation to the surrounding clauses. The initial means of developing this significance comes from the recognition that both the initial and final clauses are fundamentally concerned to describe the eschatological state of the Church. A further observation is that this clause comes in the middle of a progression from the internal unity of the Church to its cosmic fullness. This clause, therefore, may rightly be seen as a description of the Church in terms of a corporate ontology. In other words, it is the Church in its completed growth as a corporate body, rather than the internal workings of its individual members, that is now depicted. That this image uses an anthropomorphic metaphor should not be at all surprising to the reader. Paul has repeatedly used such metaphors throughout his letter. Not only does the image of the Church as the body of Christ begin to draw upon an anthropomorphic metaphor, but also his reference to the Church’s heart (1.18) and inner being (3.16) in the singular develops this metaphorical programme. Paul also situates the anthropomorphisms in particular contexts when he likens the Church to a bride (5.25-27) or a soldier (6.11-18). These metaphorical references to the Church justify the present conclusion that Paul can and does refer to the Church as a corporate ‘person’ whose own ontological makeup can be assessed.

The likely referent of this anthropomorphic metaphor is the one used in 2.15, because this is the only preceding statement in the letter where God’s people are explicitly depicted as a singular person. The union of both Jews and Gentiles into



a new humanity is likened to the creation of one ἄνθρωπος out of two. Dahl<sup>184</sup> argues that this may allude to the myth of the reunion between male and female, whereas Schlier<sup>185</sup> suggests that it has hints of the reconciliation of heaven and earth. Yet, there is no way of determining the validity of these claims. What is significant to the present study is that this metaphor is rooted specifically within the realisation of the divine mystery. In 3.6, Paul refers back to the union of the Gentiles with the Jews as the decisive element of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. The εἰς καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, which refers to the Church as the corporate people of both Jews and Gentiles, is therefore the ‘person’ that God intends to use to bring his plan to completion. Thus, when Paul presents the Church as the ἀνὴρ τέλειος in 4.13b, he is now depicting the one new person as having developed to its full maturity.<sup>186</sup> This is fitting given that both the initial clause about unity and the final clause about fullness are equally concerned with the realisation of the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. Thus, the fulfilment of the divine plan is presented by a series of images of the Church: internal unity, corporate maturity and cosmic fullness.

What this argument suggests is that Christian maturity is fundamentally corporate, cosmic and eschatological. It is the Church as a corporate body that develops towards maturity and this state is only fully realised at the eschaton. Hoehner<sup>187</sup> argues that the full maturity of the Church is possible in the present time. He presents several arguments for this: (i) there would be no need for gifts if maturity is not possible in the present; (ii) Christ’s death and the Spirit’s power are sufficient to bring about maturity; and (iii) the contrast with 4.14 makes it unlikely that believers will be susceptible to wayward doctrines until the eschaton. Yet, none of these arguments withstands critical scrutiny. Christ’s gifts to believers are to be used for the edification of the Church, but there is no indication that there will be a time before the eschaton when this responsibility will no longer be incumbent upon them. Moreover, simple observation of the present state of the Church reveals that there is a multitude of differing doctrinal beliefs, and Paul indicates that this will be an ongoing phenomenon.<sup>188</sup> Finally, that the maturity of

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184. Dahl, *Studies*, 74.

185. Schlier, *Epheser*, 124.

186. J.P. Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*, SBL SBL 13 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 178.

187. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 558.

188. E.g. Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8.

the Church does not occur until the eschaton in no way undermines the sufficiency of Christ's death or the Spirit's power. As such, contrary to Hoehner's assertion, Paul does not offer false hope by placing the full maturity of the Church in the eschaton. Instead, Church maturity as an eschatological state increases hope because it promises the fulfilment of all that the Church is progressing towards.

### 3.3.3 The Nature of Church Growth

The previous section established that maturity, according to 4.13, pertains to the growth of the Church into its eschatological state of unity amongst its members and cosmic fullness in Christ. Yet, the nature of this growth into corporate Christian maturity remains to be determined. This matter is most appropriately determined through further analysis of the positive (4.15-16) and negative (4.14) images that depict how Church growth will and will not take place. Significant to this is the contrast of several features: between the agencies operative in these images, between τῆς πλάνης and ἀληθεύοντες, and between ἐν πανουργίᾳ and ἐν ἀγάπῃ.<sup>189</sup> Each of these features will be considered separately before drawing them together to articulate the nature of Church growth.

An observable contrast between the two images of 4.14 and 4.15-16 is that of the differing activities of human and divine agents. Within the negative image, Church members are depicted as passive in the midst of a turbulent storm of doctrines and human deception. Also notable is the absence of any divine activity. Instead, the only active agency in the negative image is that of deceptive human cunning and schemes.<sup>190</sup> The positive image presents a complete reversal of agencies. The activity of human antagonists has disappeared altogether and divine agency is observable in the cohesive force that Christ supplies to the Church so that growth can take place. Believers also take on the active roles of ἀληθεύοντες as each member works according to its appropriate measure.<sup>191</sup> It may be that the

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189. Some scholars note a chiastic structure to the contrast of these terms in 4.14-15. The structure is given as: (A) ἐν πανουργίᾳ – (B) τῆς πλάνης – (B') ἀληθεύοντες – (A') ἐν ἀγάπῃ. E.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 190.

190. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 258; H. Merklein, *Das kirchliche Amt nach dem Epheserbrief*, SANT 33 (München: Kösel-Werlag, 1973), 107; O'Brien, 'Unusual Introduction', 309; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 189. There is debate as to whether 'every wind of doctrine' refers to deviant Christian teaching inside the Church or external, antagonistic philosophies. Whilst the majority view is that it is external teachings, there is little reason to accept such a dichotomy seeing as deceptive Christian doctrine could also be at work.

191. Whilst the interpretation of ἀληθεύοντες will be addressed in the subsequent analysis, the sense of κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ has already been shown to indicate the proper operation of

participation encouraged from the Church in 3.10 is now given form in the activity of its members. If believers adopt a passive response to the growth of the Church, they become susceptible to human antagonists and fruitless trajectories. In contrast, if an active posture is taken, a complementary relationship evolves between Christ and the Church as he holds its members together whilst they utilise their gifts to build up the body. Moreover, this growth does not have the random trajectory of the passive children in 4.14, but rather their activity progresses the Church as a whole *into* Christ.<sup>192</sup> Whilst the link to 3.10 is by no means certain, it is apparent that the activity of believers requires further attention to determine how Church growth occurs.

In contrast to the passive instability of the νήπιοι, the active response that Paul endorses in 4.15 is ἀληθεύοντες. Several proponents<sup>193</sup> for translating this term as ‘speaking the truth’ argue that its uses in the LXX (Gen. 20.16; 42.16; Prov. 21.3; Isa. 44.26; Sir 34.4) all occur in verbal contexts. Yet, this is an overstatement as only some of the LXX occurrences come in a ‘verbal context’<sup>194</sup> and none of them focuses on truth-telling activity. Instead, the reference of ἀληθεύω is an individual’s character or actions.<sup>195</sup> Sarah’s overt passivity and lack of speech<sup>196</sup> in Gen. 20 make Abimelech’s statement that she is ἀλήθευσον a vindication of her fidelity and innocence rather than a verification of her words. Prov. 21.3 uses ἀληθεύειν to translate the Hebrew term ‘justice’ (משפט) as an action that God esteems greater than sacrifice. In Isa. 44.26, God is the ἀληθεύων of his messengers’ advice, which indicates that he fulfils<sup>197</sup> their counsel. The poetic parallel between ἀληθεύσει and καθαρισθήσεται in Sir. 34.4 indicates a qualitative state. Since nothing can *be* clean that comes from something unclean, so too nothing can *be*

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individual grace measured according to Christ’s gift for the benefit of the whole Church. See also §3.3.2.2.

192. See §3.2.2.

193. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 444; Best, *Ephesians*, 407; J. Gnllka, *Der Epheserbrief*, HTKNT 10.2 (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1971), 217; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259-60; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 310-11; P. Pokorný, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Epheser*, THKNT 10/II (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1992), 182; Schlier, *Epheser*, 205; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 190.

194. The problem of this argument is that ‘verbal context’ is ambiguous. Does it require that the person to which ἀληθεύω refers has spoken, or does it simply necessitate that some form of speech has taken place?

195. Cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 564-65.

196. The only words that Sarah ‘speaks’ come in the form of indirectly reported speech during Abimelech’s dialogue with God (Gen. 20.5). She is reported to have stated that Abraham is her brother, which is at the very least deceptive.

197. Or perhaps ‘completes’ as another alternative of the original Hebrew ישלים.

truthful that comes from something false. But perhaps the most persuasive LXX occurrence is Gen. 42.16, where ἀληθεύετε is used to translate Joseph's statement to his brothers that he will determine whether 'the truth is in you' (האדמת אתכם). As such, the LXX occurrences contradict rather than prove the case for translating ἀληθεύοντες as 'speaking the truth'.<sup>198</sup> Instead, they provide sufficient evidence for regarding the term as concerned with the quality of one's character and actions.

Many scholars who take ἀληθεύοντες in Eph. 4.15 as 'speaking the truth' also turn to the only other NT use of ἀληθεύω in Gal. 4.16 for support. They argue that Paul's truth telling in this verse is linked with his proclamation of the truth of the gospel. Yet, when Paul speaks twice of the 'truth of the gospel' in Gal. 2, both times are used as a standard for assessing his (2.5) or Peter's (2.14) actions. Hence, it appears that the truth directs not just one's speech, but even one's conduct. Furthermore, Paul's account of his proclamation of the gospel to the Galatians in 4.13 comes in the context of his grief that they no longer are living according to the gospel truth and his attempt to bring them back to being as he is (4.12 – γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ). This agrees with Paul's primary concern in Galatians, which is to exhort the Galatians to return to living in obedience to the truth of the gospel.<sup>199</sup> His proclamation of the gospel in the past was 'through the weakness of the flesh' (4.13), but even so the Galatians received him 'as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus' despite this weakness (4.14). It is his presence, and not just his message, that the Galatians declared to be a blessing (4.15). As such, it seems that he is more than 'speaking the truth' when he describes himself as ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν in 4.16. Paul's presence, character and actions are just as much included in this term as is his speech. Reference to Gal 4.16, therefore, also undermines a reading of ἀληθεύοντες in Eph. 4.15 as 'speaking the truth'.

Given this analysis of other uses of ἀληθεύω, an alternative translation for its occurrence in Eph. 4.15 is needed. This must also fit with the statements about the truth in Ephesians. For instance, the καινὸν ἄνθρωπον that believers are now to put on is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth (4.24

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198. Pace Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 259-60. Lincoln also suggests that four occurrences in Philo (*Abr.* 107; *Decal.* 84; *Ios.* 95; *Vit. Mos.* 2.177) also vindicate the sense of 'speaking the truth'. Yet, only two of these occurrences (*Ios.* 95; *Decal.* 84) clearly pertain to speech, whereas *Abr.* 107 and *Vit. Mos.* 2.177 both make the referent of ἀληθεύω a matter of character and action.

199. J.M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, ed. J. Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), esp. 216-35.

– τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας).<sup>200</sup> This then affects their speech within the Church (4.25) and their reliance upon the truth to gird them in the midst of spiritual opposition (6.14). In other words, because believers are now constituted according to the truth, their conduct and communication must bear out that reality in the Church and world. As such, Jean-Daniel Dubois<sup>201</sup> argues for the acceptance of the textual variant ἀλήθειαν δὲ ποιοῦντες that replaces ἀληθεύοντες δέ. Yet, given the limited witness to this variant reading, which occurs only in *Codex Augiensis* (F) and *Codex Boernerianus* (G), the majority witness to ἀληθεύοντες δέ should be retained. Nevertheless, it is apparent that several interpreters of the text recognised the tension created by ἀληθεύοντες and attempted to alleviate it with the variant reading. Translating ἀληθεύοντες as ‘doing the truth’, however, is unnecessarily restrictive because it reduces the term to only one’s actions. Similarly, the translations of ‘being utterly genuine, sincere and honest’<sup>202</sup> or ‘being truthful’<sup>203</sup> are also unhelpful in that they are only a nod to something more than action. Moreover, the alternative translations of ‘cherishing the truth,’<sup>204</sup> ‘maintaining the truth’<sup>205</sup> or ‘to hold by the truth’<sup>206</sup> fail to grasp the revelatory thrust (in word and deed) of ἀληθεύοντες. Instead, I propose that a potentially helpful translation might be ‘bearing out the truth’ since this rendering can encompass character, conduct and communication. This is further reinforced by sharp contrast with the activity of Church antagonists in 4.14 in that their deceit (πλάνη) entails both actions (i.e. scheming) and doctrinal teaching. As such, the Church community is orientated towards ἀληθεύοντες, which entails that everything that believers do or say is saturated with the truth inherent to their new being.

The other contrast between the activity of Church antagonists and believers is that whereas the former are deceitful ἐν πανουργίᾳ, the latter are to bear out the truth ἐν ἀγάπῃ. It is possible that ἐν ἀγάπῃ is to be syntactically linked with

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200. The manuscript evidence for the textual variant καὶ ἀληθείας in the place of τῆς ἀληθείας is weak and therefore not accepted.

201. J.-D. Dubois, ‘Ephesians IV 15: ἀληθεύοντες δὲ or ἀλήθειαν δὲ ποιοῦντες’, *NovT* 16 (1974), 30-34.

202. Kitchen, *Ephesians*, 81.

203. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 565.

204. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 123.

205. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 102.

206. E.F. Scott, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 213.

αὐξήσωμεν, so that ‘we may grow up in love’ complements ‘builds itself up in love’ in the following verse. Yet, the chiastic structure already noted appears more appropriately to link ἐν ἀγάπῃ with ἀληθεύοντες.<sup>207</sup> This, however, elicits the question of what is intended by the qualifier ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Several scholars<sup>208</sup> see this as a prerequisite condition, though some argue that it is the essential ingredient for unity whilst others necessitate it as the verification of one’s truth-telling. Robinson simply states that truth and love are ‘the twin conditions of growth.’<sup>209</sup> Given the contrast between ἐν ἀγάπῃ and ἐν πανουργίᾳ, however, it is unlikely that ἀγάπῃ presents only a necessary condition of truth-telling, unity or growth. Church antagonists conduct their activities of πλάνη in a general state of πανουργία, which suggests a parallel state of being is envisioned by ἐν ἀγάπῃ when believers bear out the truth. To determine if this holds true, a brief survey of the uses of ἀγάπῃ in Ephesians is necessary.

Within Ephesians, the occurrences of ἀγάπῃ/ἀγαπητός/ἀγαπάω may be assessed by attending to the subject. Frequently, these terms are used to denote the relational aspect of love, whether it be God’s/Christ’s love for the Church (2.4; 3.19; 5.1, 2, 25; 6.23), Christ as the ‘beloved’ of God (1.6), the Ephesians’ love for all the saints (1.15), or Paul’s six-fold command that husbands are to love their wives (5.25-33). Yet, four references to love with respect to believers take the same construction as those in 4.15-16: ἐν ἀγάπῃ. That Christ indwells the heart of the Church roots and grounds its members ἐν ἀγάπῃ (3.17). In line with this, believers are exhorted to bear with one another (4.2) and walk (5.1) ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Both verses indicate that love is a state of being that contextualises one’s conduct, because ἐν ἀγάπῃ diverges from the instrumental uses of μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος and μετὰ μακροθυμίας in 4.2 and the command to walk ἐν ἀγάπῃ is developed through the commendation of thanksgiving and denunciation of sexual immorality and covetousness (5.3-6). Given this, it seems best to syntactically link the occurrence of ἐν ἀγάπῃ in 1.4 to ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ instead of το προορίσας or ἐξελέξατο,<sup>210</sup> so that God’s election ensures that believers will be

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207. See n. 189. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 260. Pace Bouttier, *Éphésiens*, 194: ‘la vérité assure aux croyants une croissance dans l’amour qui les unira plus profondément au Christ.’

208. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 260; Pokorný, *Epheser*, 182; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 190-91; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 213-14.

209. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 102.

210. Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, 84 n. 2.

holy and blameless before him ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Hence, when ἐν ἀγάπῃ is employed twice in 4.15-16, it appears that a qualitative state of love is indicated.<sup>211</sup> Believers are to bear out the truth as an outworking of being ἐν ἀγάπῃ, just as the body builds itself up as an outworking of being ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

The survey also reveals a causal relationship between divine love and the love of believers. It is the experience of active divine love that establishes the qualitative state of love in believers, which is then expressed in their lives and conduct. This is apparent when Paul grounds his commands for believers to walk in love (5.2) and for husbands to love their wives (5.25) in the prevenient and sacrificial love of Christ. Further evidence is found in Paul's prayers for the Ephesians, which begin with their coming to know several aspects of the divine plan and its relevance for their lives (1.15-19a) but culminate in their coming to know the love of Christ (3.17-19). Ironically, the love of Christ ultimately surpasses knowledge, so that the comprehension of believers extends beyond what can be expressed into the realm of the tacit and experiential. Hence, believers are consistently renewed ἐν ἀγάπῃ as they continually experience the reality of Christ's love for them. That reality reminds them of their status as 'holy and blameless before God' and the many blessings they have received from him (1.3-14). The experience of divine love also manifests itself in believers by bearing with one another (4.2) and walking (5.2) ἐν ἀγάπῃ.<sup>212</sup> Finally, within the context of Church growth, the outworking of divine love is the foundation upon which believers bear out the truth in their lives and use their gifts for the building up of the body (4.15-16).<sup>213</sup>

What this suggests is that love is not only the motivation behind the redemptive activities of God and Christ (cf. 2.4; 5.2, 25), but also the 'force' through which God intends to realise the divine plan. Divine love, in other words, grounds

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211. Pace Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 565. Hoehner argues that the preposition ἐν denotes instrument.

212. Paul also suggests this when he notes that the Ephesians' love for all the saints (1.15) is one of two evidences (the other being their faith in Christ) that lead him to thanksgiving.

213. Cf. Schlier, *Epheser*, 205. Schlier states: 'Das Sagen der Wahrheit geschieht ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Damit ist nicht nur die Verkündigung der Wahrheit mit der Liebe verbunden, sondern geradezu in die Liebe verlegt. Die Wahrheit des Evangeliums kommt in der Liebe zur Auswirkung und zur Erscheinung. Die Verkündigung der Wahrheit vollzieht sich in der Weise der Liebe, so wie ja auch V. 16 von der οἰκοδομῇ des Liebes Christi ἐν ἀγάπῃ die Rede ist. Die Wahrheit hat ihre Vertretung in der Liebe, die auf der Erfahrung der Liebe Christi beruht, 3, 19, und so ein Ausfluß der Liebe Gottes in Christus, 2, 4; 5, 2. 25, in der Kraft des Geistes der Liebe ist, 4, 2f.' Whilst Schlier's interpretation of ἀληθεύοντες as the proclamation of the gospel has already been shown to be unnecessarily restrictive, he nevertheless correctly identifies that believers act as an outworking of experiencing divine love.

believers in relationship with God and then becomes the impetus for their participatory response to the divine plan. Furthermore, the use of the organic metaphor of being ‘rooted and grounded’ (3.17 – ἑρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι) may be linked to the architectural metaphors of the letter since the term θεμελιώω carries the semantic range of ‘to establish, make stable’ or ‘to found, lay a foundation’ and the building in 2.21 ‘grows’ (αὕξει) into a temple. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the idea of growth (4.15 – αὐξήσωμεν; 4.16 – τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ σώματος) is now linked with the image of the body ‘building itself up in love’ (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ) in 4.16. Hence, it is by being rooted and grounded in love that the Church not only can come to ‘know’ the love of Christ, but indeed experience it and express it in the midst of corporate growth as the body builds itself up.<sup>214</sup> Being ἐν ἀγάπῃ, then, becomes the qualitative state that enables believers to fulfil the goal of Church growth in 4.13.

The nature of Church growth, therefore, occurs as believers are motivated by active love to embody the truth. Love and truth, however, are established by God through his redemptive activity. Believers have been created according to the truth and encompassed with the inexhaustible reality of Christ’s love. Hence, the qualities needed for Church growth are provided to believers prior to being elicited from them. What remains incumbent upon them is an active response to the realities of God’s redemption via participation with his plan. This implies that individual maturity pertains to active love in the embodiment of the truth that participates with God’s intentions by building up the Church towards its mature state.

### 3.3.4 Summary

The purpose of this section was to determine how the introduction to the paraenetic section directed participation with the divine plan. I have argued that the exhortation, confession of unity and allusion to Ps. 68 all look towards the eschatological goal depicted in 4.13. The goal is described through three parallel clauses, with each one elaborating upon a different feature of the Church. The first clause presents the goal of the Church as unity within the body, and that unity entailed a faith of objective substance and subjective solidarity as well as knowledge of and about Christ. The final clause depicts the goal of the Church as

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214. Best, *Ephesians*, 407.



the cosmic fullness of Christ, which is the harmonious eschatological reality of the Church and all things being in Christ and he in return filling them. The middle clause regards the Church in its corporate maturity, when the maturation of the body has reached its completion. Each of these draws in themes from the *μυστήριον* via reference to unity amongst God's people and a concern for the entire cosmos. Furthermore, the contrasting images of unstable children and proper Church growth elaborate the manner in which this goal is and is not achieved. In contrast to being subject to a host of deceptive errors, believers are to bear out the truth and build up the body through the use of personal gifts as a manifestation of their experience of divine love. This active love and embodiment of the truth will grow the body into its mature state. As such, the realisation of the divine plan of the *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις* is commensurate with the Church attaining to its eschatological maturity.

### **3.4 Conclusion: Christian Maturity in Ephesians**

The premise of this chapter has been that the statement of maturity in Ephesians 4.13 is inadequately assessed by scholars. This is due to the prioritisation of subsidiary themes such as unity and ecclesiology over the main theme of God's plan to unite for himself all things in Christ. It is by following the thread of this main theme through the course of the letter that an appropriate appreciation of the significance of 4.13 may be obtained. From beginning to end, Ephesians has as its goal to reveal this plan so that believers will be moved to participation through the experience of many blessings of divine love. Paul accomplishes this first by unpacking the theological implications of the *μυστήριον* throughout his discourse. This mystery is God's intention to bring the entire cosmos into unity in Christ, and he will accomplish this through the representative work of the Church. He then moves to paraenesis with the intent to direct believers in the ways that participate with the *μυστήριον*. The hope that he places before them in the midst of their activities is the eschatological maturity of the Church. All of the endeavours to foster unity within the Church and impact the world around them are ultimately progressing the Church towards this one hope. Believers, therefore, walk in a manner worthy of their calling (i.e. active love and truth embodiment) because it is in doing so that they participate with God's plan and attain maturity for the Church.

This conclusion also reveals that Paul operated with essentially the same basic framework of the ancient world for the construction of maturity. The theology of Christian maturity operates within the divine plan to unite all things in Christ through the Church, thereby entailing a construction that employs divine (God/Christ/Spirit), social (Church) and cosmic (All Things) reference points. To be sure, there are important differences between the nature of maturity in Ephesians and those assessed in the previous chapter. What this suggests is that this common framework of reference points for the construction of maturity in antiquity did not necessarily entail a particular set of outcomes. Instead, it appears that it was a tacit act of the ancient world to understand the *telos* of humanity in relation to their physical, social and theological environment. This has profound implications for the appropriation of a theology of Christian maturity in the modern world, especially when considering the stark contrast between the corporate aspect of maturity in Ephesians and that of developing individual autonomy in the modern discourse. Yet, before making an effort at a contemporary appropriation, my conclusions about the nature of Christian maturity in Ephesians must be co-ordinated with that found in Colossians. Moreover, my observations on the common framework for constructing maturity in antiquity, and the distinct features of Christian maturity within that ancient discourse, must be set on a firmer analytical foundation.

## Chapter 4 Christian Maturity in Colossians

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct an analysis of the theology of maturity presented by Paul's<sup>1</sup> letter to the church at Colossae. Like Ephesians, Colossians contains explicit references to maturity using the term τέλειος (1.28; 4.12),<sup>2</sup> and this is co-ordinated with the language of growth (1.6, 10 - αὐξάνω; 2.19 - αὕξω, αὕξησις) and fruitfulness (1.6, 10 - καρποφορέω). Unlike Ephesians' strong ecclesiological thrust, however, the primary thrust of Colossians is Christological. Given this, it is to be expected that Colossians will articulate a distinct theology of maturity despite its considerable literary overlap with Ephesians.<sup>3</sup> I will demonstrate that the topic of maturity is integrally related to the main concern of Colossians, which is for believers to remain faithful to Christ until his Parousia. As this suggests, I will argue that whereas Ephesians focused on the corporate aspect of maturity, Colossians reveals stronger interest in maturity of individual believers.

My method of analysis will be to follow the rhetoric of Colossians as closely as possible, with the only exceptions being that I will assess elements of the introductory prayer (1.3-14) and concluding paraenesis (3.5-4.6) as needed. I will demonstrate that the Christological hymn (1.15-20) presents Christ as the pre-eminent sustainer of the Church and cosmos. Reciprocally, the Church is the somatic fullness of Christ, and therefore the instrument of his reconciliatory purpose for the entire cosmos. I will then argue that Paul regards his apostolicity to entail a responsibility to present believers in their eschatological maturity (1.24-

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1. Just as with my chapter on Ephesians, my position to uphold Pauline authorship is not crucial to the present analysis of maturity in the letter. Readers with alternate positions may substitute 'the author' where 'Paul' is stated as author. See also ch. 3, n. 1.
  2. There is greater potential to opt for a different sense for τέλειος in Colossians than there is in Eph. 4.13. However, I will demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for reading these occurrences as 'mature'. See §4.3.1.3.
  3. Regardless of one's position on the authorship of these letters, or whether priority is given to Ephesians or Colossians, the literary relationship between Colossians and Ephesians is apparent in the considerable overlap in subject matter and theology of the letters, significant number of similar phrases, and the identical commendation of Tychicus (Eph. 6.21-22; Col. 4.7-8).

2.5). As such, Paul's concern for the maturity of believers requires that he promote their faithfulness to Christ through their growth and perseverance within the Church that is reconciling all things. I suggest that he considers the Colossians' faithfulness to be in jeopardy due to an incipient 'error'<sup>4</sup> in their community (2.8-19), which will warp their understanding of, and conduct within, the Church and world. He therefore brings the message of the hymn to bear on the error in order to promote an ethic conducive to the growth and perseverance of believers in the Church (2.20-3.4).

## 4.2 The Christological Hymn (1.15-20): Christ and the Created Orders

The purpose of this section is to assess the structure and theological message of the Christological hymn (1.15-20). Whilst the hymn itself has received considerable attention by scholars, significant differences still exist over the origin and structure of the passage. Even though these two elements are intertwined to some degree, the origin of the hymn is of less importance to the present study. I will demonstrate that the hymn co-ordinates a chiasmic structure with a theological message that Christ is not only the pre-eminent sustainer of the original and new creations, but also the goal of their very existence. Furthermore, I will argue that this structure associates the new creation with the Church. Thus, the hymn presents the Church as a cosmic space reconciled for Christ, which makes it the community that is qualified for eschatological maturity.

### 4.2.1 The Structure of the Hymn

An exhaustive survey of available works on the Christological hymn in 1.15-20 is not possible within the scope of this chapter.<sup>5</sup> Yet, it is possible to present the origin and development of scholarship on the topic. Form critical analysis of the hymn began in earnest with Eduard Norden,<sup>6</sup> who found in its contents

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4. Scholarship differs on referring the problem at Colossae as a heresy, error or philosophy. Given that the terms 'heresy' and 'philosophy' are far too specific for the relatively ambiguous insights into the problem afforded by the letter, I opt for the terms 'error' and 'errorists' given that Paul's opposition makes it clear he regards it to be both wrong and harmful. See also §4.4.1.

5. For a comprehensive survey of scholarship on the hymn prior to 1965, see H.J. Gabathuler, *Jesus Christus: Haupt der Kirche - Haupt der Welt*, ATANT 45 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1965), 11-124. The majority of works on the hymn after 1965 will be noted in the subsequent analysis.

6. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1923), esp. 250-54.

indications of Stoic and Platonic cosmological speculation (e.g. τὰ πάντα and τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα) interpreted within Jewish-Hellenistic thought. He consequently divided the passage into two strophes (1.15-18b and 1.18c-20)<sup>7</sup> based upon the parallel introductory phrase ὅς ἐστιν, so that the creation-church structure would fit these cosmological emphases. Ernst Lohmeyer<sup>8</sup> regarded the hymn as derived exclusively from Jewish liturgical ritual where intercession and thanksgiving prayer led into a development of the Word of God, which in Paul's mind was fulfilled in Christ. Hence, he argued that the Christological hymn should include 1.13-14 as an introduction so that it fits the liturgical order of early Christian worship. Lohmeyer then concluded that the whole arrangement should be divided according to a 3-7-3-7 pattern of lines (1.13-14, 15-16e, 16f-17, 18-20).<sup>9</sup> Charles Masson<sup>10</sup> also saw predominantly Semitic influences in the parallelism of the hymn, but argued it should be divided into five strophes (1.15-16b, 16c-f, 17-18, 19-20a, 20bc) using a metrical basis. The early attempts of Lohmeyer and Masson to provide unique arrangements, however, did not win critical approval.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Norden's attention to the linguistic parallels between 1.15 and 1.18 provided a simple division of the hymn that scholars have used as a basis for providing variations.<sup>12</sup>

Following from Norden's initial division of the hymn into two strophes, two major and often complementary trends in scholarship can be seen. The first trend is the attempt to identify authorial additions to a pre-existing hymn and removing them in order to produce a hypothetical 'original' form. The most commonly accepted additions are τῆς ἐκκλησίας in 1.18b and διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ

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7. All versifications of the hymn's structure are presented according to my outline in the following analysis (see p. 139) rather than the versification provided by each author.

8. E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 9.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., 1956), 41-68.

9. Lohmeyer's 3-7-3-7 pattern treats both 1.18ab and 1.18cd as one line each. The conflation of 1.18cd into one line is particularly unusual seeing as he treats 1.15ab as two separate lines.

10. C. Masson, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Colossiens*, CNT 10 (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Nestlé, 1950), 97-107, esp. 105.

11. E.g. P. Ellingworth, 'Colossians i. 15-20 and its Context', *ExpTim* 73 (1961-62), 252-53; E. Käsemann, 'A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy', in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W.J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), 149-50.

12. E.g. J.-N. Aletti, *Colossiens 1,15-20: Genre et exégèse du texte Fonction de la thématique sapientielle*, AnBib 91 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 1-45; P. Benoit, 'L'hymne christologique de Col i, 15-20. Jugement critique sur l'état des recherches', in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J. Neusner, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 226-63; Gabathuler, *Jesus Christus*, 125-31. Cf. Dibelius, *Kolosser, Epheser*, 6-7; M.J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 41-42. Both scholars present a similar division, but opt to begin the second strophe at 1.18a.

αὐτοῦ in 1.20b.<sup>13</sup> The former addition shifted the emphasis of Christ's headship over the cosmos in the original hymn to his authority over the Church,<sup>14</sup> whereas the latter was added in order to transform 'a hymn in praise of the cosmic Lord of creation into a song of redemption which centres in Christ's atonement.'<sup>15</sup> Some scholars also regard references to the cosmic domains and powers in 1.16 and 1.20 as additions made to address the Colossian error. Extreme examples of this line of scholarship are found in the work of James Robinson,<sup>16</sup> who removes all additions and then rearranges and supplements what remains via reference to other passages in Colossians; or Christoph Burger,<sup>17</sup> who discards large portions of the hymn. That Paul made additions and corrections to an original hymn, however, cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. Furthermore, the possibility that Paul also may have omitted material makes the endeavour to derive an original hymn from the present form a futile effort.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the best means forward in the analysis of Col. 1.15-20 is to accept its current form and regard its message as pertinent to the subsequent material in Colossians.<sup>19</sup>

13. Cf. Käsemann, 'Baptismal Liturgy', 150-54. Käsemann argued that the bracketing of these two Christian redactions 'is all that is needed in order to eradicate every specifically Christian motif (154). Hence, he concluded that the Christian adaptation, when taken with the introductory 1.12-14 derived from a pre-Pauline baptismal context, meant that the hymn was to be used in a baptismal liturgy.

14. J.D.G. Dunn, 'The "Body" in Colossians', in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, eds. T.E. Schmidt and M. Silva, JSNTSup 100 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 173; R.P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), 116.

15. R.P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* (London: Oliphants, 1978), 57.

16. J.M. Robinson, 'A Formal Analysis of Colossians 1:15-20', *JBL* 76 (1957), 270-87. Square brackets indicate supplements and/or modifications, whereas the parentheses indicate content that he is uncertain if it should remain:

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου  
 πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως  
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς  
 οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς  
 [καὶ] τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν  
 (ἐκτίσται)  
 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων  
 καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν

ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή  
 πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν  
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ [κατοικεῖ] πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα  
 [τῆς θεότητος (σωματικῶς)]  
 καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ [ἀποκατήλλαξε] τὰ πάντα εἰς  
 αὐτὸν  
 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος  
 ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων

17. C. Burger, *Schöpfung und Versöhnung: Studien zum liturgischen Gut im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief*, WMANT 46 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975), 3-38:

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν  
 πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως  
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα  
 τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα

ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή  
 πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν  
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι  
 εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

18. Cf. T.J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, JSNTSup 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 172 n. 2; N.T. Wright, 'Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20', *NTS* 36 (1990), 445.

19. W. Pöhlmann, 'Die hymnischen All-Prädikationen in Kol 1 15-20', *ZNW* 64 (1973), 53-74; Sappington, *Revelation*, 171-72; Wright, 'Poetry', 445.

The second trend in analyses of the hymn is to accept Norden's basic division but separate out 1.17-18b as a third, middle stanza. Eduard Schweizer<sup>20</sup> first articulated this division, with each strophe composed of three lines through the removal of several clauses (1.16de, 18b, 18e and διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in 1.20b). This arrangement signified Christ's role in creation (1.15-16c, 16f), preservation (1.17-18a) and redemption (1.18cd, 19-20). Johannes Lähnemann<sup>21</sup> argued for the same structure whilst retaining all but τῆς ἐκκλησίας (1.18b) of the hymn's contents. In opposition, some scholars have argued for a return to Norden's division of two strophes,<sup>22</sup> whilst others regard any strophic division of the hymn as altogether spurious.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, many scholars still prefer to treat 1.17-18b as an intermediate third strophe.<sup>24</sup>

Building upon the strengths of a three strophe division, a few scholars argue for a chiasmic structure to the hymn. Ernst Bammel suggested that the hymn composed of a major chiasm (1.15-16a, 16f and 1.18cd, 19-20a), and embedded

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20. E. Schweizer, 'The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ', *NTS* 8 (1961-62), 1-11. Cf. Martin, *Colossians*, 55-57, 63-64. See P. Beasley-Murray, 'Colossians 1:15-20: An Early Christian Hymn Celebrating the Lordship of Christ', in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. D.A. Hagner and M.J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 169-83. Whilst critical of Schweizer's analysis, Beasley-Murray nevertheless provides a similar reconstruction with the further omission of 1.16b. See also R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament*, SNTSMS 21 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 170-72. Hamerton-Kelly supports Robinson's analysis of the structure, but differs by retaining 1.17-18a as an intermediate strophe that closely resembles Schweizer's proposal.
21. J. Lähnemann, *Der Kolosserbrief: Komposition, Situation und Argumentation*, SNT 3 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971), 38-42.
22. E.g. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 84; D.M. Hay, *Colossians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 50-52; I. Karavidopoulos, 'L'hymne christologique de l'Épître aux Colossiens (1,15-20) dans son micro- et macrocontexte', in *Le Christ Tout et en Tous (Col 3,11): L'Épître aux Colossiens*, ed. B. Standaert, S.M.Ben 16 (Rome: Abbaye de S. Paul, 2003), 5-27; Lincoln and Wedderburn, *Later Pauline Letters*, 14-16; E. Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 9.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 77-85; W.G. Rollins, 'Christological Tendenz in Colossians 1:15-20: A *Theologia Crucis*', in *Christological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Harvey K. McArthur*, eds. R.F. Berkey and S.A. Edwards (New York, NY: Pilgrims Press, 1982), 123-38.
23. E.g. C.F.D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 61; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 111-21. Van Kooten's objection of dividing the hymn into stanzas is partially undermined by his own provision of an A-B-C-A'-B' structure (1.15-17, 18a-d, 18e, 19, 20). Cf. R.M. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 126-27. Wilson accepts the possibility of either a two or three strophe arrangement.
24. J.M.G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 59-63; M. Barth and H. Blanke, *Colossians*, vol. 34b, *AB*, trans. A.B. Beck (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994), 193-94, 227-36; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 54-57; Martin, *Reconciliation*, 114-17; A.G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, NIBCNT 10 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 29.

minor chiasm (1.16bc and 1.16de).<sup>25</sup> Yet, given Bammel's premise that the hymn contains an elaborate chiasmus, it is surprising that he disregards a chiastic relationship between 1.16 and 1.20.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, he not only neglects the parallels between 1.17 and 1.18ab, but also relegates these verses and 1.20bc to subsidiary import by detaching them from the chiastic structure.<sup>27</sup> Steven Baugh and Vincent Pizzuto<sup>28</sup> both argue that the hymn fits a Semitic form of chiasm and give priority to 1.17b as the centre point of the letter. Whilst their division of 1.17-18b is appealing by organising this section according to the introductory καί of each line, the conclusion that the focal message of the hymn as 'all things holding together in Christ' cannot be maintained given that Paul does not prioritise this point later in the letter. Wayne McCown and N. T. Wright<sup>29</sup> both propose that a

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25. E. Bammel, 'Versuch zu Col 1 15-20', *ZNW* 52 (1961), 88-95:

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|----|--|
| a  | ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου  |
| b  | πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως   |
| b  | ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα   |
| α  | ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς   |
| β  | καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς  |
| β  | τὰ ὄρατά   |
| α  | καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα  |
| α' | εἴτε θρόνοι  |
| β' | εἴτε κυριότητες  |
| β' | εἴτε ἀρχαί   |
| α' | εἴτε ἐξουσίαι  |
| a  | τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται<br>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων<br>καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν<br>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος (τῆς ἐκκλησίας) |
| a' | ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή  |
| b' | πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν<br>[ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων]  |
| b' | ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι  |
| a' | καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτὸν<br>εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ<br>δι' αὐτοῦ εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς<br>εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς     |

26. Cf. P.T. O'Brien, 'Colossians 1:20 and the Reconciliation of All Things', *RTR* 33 (1974), 46-47.

27. Cf. J.L. Houlden, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 157-62. Houlden acknowledges these weaknesses, but nevertheless accepts Bammel's structure.

28. S.M. Baugh, 'The Poetic Form of Col 1:15-20', *WTJ* 47 (1985), 227-44. Cf. V.A. Pizzuto, *A Cosmic Leap of Faith: An Authorial, Structural, and Theological Investigation of the Cosmic Christology in Col 1:15-20*, CBET 41 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 203-205. Both present the following structure:

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| A  | ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου...             |
| B  | καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων                         |
| C  | καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν                    |
| B' | καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας |
| A' | ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή...                                   |

29. W. McCown, 'The Hymnic Structure of Colossians 1:15-20', *EvQ* 51 (1979), 156-62; Wright, 'Poetry', 445-48; N.T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 64-66. Wright correctly



basic chiasmic structure is evident in the hymn by treating 1.17 and 1.18ab as the centre-point of the chiasmus. Although Wright argues that an absolute symmetry is neither possible nor necessary, he attempts to arrange the hymn in order to create poetic symmetry of lines and syllable counts.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, McCown notes a number of parallels between 1.15-16 and 1.18c-20, but emphasises the syllable counts of each stanza and the ‘refrain’ (i.e. centre-point) so that the hymnody of the chiasmus becomes apparent. As such, these attempts to present a chiasmic structure for the hymn have been undermined by attempts to find poetic symmetry.

I suggest, however, that the observation of a chiasmus in the hymn is essentially correct. The parallelism between 1.15-16a and 1.18cd, 19 has always been recognised, and the parallels between 1.17 and 1.18ab observed by Wright and McCown are justifiable. Yet, it is the theological content of the hymn that focuses on Christ’s role in creation (1.15-17) first and then second on his role in redemption (1.18-20), that ultimately proves this is a chiasmus. The commonly recognised shift in subject matter from creation to redemption agrees with a chiasmic structure that places 1.15-16 and 1.18c-20 in parallel, with the pivotal moment occurring between 1.17 and 1.18ab in the centre-point. What this suggests is that symmetry in theological content is more important than symmetry in poetic

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argues that the parallelism between 1.17 and 1.18ab has been neglected due to the influence of the view that τῆς ἐκκλησίας is a Christian interpolation.

30. For instance, Wright separates 1.15a into two lines so that his 1.15 parallels 1.18c-e. He also moves τοῦ σώματος from 1.18a to 1.18b so that the syllable counts of the two lines in both 1.17 and 1.18ab are roughly parallel. As such, some of the theological parallels are lost, which a reproduction of Wright’s presentation should reveal:

- A ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν  
τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου  
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως  
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα  
ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς  
τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα  
εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες  
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι  
τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται
- B καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων  
καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν
- B' καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ  
τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας
- A' ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχὴ  
πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν  
ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων  
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν  
πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι  
καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτὸν  
εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ [δι’ αὐτοῦ]  
εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

structure.<sup>31</sup> Thus, I propose that a helpful arrangement of the chiasmic structure is as follows:<sup>32</sup>

A	ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου	15a
	πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως	15b
	ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα	16a
a	ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	16b
b	τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα	16c
	εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες	16d
	εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι	16e
c	τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται	16f
B	καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων	17a
	καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν	17b
B'	καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος	18a
	τῆς ἐκκλησίας	18b
A'	ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή	18c
	πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν	18d
	ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων	18e
	ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι	19
c'	καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν	20a
b'	εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ	20b
a'	εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς	20c

I will justify this division through further observations on the B-B' and A-A' parallels, thereby demonstrating how the hymn's structure pertains to its message.

The pair of couplets (1.17 and 1.18ab) that form the centre-point of the chiasmus begin with καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν:

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων	καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος
καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν	τῆς ἐκκλησίας

When compared in parallel, it can be seen that both couplets articulate Christ's role as the one who sustains that which he is pre-eminent over. This is made explicit in the B couplet. That Christ is πρὸ πάντων indicates temporal and authoritative priority<sup>33</sup> with respect to all things,<sup>34</sup> and this priority entails that he

31. Pace McCown, 'Hymnic Structure', 158-62; Wright, 'Poetry', 449-50.

32. My presentation of the hymn omits the textual variant δι' αὐτοῦ in 1.20b. The manuscript evidence is equally weighted in terms of numbers, with B, D\*, F, G, I, L, 075, 0278, 81, 104, 1175, 1241, 1739, 1881, 2464 omitting the variant and  $\square^{46}$ ,  $\square$ , A, C, D<sup>1</sup>,  $\Psi$ , 048<sup>vid</sup>, 33,  $\square$  including it. Hence, most scholars opt to retain the variant because it receives earlier attestation and represents the more difficult reading. However, the majority of these scholars also bracket the phrase and disregard it in their analysis. It is possible that the criterion of the more difficult reading cannot bear its own weight. Furthermore, the removal of the phrase from later manuscripts may indicate a scribal attempt to clarify what was understood of the text. Cf. G.E. Sterling, 'Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts', in *Wisdom and Logos: Studies in Jewish Thought in Honor of David Winston*, eds. D.T. Runia and G.E. Sterling, SPhiloAn 9 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 235 n. 81.

33. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 203-204; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 65; Harris, *Colossians*, 47; P.T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, *WBC* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 47. Pace Wilson, *Colossians*, 143. Wilson accepts only the temporal significance.

34. Whilst πάντων does not occur in the technical form τὰ πάντα, it does convey the same sense due to the surrounding occurrences of τὰ πάντα in 1.16a, 16f, 17b. Cf. Harris, *Colossians*, 47.

sustains all things ἐν αὐτῷ. Because the B' couplet is not as explicit as B, the significance of its message will be drawn from its parallelism with the B couplet and then confirmed in the subsequent analysis of κεφαλή.<sup>35</sup> Christ's role as ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος stands parallel to being πρὸ πάντων, which suggests that κεφαλή entails both an authoritative rule over the body<sup>36</sup> and a temporal priority as his organic relationship to it as its source of life.<sup>37</sup> This body is then clarified by the genitive τῆς ἐκκλησίας that stands in apposition to τοῦ σώματος.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, that it parallels τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν in B indicates that Christ's supremacy over the Church as his body also entails that he supplies its very life. This is confirmed by the later statement of 2.19 when Christ's headship is linked to his nourishing and cohesive force within the body. As such, the centre point of the chiasmus presents Christ as pre-eminent over the creation (B) and the Church (B'), and endows that pre-eminence with a sustaining power.

The parallelism between 1.15-16 (A) and 1.18c-20 (A') is more complex as indicated by the following delineation:

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως	ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν ἵνα γένηται ἐν πάσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι	ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ
τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται	εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

The first parallel between the two strophes established by the introductory ὅς ἐστιν presents a lack of symmetry. The term εἰκὼν is modified by the genitival clause τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου in A, whereas ἀρχή receives no similar modification in A'.<sup>39</sup> Yet, by attending to the theological symmetry of the two passages, rather than expecting a rigid grammatical or poetic symmetry, a coherent and parallel message can be found. The theological significance of the A couplet is in the allusion of

35. See §4.2.2.2.

36. Cf. Martin, *Colossians*, 59; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 49.

37. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 68.

38. Speculation that ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος reveals the substratum of an original pre-Christian hymn, which makes τῆς ἐκκλησίας a Christian interpolation, is ultimately unverifiable. Whilst it is possible that ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος derived from Hellenistic philosophies that made the cosmos the body of a divine head (e.g. Zeus, Logos), this is not certain. Additionally, that this image (like that in Ephesians) prioritises Christ as the metaphorical head of the body, whereas the head is simply another body part 1 Corinthians 12.21, does not represent a radical break from the Pauline tradition. Nothing in the Corinthian correspondence suggests that Paul used the head metaphor in rigid fashion that disallows its expansion here.

39. Recall Wright's attempt to solve this problem by poetically balancing the delineation (n. 30).

εἰκῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου and πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως to the Jewish sapiential tradition,<sup>40</sup> so that Christ now takes on the Wisdom's role as the mediator of creation. At the same time, the possibility that εἰκῶν also alludes to the creation of Adam in Gen. 1 is confirmed by the renewal of the new man κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν (3.10).<sup>41</sup> This suggests that the A couplet operates with an integrated Adam-Wisdom Christology,<sup>42</sup> where Christ embodies the roles of Wisdom and Adam in the original creation. Given this, the occurrence of ἀρχή without elaboration in the A' couplet is likely an allusion to Gen 1.1 that has been creatively reapplied within a redemptive context of the new creation through the next clause πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν.<sup>43</sup> As such, through his assumption of the roles of Wisdom and Adam, Christ enjoys a pre-eminent position in the creation and new creation.

The next parallel in the A-A' strophes begins with the parallel phrasing ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ. This clause is consistent in both strophes through the depiction of Christ as the ἐν-dimension of existence for the created order, which 'reflects the Hellenistic Jewish idea of the Logos as the "place" in which the world exists.'<sup>44</sup> Given this, I propose that πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19 functions as a reference to the new creation parallel to the original creation (τὰ πάντα) in 1.16a. This will be substantiated in

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40. Dunn, *Colossians*, 88-91; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 43-45; Turner, 'Ephesians', 187-91; Wilson, *Colossians*, 128-29.

41. D. Steenburg, 'The Worship of Adam and Christ as the Image of God', *JSNT* 39 (1990), 95-109, esp. 99; N.T. Wright, 'Adam in Pauline Christology', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1983 Seminar Papers*, ed. K.H. Richards, SBLSP 22 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 384-85. Wright also argues that the echoes of the creation mandate in the expressions 'bearing fruit and multiplying' further justify this association.

42. Pace C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, 'Wisdom Christology and the Partings of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity', in *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries*, eds. S.E. Porter and B.W.R. Pearson, JSNTSup 192 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 64-66. Fletcher-Louis argues that the hymn's statements about Christ are all derived from Jewish Wisdom speculation, but fails to explain why an Adamic component to the Christology should be excluded. I propose that an integrated Adam-Wisdom Christology is apparent in 1.16 when Paul states: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα... τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται. Whereas it was common in Jewish Wisdom contexts to refer to all things being created in and through Wisdom, it was never said that all things were created *for* Wisdom. Likewise, Jewish Adam speculation replaced the fallen first steward of creation with the redeemed elect steward Israel, which in some sense was pre-existent, and therefore the one for whom the world was made. Yet, it was never thought that all things were created in and through Adam/Israel. It is only through the confluence of these two into an Adam-Wisdom Christology that all things could be regarded as being made in, through and for him. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 91-92; S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 257-68; Pizzuto, *Cosmic Leap*, 257-65; Wright, 'Adam', 386.

43. C.F. Burney, 'Christ as the APXH of Creation', *JTS* 27 (1926), 160-77.

44. Dunn, *Colossians*, 91 n. 20. See also the following discussion of prepositional metaphysics.

the subsequent analysis of σῶμα and πλήρωμα.<sup>45</sup> Following this clause, another parallel occurs in an embedded chiasmus in that the ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς/ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς/τὰ πάντα/δι' αὐτοῦ/εἰς αὐτόν order in 1.16b-f is essentially reversed in 1.20.<sup>46</sup> McCown notes this chiastic pattern, but fails to explore its significance.<sup>47</sup> I suggest that this embedded chiasmus draws attention to the content of both sections. The content of A, given in 1.16c-e, defines the scope of τὰ πάντα as comprehensively inclusive, incorporating all visible and invisible things, even thrones, dominions, rules or authorities, irrespective of whether they recognise this reality. In contrast, the content of A' in 1.20b restricts the scope of the new creation specifically to that which has made peace through the blood of his cross. Alternatively, it could be described as providing the grounds by which Christ's reconciliation of all things will be accomplished. In either case, the manner in which the peace of Christ's cross obtains this cosmic ramification must be resolved in the subsequent sections. For now, it can be observed that the second parallel in A-A' elaborates upon the first. Christ's pre-eminence over the creation and the new creation entails that he is the ἐν-dimension of their existence, which included everything in the original created order and therefore encompasses everything within the scope of Christ's reconciliation accomplished on the cross.

The chiastic structure that I have proposed provides symmetry to the theological content of the hymn. Yet, it is apparent that it does not provide a perfect structural symmetry. I suggest, however, that the deviations from the chiastic pattern are more interesting and provocative, because they purposely draw the readers' attention in order to express something significant. The first deviation is the unparalleled ἵνα clause of A' in 1.18e. Wright's argument that it 'sums up the effect'<sup>48</sup> of 1.18cd cannot be maintained since ἵνα presents a purpose clause rather than a summation. As such, Christ is the beginning of the new creation as the firstborn from the dead *so that* he might be pre-eminent in everything.<sup>49</sup> In other words, Christ's resurrection preceded all others as the divine act of maintaining his pre-eminence over the created order within the new creation. This reinforces the

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45. See §4.2.2.3.

46. Pizzuto, *Cosmic Leap*, 173-81.

47. McCown, 'Hymnic Structure', 159.

48. Wright, 'Poetry', 450.

49. I take ἐν πᾶσιν as distinct from the technical term τὰ πάντα, so that it expresses the comprehensive scope (i.e. 'in everything') of Christ's pre-eminence. See also §4.2.2.1.

statement in 1.18c of Christ being the ἀρχή in that there was no ‘new creation’ prior to his resurrection. Furthermore, as the beginning of the new creation, Christ again occupies a Wisdom-Adam role that maintains and extends his pre-eminence into this new order.

The second deviation occurs in the embedded chiasmus of 1.16b-f and 1.20 when the prepositional phrase εἰς αὐτόν disrupts the chiastic pattern. Had it occurred before τὰ πάντα in 1.16f, or vice versa before δι’ αὐτοῦ in 1.20a, a perfect symmetry would have been achieved. Yet, that εἰς αὐτόν comes at the end of both verses accentuates the claim that because all things were created *in* him and *through* him, they were also created *for* him. The division of metaphysical causality by means of technical preposition usage was common to the philosophical and religious schools of antiquity, wherein ἐκ denoted the origin or material cause, διὰ the instrument, ὑπό the agent, κατά the form, ἐν the place or time, and εἰς the goal or purpose.<sup>50</sup> In speaking of the causal goal or purpose, Philo stated that it was the motive or object for that which has been generated.<sup>51</sup> In other words, by claiming that all things were created *for* Christ, the hymn identifies him as the object towards which the creation is properly directed. Whilst it is never explicit in the letter as a whole, I will show in the following section that this original intention is assumed to be lost or broken. The reconciliation of all things, therefore, has as its goal the restoration of creation to being properly directed as *for* Christ.<sup>52</sup> Hence, Christ is the original goal of cosmic causality, which entails that this goal of all things being *for* him is maintained in the redemptive causality.<sup>53</sup> The two deviations from the chiastic structure therefore reinforce one another. As the one who is pre-eminent over the old and new creations by existing temporally prior to them and sustaining them, Christ is ultimately the one *for* whom all things that have been made *in* and *through* him should have been, and therefore once again will be, appropriately directed.

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50. Cf. Sterling, ‘Prepositional Metaphysics’, 219-38. With thanks to Dr. Michael Lakey, who brought the issue of prepositional metaphysics and this essay to my attention.

51. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 123.

52. The sense of the preposition εἰς should be consistent between both clauses, rather than distinguishing the first occurrence (1.16) as ‘for’ but the second (1.20) as ‘to’. Given that Paul’s prepositional work draws from technical language in ancient reflection on causation, I regard it as expressing the goal of causality (i.e. ‘for’).

53. Burney, ‘Christ’, 175-77. Cf. Sterling, ‘Prepositional Metaphysics’, 235; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 122-25.

In summary, the theological message of the hymn in Col. 1.15-20 is that the entire cosmos was created *in, through* and, most importantly, *for* Christ who not only is pre-eminent in that created order but also sustains it. Moreover, the theological message participates with the chiastic structure of the hymn in that the first half presents this reality in the original creation and the second half depicts the restoration of that original intent in the new creation. The relevance of this to Paul's concern for the maturity of believers *in* Christ is that the Church is presented as reconciled *in* Christ. The subsequent implication is that this reconciled community is extending redemption *through* Christ to all things so that they will be *for* him. However, the assessment of the hymn has revealed several elements that require further exploration. First, it remains to be seen if any material is available in the letter that clarifies how or in what way the original intentions for the created order were lost. Second, it is necessary to consider further the import of κεφαλή for the hymn and letter as a whole. Finally, the manner in which Christ's reconciliatory work on the cross obtains a cosmic scope must be determined. Each of these topics will be addressed in that order through the following sections.

#### **4.2.2 The Message of the Hymn**

The purpose of this section is to explore the relationship between Christ, the Church and the cosmos. I intend to accomplish this through a brief study of τὰ πάντα in Colossians, which will reveal that 'all things' refers to the cosmic spheres of heaven and earth that stand in tension with each other by being properly directed or not (respectively) *for* Christ. Next, I will consider the nature of Christ's headship as it stands in relation to the Church and cosmos. I will clarify that within the earthly sphere of the cosmos, Christ's headship extends only to the Church. Based upon this premise, I will show that the Church is therefore the first-fruits of the new creation in the world and consequently serves as a reconciling agent within the old creation that draws all things into relationship with Christ.

#### 4.2.2.1 Τὰ Πάντα: Ethical Realms

The term πᾶς occurs in the neuter form with the definite article only six times in Colossians (1.16af, 17, 20; 3.8, 11).<sup>54</sup> Even amongst such a small collection, it is apparent that τὰ πάντα does not consistently convey a technical meaning of ‘all things’ as a reference to the entirety of the cosmos. For instance, τὰ πάντα in 3.8 clearly refers to the following list of vices that are to be put away. Nevertheless, the four occurrences in the Christological hymn all carry the technical sense. The term is given the explicit scope of the cosmic domains (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) in 1.16f and 1.20.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the cosmic sense of τὰ πάντα is evident in that ‘all things’ are created in him (1.16a) and hold together in him (1.17), so that nothing is excluded from its comprehensive scope. Within the Christological hymn, therefore, τὰ πάντα denotes the entirety of the cosmic order.

The technical use of τὰ πάντα in the hymn requires an assessment of the clause ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός in 3.11. If τὰ πάντα denotes the technical cosmological sense of ‘all things’, it would present a *non sequitur* with the preceding abolition of human division markers. In other words, the claim that Christ is the cosmos (i.e. ‘all things’) would fail to function as a contrast to the list of human categorisation. However, it is possible to comprehend the phrase in a manner that still possesses cosmological significance. Specifically, George van Kooten’s<sup>56</sup> observations about the philosophical background of πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν clarify the potential meaning of this virtually identical phrase here. The phrase originated with the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras who taught that ‘in everything there is a portion of everything’,<sup>57</sup> which indicated to him that ‘each single object is characterized by that which is predominantly present in it.’<sup>58</sup> Applied to the Church, it can be said that Christ has now become the new coherent reality that undermines any attempt to divide and separate believers.<sup>59</sup> Yet, the

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54. The textual variant that omits the definite article in 3.11 is weak and the stronger witness to its inclusion should be accepted.

55. O’Brien, *Colossians*, 54-56. O’Brien provides a succinct survey of scholars who reject that the object of ἀποκαταλλάξαι in 1.20 could be the impersonal cosmos. Given that this concern has already been addressed in the previous chapter (§3.2.2.2), no repetition of the same arguments will be made here.

56. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 104-105, 157-59.

57. E.g. Anaxagoras, *Fragments*, B6, B11, B12.

58. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 105.

59. This would be in keeping with Paul’s comments in 1 Cor. 12.4-6 that even though there are a variety of gifts, services and activities in the Church, they all come from the same Spirit, Lord and God who empowers τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν (12.6).



cosmological significance that the phrase held in its philosophical usage is also evident as well. In contrast to the worldly division markers of ethnicity, nationality or social status, Christ has established the Church as a new cosmic sphere in which such divisions are operative no longer because of his pervasive presence. The implications of this will be drawn out the subsequent analysis.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the cosmological implications of 3.11, only the Christological hymn uses τὰ πάντα in a technical sense as a reference to the entire cosmos. As such, some question remains as to the pertinence of its cosmic scope for the remainder of the letter. The means of assessing this is through attention to the elaboration of τὰ πάντα with the cosmic spheres: ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (1.16, 20). The plural form οὐρανοῖς (cf. 1.5) reflects the stratified conception of heaven within Jewish thought, where the upper regions were inhabited by God and angelic beings and the lower parts contained cosmic forces (i.e. rulers and authorities) that were commonly regarded to be hostile.<sup>61</sup> Despite this image of a potentially disunited heavenly realm, Paul's concern for the redemptive effects of Christ's work remains focused within the world. The gospel spreads ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ (1.6), which is clarified later to be specifically the earthly realm by the statement that it is proclaimed ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν (1.23). Yet, this does not eliminate heaven from the scope of redemption altogether, but rather sets it apart as a different sphere that offers perspective on the believer's life in the world. The orientation towards this heavenly perspective is already established when the hope of believers is stored in heaven (1.5). It is then fortified in 1.12-14 through references to 'the saints in light' and 'kingdom of his beloved Son' that contrast the 'domain of darkness'. Given that this light-darkness motif draws upon an eschatological dualism familiar to Jewish Apocalypticism, these references are rightly taken as allusions to the spiritual realm of opposing dominions.<sup>62</sup> By drawing upon this heavenly theme within a soteriological context, Paul indicates 'daß der Herrschaftswchsel stattgefunden hat, der das Leben der Glaubenden

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60. See §4.2.2.3.

61. Dunn, *Colossians*, 59-60; Wilson, *Colossians*, 89.

62. Dunn, *Colossians*, 77-78. Cf. P. Benoit, "Ἄγιοι en Colossiens 1.12: Hommes ou Anges?" in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, eds. M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 83-99. This is strengthened by Benoit's argument that the ἄγιοι in 1.12 may likely refer to the angels, or at least include them within the scope of 'the saints'.

schlechthin bestimmt'.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the heavenly perspective will now become determinative for the life of the believer within the earthly realm.

Additionally, τὰ πάντα encompasses τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι (1.16). Whilst the visible things, namely the θρόνοι and κυριότητες do not feature in the rest of the letter, the invisible entities do reappear when Paul twice notes Christ's supremacy over the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (2.10, 15). Further evidence of the cosmic implications of these entities is found in the relationship between the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι and the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Whilst Paul regards the philosophy and deceit of the errorists to be κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (2.8), he counters the error with the argument that Christ is the head of all ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (2.10). Christ's triumph with respect to the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι is linked to his crucifixion and resurrection (2.14-15),<sup>64</sup> which believers spiritually participate in through baptism (2.11-13). As such, Paul questions why they live as still alive in the world when they have died to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (2.20). What this suggests is a present tension between heavenly and earthly experience of the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι. Even though these cosmic realities are subordinate to Christ, believers do not experience this hierarchy as a present earthly reality. Instead, it is a heavenly reality in which they participate through the death and resurrection with Christ. In other words, Paul does not state that the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are not operative in the world. Instead, he removes believers from the sphere of the world's influence by claiming they have died with Christ and live with him in the heavenly sphere.

It still remains to be seen how the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι can on the one hand be subordinate to Christ in the heavenly realm, but on the other hand represented as operative in the earthly realm. I suggest that the resolution of this apparent paradox is found in returning to the causal language of the hymn. Specifically, the hymn identified that all things are to be appropriately directed as *for* Christ. Within the heavenly realm, the appropriate placement of the στοιχεῖα

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63. Lohse, *Kolosser*, 73.

64. Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 61-63; R. Yates, 'Colossians 2.15: Christ Triumphant', *NTS* 37 (1991), 573-91. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 166-70. Carr and Yates both argue that 2.15 portrays the celebration of angelic powers who publicly praise Christ's atoning death. Dunn, however, contends that this is unsupported by ancient parallels. Yet, Dunn does explain why 2 Cor. 2.14, with its virtually identical grammatical structure, is not an ancient parallel. To be sure, the interpretation that Carr and Yates provide is problematic when they take ἐν αὐτῷ to denote Christ's work on the cross. However, their reading of Col. 2.15 more closely apprehends the intended meaning of the verse.

and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι with the hierarchy of powers indicates that they are now directed in their proper manner. Indeed, heaven becomes indicative of being properly directed *for* Christ given that Paul exhorts believers to seek and set their minds on that realm when considering how to live on earth (3.1-4).<sup>65</sup> In contrast, within the earthly realm, humanity still espouses traditions that place the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι in a position either contrary or superior to Christ, and in so doing misdirects them. Whilst this proposal must be substantiated by assessing the implications of the term κεφαλή in Colossians, the present analysis is sufficient to demonstrate that Colossians depicts a tension between the cosmological realms of heaven and earth. Heaven is the place of life and proper directedness *for* Christ, but earth is the place where death, sin and rebellion still operate. This is important to the topic of maturity in that the hope of the eschatological, glorious existence is currently fixed upon the righteous life of the heavenly realm.

#### 4.2.2.2 Κεφαλή: Pre-eminent Sustainer

Even though the term κεφαλή only occurs three times in Colossians (1.18; 2.10, 19), its significance to the letter must not be underestimated. The first instance in the hymn clearly assigns Christ's headship to the Church in the section that presents the divine intention to reconcile all things. The next occurrence is found in Paul's initial rebuttal of the Colossian error that prompted the writing of the letter. The final use is when Paul concludes that the detrimental effect of the error is what amounts to the individual believer being disassociated from the κεφαλή and therefore from the body (σῶμα) that is growing in the world. Yet, the import of the term in these passages is difficult to assess, especially when considering that the object of Christ's headship is the Church in 1.18, the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι in 2.10, and an undefined σῶμα in 2.19.<sup>66</sup> I suggest that it is the ambiguity created when Paul varies the objects of Christ's headship that has promulgated the ongoing discussion of whether κεφαλή denotes 'source' or 'authority'. Because of this, I will analyze the term in each instance in order to draw a common theme

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65. Cf. A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*, SNTSMS 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 130-31.

66. Whilst a few scholars argue that σῶμα in 2.19 refers to the cosmos, I will demonstrate that the majority interpretation as a reference to the Church is correct. See §4.2.2.3.

throughout the letter. I will address the instance of κεφαλή in 2.10 first in order to justify my observations made in the previous section. The conclusions drawn from this will then clarify a reading of the two other occurrences in 1.18 and 2.19.

An analysis of κεφαλή in 2.10 will reveal that the common efforts amongst scholars to assess the term within the senses of ‘authority’ and/or ‘source’<sup>67</sup> insufficiently apprehends its significance for the subsequent statements in 2.11-15. When these verses are brought to bear upon the question, it becomes apparent that Paul is attempting neither to argue simply that Christ has authority over the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσία,<sup>68</sup> nor to assert simply that they are part of his ‘cosmic body’.<sup>69</sup> Instead, Paul encapsulates these potential meanings within the greater claim that Christ has redirected these heavenly realities as *for* him in his crucifixion and resurrection. This is articulated in 2.11-15 when Paul explains the benefits believers have received through their participation with Christ’s redemptive work. Significant to the present inquiry is Paul’s use of the noun ἀπέκδυσις (2.11) and its cognate verb ἀπεκδύομαι (2.15) to bracket his exposition. The former term depicts the stripping off of the σῶμα τῆς σαρκός whereas the latter refers to the stripping off of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσία. The common link between these two objects is their relation to the στοιχεῖα. The philosophical and religious milieu of antiquity conceived the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσία to be synonymous with, or even deified forms of, the στοιχεῖα.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the human body was considered to be constituted by the στοιχεῖα and therefore enslaved to their destructive processes and desires.<sup>71</sup> Hence, in claiming that Christ’s death and resurrection entailed the stripping off of the body of flesh (2.11) and the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσία (2.15), Paul indicates that Christ no longer possesses a body that is constituted by the στοιχεῖα. In other words, the

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67. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 102; J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: MacMillan, 1927), 181; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 44; Wilson, *Colossians*, 199.

68. E.g. C.E. Arnold, ‘Jesus Christ: “Head” of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians)’, in *Jesus of Nazareth - Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, eds. J.B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 364; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 316; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 152; Martin, *Colossians*, 81; Moule, *Colossians*, 94; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 114; P. Pokorný, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser*, THKNT 10/I (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 103-104; E. Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976), 109; B. Witherington, III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 156; Wright, *Colossians*, 104.

69. Dibelius, *Kolosser, Epheser*, 21-22; Dunn, *Colossians*, 153; Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, 107; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 23-27; Wilson, *Colossians*, 199.

70. Cf. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 100-103.

71. Cf. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 60-65.

στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι have been re-ordered with respect to Christ in that his resurrection body reveals that they are subject to him rather than the reverse.

That the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are re-ordered as *for* him is confirmed in a reading of 2.15. Whilst the majority interpretation holds that Christ triumphed over the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι and displayed them as defeated and humiliated captives, Roy Yates<sup>72</sup> persuasively reverses this understanding with the argument that the term θριαμβεύω draws from the Roman practice of triumphal procession wherein the victor leads his victorious army. This imagery accords with the only other NT use of θριαμβεύω in 2 Cor. 2.14 where the apostles are led by Christ in triumph rather than as defeated captives. As such, the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are not boldly displayed (ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ) in humiliated defeat but rather as triumphant ἐν αὐτῷ. Yates' acceptance of Carr's<sup>73</sup> rendering of ἐν αὐτῷ as 'on the cross', however, unnecessarily restricts the clause to the historical event of the crucifixion.<sup>74</sup> Envisaged within the passage is Christ's death and resurrection, which suggests that the bold display involves his resurrected body as much as his crucified body. Given that the bold display cannot be linked to one specific historical event, the technical meaning 'in him' of ancient prepositional metaphysics is to be preferred at this point. As such, Christ's bold display of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι being led in triumphal procession is that they are now *in* him rather than holding his body subject to them. It is the combined force of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι being led in triumph *in* him, rather than as defeated antagonists, that would have conveyed the sense of being redirected as *for* him. Hence, Christ as head of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι claims that he holds authority over them, that he sustains them *in* him, and that they are directed as *for* him.

This understanding of κεφαλή in 2.10 indicates the potential import of the term in 1.18 and 2.19. Whilst the object of Christ's headship in 2.19 is an unspecified body, the majority interpretation that takes it to be the Church is correct. Confirmation of this is found in the parallel between the σῶμα that is 'knit together' (συμβιβάζω) in 2.19 and Christ's σῶμα, the Church (1.24), that Paul

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72. Yates, 'Christ Triumphant', 574-80.

73. Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 61-66.

74. Indeed, the crucifixion by itself would have been regarded as the superiority of the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι in that their destructive force of death is operative. It is only when the resurrection is included that a reversal occurs so that Christ now has authority over them and sustains them in him.

labours for in order to see their hearts ‘knit together’ (2.2 – συμβιβάζω).<sup>75</sup> Thus, both of these passages refer to Christ’s headship over the Church as his body. Furthermore, the concepts of authority and sustainer are clearly indicated by both occasions. I have already established that κεφαλή in 1.18 conveys Christ’s headship as an authority over that which is sustained by him via its parallels with 1.17. In 2.19, Christ’s headship is explicitly linked to a sustaining role in that he nourishes the body. The notion of authority is implicit in that the errorists are disjoined from this sustaining source by not ‘holding fast’ (κρατέω) to it. The sense of κρατέω implies an adherence to Christ as authority, and this is confirmed by the fact that the error represents a departure from him (cf. 2.6-8). In other words, κεφαλή in both of these instances expresses that Christ’s headship entails that he holds authority over the Church and sustains it. Hence, the theological relevance of κεφαλή to maturity *in* Christ is that the Church is governed and sustained *in* the one who is its head. However, this programme does not necessarily entail that the Church is therefore appropriately directed as *for* Christ. As such, I will demonstrate that Paul intended for this to be understood in his language of κεφαλή through a consideration of the ecclesiology of Colossians.

#### 4.2.2.3 Ἐκκλησία: Somatic Fullness

Of the four instances of the term ἐκκλησία in Colossians, only two refer to the universal Church (1.18, 24) whereas the other two refer to local congregations (4.15, 16). Furthermore, the two references to the universal Church metaphorically depict it as Christ’s σῶμα without elaboration. As such, the material available to assess the ecclesiology of Colossians would appear to be only Paul’s brief statements about the σῶμα in 2.19 and his comments on, and prayer for, the Colossian congregation. Yet, I suggest that further material for this analysis is found in the Colossian hymn. Specifically, I will demonstrate that 1.19-20 presents the Church as the cosmic space of the new creation within the present created order. This will entail a reading of the πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19 as a reference to the Church as the somatic fullness of Christ.<sup>76</sup> The benefit of this interpretation is that

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75. Cf. Eph. 4.16 where the body that is ‘knit together’ is clearly the Church.

76. To be sure, I am not the first to consider that the Church is the reference here. At least two scholars are open to this as a possibility: Bogdasavich, ‘*Pleroma*’, 119; J.H. Burtness, ‘All the Fullness’, *Dialog* 3 (1964), 259. Indeed, Burtness provides a justification for this by noting that both 1.19 and 2.9 occur in contexts where Christ’s relationship with the Church is active. However, to the best of my knowledge, the present analysis represents the first systematic and exegetical reading of an ecclesiological referent.

it not only maintains the theological and structural symmetry of the hymn, but also provides the ecclesiology underlying Paul's apostolic ministry and his rebuttal of the error in Colossae.

The interpretation of 1.19-20 is complicated by several features in that it must (i) decipher the nebulous terminology of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα; (ii) identify the subject of the verb εὐδόκησεν; (iii) determine the temporal relationship of the participle εἰρηνοποιήσας to εὐδόκησεν; (iv) align this reading within the theology and structure of the hymn; and (v) co-ordinate this entire effort with the similar statement in 2.9 (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς). The majority of interpreters<sup>77</sup> give priority to the first and last of these tasks by regarding 2.9 as the decisive commentary on 1.19. As such, they treat πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19 as an abbreviated form of 2.9, so that the verse reads 'in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell'. Whilst this rendering inherently shifts the meaning of τῆς θεότητος in 2.9 to an implicit τοῦ θεοῦ in 1.19, it nevertheless retains the same sense of the full divine nature. Yet, this interpretation is suspect considering that it makes the divine nature a discrete agent capable of *volitionally* dwelling in Christ (1.19) and reconciling all things (1.20).<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, if the participle εἰρηνοποιήσας presents an event antecedent to the verb εὐδόκησεν, the dwelling of the divine nature in Christ becomes not only a result of the crucifixion rather than the incarnation, but also an event predicated upon the resolution of some hostility between the two. However, if the participle represents a contemporaneous event,<sup>79</sup> then the divine nature again becomes the active agent that makes peace with an unspecified object. Regardless of which temporal aspect is accepted, the interpretation of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as the full divine nature that is capable of volition and redemptive purpose is not without significant theological discontinuities with the rest of the NT.<sup>80</sup>

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77. E.g. H.M. Carson, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), 44-46; Dunn, *Colossians*, 99-102; Harris, *Colossians*, 49-50; Hay, *Colossians*, 61-62; Martin, *Colossians*, 59-60; Pokorný, *Kolosser*; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 65-67; Wilson, *Colossians*, 151-54.

78. Both κατοικῆσαι and ἀποκαταλλάξαι are governed by the finite verb εὐδόκησεν so that the subject of the verb is also that of both infinitives. Moreover, εὐδοκέω carries a volitional sense when followed by an infinitive.

79. An aorist participle may denote either antecedent or contemporaneous activity when linked to an aorist finite verb.

80. Whilst some ancient commentators took πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as a reference to the divine nature (e.g. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians*, III; Origen, *On Prayer*, 23.2), they do not address the volitional aspect of εὐδοκέω.

Several scholars provide a modified interpretation in an effort to resolve the problems of the majority reading by proposing God as the subject of εὐδόκησεν by regarding him to be the implied referent of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα.<sup>81</sup> C. F. D. Moule<sup>82</sup> argues for this from a strained interpretation of πλήρωμα in Ephesians. More commonly, scholars<sup>83</sup> turn to the LXX, from which they argue that God's intentions to fill all things and his election of Mount Zion as his dwelling place have now converged in the person of Christ. Indeed, the latter argument seems to be supported by a close parallel in terminology from the LXX Ps. 67.17: εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς κατοικεῖν ἐν αὐτῷ. Furthermore, these scholars suggest that God is usually the subject of εὐδοκέω in the LXX and NT. They also argue that their interpretation provides a proper subject for the masculine εἰρηνοποιήσας.<sup>84</sup> Because of this, they render πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in Col. 1.19 as 'God in all his fullness', claiming that this resolves the critical need for a personal, and even divine, agent behind all of the verbal activities in 1.19-20.

This reading, however, replaces the problems of the majority interpretation with new ones. First, it rests on a transition from statements of God's activity in the LXX and Philo wherein he fills the cosmos to a highly elliptical expression about God's fullness as a divine state-of-being. Second, it requires 1.19 to be an allusion to, or echo of, LXX Ps. 67.17 that is in no way signalled by, or prepared for, in the rest of Colossians. Third, no language about God's filling activities occurs in LXX Ps. 67. Hence, the interpretive manoeuvre of linking these separate OT concepts from this one statement certainly requires a significant hermeneutical leap on the reader's part that is not supported by the text. Fourth, no attempt is made to co-ordinate this reading of 1.19 with that of 2.9. In particular, it is unclear how πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα possesses an allusion to a broad OT theology in 1.19 but is entirely nondescript in 2.9. Put differently, if πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα refers to 'God in all

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81. That Christ could be yet another alternative subject is unlikely given that he is the indirect object specified by ἐν αὐτῷ. E.g. Moule, *Colossians*, 70; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 51.

82. Moule, *Colossians*, 70-71, 164-69.

83. J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 192; Ernst, *Pleroma*, 83-87; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 51-53. Cf. C.E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, WUNT 77 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 262-64; J.M.G. Rojas, S.J., *La reconciliación en la Carta a los Efesios y en la Carta a los Colosenses: estudio exegético de Ef 2,14-16 y Col 1,20.21-23*, AnBib 170 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2008), 149-52. Whilst Arnold and Rojas belong to the former group of scholars who treat πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as an impersonal entity, they argue that the term denotes Christ's sufficiency in his divinity, sovereignty and glory based upon its usage in the LXX.

84. Cf. G. Munderlein, 'Die Erwählung durch das Pleroma', *NTS* 8 (1961-62), 265-66.



his fullness' in 1.19, it is unclear why the addition of τῆς θεότητος is needed in 2.9. Finally, no explanation is proffered as to why, in a hymn that presents Christ as pre-eminent sustainer of created orders, God suddenly emerges as an active agent and seizes the foreground of activity in the final half of the last strophe. In fact, this emergence leads Moule to alter the subject of the one *for* whom all things are being reconciled from Christ to God.<sup>85</sup> As such, the interpretation of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as 'God in all his fullness' is likewise surmounted by difficulties.

I propose that the problems generated by treating πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19 as referring to God or the divine nature may be resolved if it is taken to be a reference to the Church. This is not to say that the phrase πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα should be simply equated with ἐκκλησία, but rather that the Church is 'all the fullness' by virtue of receiving the divine πλήρωμα in Christ. This is supported by the parallel statement 'all the fullness of deity dwells in him [Christ] bodily' in 2.9 when it is taken with the subsequent comment in 2.10 that 'you are filled in him' (ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι). That both of these statements occur in contexts where somatic terminology is employed suggests that the two metaphors of the Church as Christ's body and as his fullness are correlated. The divine fullness that dwells in Christ's corporeal body is extended to, and instantiated by, his ecclesial body in the world.<sup>86</sup> This in effect sets out the Church as a cosmic space in the original created order wherein the divine fullness is received, experienced and extended further into the world. M. Bogdasavich states this concisely:

Christ is the *pleroma* of the Father, and the Church, by its unity with Christ, receives the *pleroma* from him. It is in this way that the Church, and each member of it, becomes the object of the divine intrusion into the cosmos. It is in this way that the work of creation is repeated. ... But the *pleroma* extends further than the human race. Just as the first creation involved the making of a cosmos, and just as the wisdom literature saw that cosmos as a kind of overflow of the divine Wisdom, so in St Paul, too, the effects of Christ's redemptive act flow into the entire created universe. All things are renewed in him.<sup>87</sup>

The Church, therefore, is the new creation in the world, where the divine intent to fill all things has already been realised.<sup>88</sup> Yet, it is also the vanguard of Christ's redemptive intent in that its work is to reconcile all things *for* Christ (1.20a). This

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85. Moule, *Colossians*, 70. Cf. G. Schrenk, 'εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκία', *TDNT* 2:741 n. 16.

86. Hence, I will argue that scholars who see a *double entendre* at work in the term σωματικῶς in 2.9 are essentially correct. See §4.4.1.1.

87. Bogdasavich, 'Pleromá', 127-28.

88. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 158: '[T]he church is the locus where Christ's rule over the cosmos has already been fully implemented. The church has already been filled, it is already a fullness (πλήρωμα), whereas the cosmos itself is still in the process of being filled.'

is confirmed by the fact that Paul explicitly expects his apostolic proclamation of Christ that warns and teaches every person (1.28 – νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον) to be carried on by the Church (3.16 – διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς). In other words, as the gospel grows and bears fruit in believers (1.10) who constitute the body of the Church, it will grow and bear fruit in the world (1.6) as that body extends its message further. In this way, the Church that is *in* Christ will *through* him reconcile all things *for* him.

The benefit of this reading lies in its capacity to address the five tasks previously outlined. Tasks (i) and (v) have already been addressed in setting out an interpretation of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as referring to the Church in co-ordination with 2.9-10. It also provides a reading that fits within the theological-structural symmetry of the hymn. By identifying the Church as the cosmic space of the new creation, this verse fits within a consistent pattern in the hymn wherein the first half of each strophe speaks of Christ’s pre-eminence and the second half speaks of the created order that is *in*, *through*, and *for* him. This can be depicted by the following organisation:

<b>Christ</b>	1.15 ὅς ἐστίν... πρωτότοκος...	1.17a καὶ αὐτός ἐστίν...	1.18a καὶ αὐτός ἐστίν...	1.18cde ὅς ἐστίν... πρωτότοκος... ἵνα γένηται...
<b>Created Order</b>	1.16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ... τὰ πάντα...	1.17b καὶ τὰ πάντα...	1.18b τῆς ἐκκλησίας	1.19-20 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ... πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα... τὰ πάντα...

Table 1: Christ and Creation/New Creation Hymn Symmetry

Whereas treating πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα as a reference to the Church as the new creation maintains the Christ-Created Order symmetry of the hymn, taking it to be a reference to God or the divine nature deviates 1.19-20 from the hymn’s cosmic message.

A significant challenge to my proposed reading of 1.19 is determining the subject of εὐδόκησεν. If πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα is a nominative, the Church becomes the active agent of redemption that derives pleasure from its volitional act of dwelling in Christ and reconciling all things. To be sure, this is not implausible, seeing as surveying the uses of εὐδοκέω<sup>89</sup> and κατοικέω<sup>90</sup> reveals that neither requires a

89. Schrenk, ‘εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκία’738-51. In the LXX, the subjects of εὐδοκέω are: Abraham’s servant (Gen. 24.26, 48), Esau (Gen. 33.10), the promised land (Lev. 26.34, 43), David (1 Chron. 29.3),

divine subject. Furthermore, it can be theologically supported along lines similar to the triumphant ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι by viewing the Church as deriving pleasure from fulfilling its teleological purpose of dwelling *in* Christ and reconciling all things *through* him and *for* him. Finally, it is possible that Paul's use of εὐδοκέω functions as a rhetorical foil for the Colossians to compare his goal of preserving the relationship between believers and Christ by exhorting them to volitional and emotive faithfulness against the effects of the invading error.<sup>91</sup> Alternatively, the neuter πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα may be accusative, which opens the possibility to take God as the implied subject of the third person, singular form of εὐδοκέω.<sup>92</sup> Barth<sup>93</sup> attempts this with the rendering 'it was the will of God to let in Him dwell all the fullness'. However, this requires the addition of a concessive voice to the infinitive κατοικῆσαι that its function in his reading as an adverbial complement does not allow. Yet, another interpretive option is to take πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι as an *accusativus cum infinitivo* construction.<sup>94</sup> This is not without precedence for the controlling verb εὐδοκέω, with a significant occurrence being 2 Macc. 14.35 (Σὺ κύριε τῶν ὄλων ἀπροσδεῖς ὑπάρχων ἠυδόκησας ναὸν τῆς σῆς σκηνώσεως ἐν ἡμῖν

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Solomon (1 Chron. 29.23), the king of Moab (Judg. 11.17), Samson (Judg. 15.7), the Levite (Judg. 19.10), the Benjamites (Judg. 19.25; 20.13), Israel (1 Macc. 1.43; Jer. 2.19); God's servants (Ps. 101.15), and the wicked (Ps. 48.14). In the Pauline corpus: God (1 Cor. 1.21; 10.1; Gal. 1.15), Paul (2 Cor. 12.10; and his co-workers, 2 Cor. 5.8; 1 Thess. 2.8; 3.1), unbelievers (2. Thess. 2.12), and the churches in Achaia and Macedonia (Rom. 15.26-27).

90. O. Michel, 'οἶκος, κ.τ.λ.' *TDNT* 5:153-55. The term is used to depict not only God, Christ and/or the Spirit dwelling cosmic realms, Mt. Zion, the Temple, human beings and patience, but also of human beings dwelling in geographical realms, abstract ideas (i.e. the virtues, wisdom, etc.) or God. Furthermore, it also takes spiritual (e.g. the devil dwelling in anger, demons dwelling man) and impersonal subjects (e.g. righteousness dwelling in heaven, patience dwelling amongst the faithful).
91. For instance, Paul prays for the Colossians to be strengthened in for patience and endurance with joy (1.11-12; 2.1-4) and to ethically conduct themselves in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving to God (4.17). The fact that the means set out for remaining faithful to Christ evokes the Colossians' volition within an emotive framework of joy and thanksgiving is significant for the reading of 1.19. By presenting the Church as pleased (i.e. volition with positive emotive content) to dwell in Christ, Paul provides the Colossians with a provocative image relevant to their current circumstances. Within the context of a local congregation confronted by an error that deceptively encourages believers to relinquish their hold on Christ (cf. 2.19 – οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν), the depiction of the Church as deriving pleasure from its decision to abide permanently in Christ would have significant potential to reinforce believers in their resolution to remain in the faith. See also §4.4.1.3.
92. The other possibility that Christ is the implied agent of εὐδοκέω is unlikely given that he is the referent of the participial clauses ἐν αὐτῷ, δι' αὐτοῦ, and εἰς αὐτόν. Cf. Moule, *Colossians*, 70; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 51.
93. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 210-13.
94. With thanks to Prof. John Barclay, who suggested this option as I developed this reading of the Colossian hymn. Cf. Schrenk, 'εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκία' 741. Schrenk argues for this grammatical construction, but does not specify the reference of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα.

γενέσθαι).<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, even though Chrysostom argued for a different referent of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα, he nevertheless understood Col. 1.19 to use this grammatical construction.<sup>96</sup> Thus, if this construct is taken to be operative in 1.19, it would read as ‘He (God) was pleased that all the fullness (the Church) dwell in him (Christ)’. This construct would also retain its force with the subsequent infinitive ἀποκαταλλάξαι, so that the Church is appointed by God to be the reconciliatory agent in the world.

There are considerable advantages to accepting the latter proposal. First, it alleviates the need to provide questionable justifications for taking the Church to be the subject of εὐδοκέω. Second, it rests upon a commonly used grammatical construction. Third, and importantly, it not only maintains the Christ-Created Order symmetry of the hymn, but also establishes a significant symmetry of agencies. Specifically, when 1.16 states ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, the understood active agent of the clause is God. Likewise, God is understood to be the active agent of 1.19, but this never becomes explicit. Also, in leaving God’s agency implicit, no confusion arises as to whether ἐν αὐτῷ, δι’ αὐτοῦ, and εἰς αὐτόν refers to Christ or God. Moreover, just as τὰ πάντα in 1.16 is a passive agent, so too is the πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19. To be sure, there is an implied activity in saying that πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα reconciles τὰ πάντα (1.20a), but in the structure of the verse this activity is assigned to the passive agent by God. Finally, whilst it has been shown that εὐδοκέω does not require a divine agent, a comparative glance at Ephesians is informative. In the eulogy, God is said to bestow blessings upon believer κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (1.6), or simply κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ (1.9). Because Ephesians enjoys a significant literary relationship with Colossians, the crediting of εὐδοκία to God should not be overlooked.

There is one hermeneutical challenge to this reading, however, in determining the subject of the participle εἰρηνοποιήσας and its temporal relationship to the main verb εὐδόκησεν. Whilst providing God as the implied subject of εὐδοκέω seems also to satisfy the need for a masculine subject for the participle, peace has its source in Christ and is given to the Church in Col. 3.15. Furthermore, in Ephesians, peace (2.14, 15 – εἰρήνη) is something that Christ has

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95. Cf. Rom. 15.26 (εὐδόκησαν γὰρ Μακεδονία καὶ Ἀχαΐα κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι); *Polyb.* 1.8.4: τότε πάντας ὁμοθυμαδὸν εὐδοκῆσαι στρατηγὸν αὐτῶν ὑπάρχειν Ἰέρωμα.

96. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians*, III: ‘For it was the good pleasure of the Father, that in Him all the fullness should dwell.’

made (2.14, 15 – ποιέω) by his blood (2.13 – αἷμα) within the Church, and this constitutes it as one new person (2.15 – εἷς καινὸς ἄνθρωπος). It is possible, therefore, that the Church is the subject of εἰρηνοποιήσας in Col. 1.20 by virtue of being the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος. Not only does the similar terminology between Eph. 2.11-18 and Col. 1.20b allow for this hermeneutical link, but also the further evidence that the later reference in Ephesians to putting on (ἐνδύω) this καινὸς ἄνθρωπος (4.24) is echoed in Colossians at 3.10 (ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν).<sup>97</sup> Yet, this interpretation is suspect specifically because a description of the Church as the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος never occurs in Colossians. Given this, it should be noted that peace-making in Ephesians engages a complex relationship between God, Christ and the Church when the 'dividing wall of hostility' is abolished (2.14).<sup>98</sup> This is further indicated when Paul greets the Ephesians with the blessing εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1.2), but the Colossians only εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν (1.2). As such, it seems best to take God as the subject of εἰρηνοποιήσας, but to keep in mind the fact that other agents and objects are close at hand. This also resolves the need to determine the temporal relationship between the participle and εὐδόκησεν. If it presents an antecedent event, it speaks of the peace made between God and the Church by Christ's reconciliatory work on the cross. If it speaks of a contemporaneous event, it implies the progressive extension of peace between God and all things as the Church grows in the world.

In summary, I have argued that the commonly accepted interpretations of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα in 1.19 by no means occupy the privileged position of being an easier or less problematic reading. In fact, I suggest that these interpretations have enjoyed scholarly acceptance by virtue of the lingering influence of redaction criticism that regarded τῆς ἐκκλησίας in 1.18b as an addition to a pre-Pauline hymn. As such, even when scholars rightly include it within their analysis of the hymn, their interpretations disregard it when addressing the very next verse. In

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97. Cf. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 410; Dunn, *Colossians*, 221; Hay, *Colossians*, 126; Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 213; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 205; Moule, *Colossians*, 119; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 142-43; Wilson, *Colossians*, 251.

98. Barth, *Broken Wall*, 234-36. Of the four potential referents that Barth identifies for the 'dividing wall' in Ephesians 2.14, three are certainly tenable: (i) the Temple wall between the inner court for Jewish worshippers and the outer court for Gentiles, (ii) the 'wall' of the curtain dividing God from human beings, and (iii) the 'wall' of the Law dividing Jews from Gentiles and God from humanity. Thus, the effect of Christ's redemptive work establishes peace within a complex matrix of divine and human relationships. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 159-60.

other words, scholars treat the hymn as introducing the Christ-Church relationship but then immediately discarding it in favour of the God-Christ or the divine nature-Christ relationship. Ultimately, however, these readings fail to provide (respectively) either an interpretative or theological coherence. Instead, taking the Church to be the reference of πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα provides a coherent reading via reference primarily to Colossians itself. This coherence was not lost on early commentators, seeing as both Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>99</sup> interpreted the phrase as a reference to the Church. As such, there are ample grounds upon which to claim that the hymn sets out the Church as the somatic fullness of Christ in the world, so that its growth according to God's plan will bring about the reconciliation of all things *for* Christ.<sup>100</sup> It can be seen, therefore, that the body of the Church demarcates the community that is reconciled *for* Christ and is consequently qualified for the hope of glory. In this sense, belonging to, and persevering within, the Church sets out those believers who will be mature *in* Christ.

#### 4.2.3 Summary

This section has demonstrated that the Christological hymn articulates Christ's pre-eminence in relation to the cosmos and the Church. The original order was created *in, through* and *for* Christ, because he is the pre-eminent mediator and sustainer of all things. Yet, a tension within the created order was observed, where heaven and earth represented a dualism between righteousness and wickedness, life and death. Hence, within the new creation, Christ's pre-eminence is maintained as well as charged with reconciliatory purpose. The first evidence of this is found in that the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι have been re-ordered through the crucifixion and resurrection so that they are once again *for* Christ. Within the world, the Church exists as the first-fruits of the new creation in that it is appropriately directed *for* Christ. It also serves as the vanguard for Christ's reconciliation of the old creation. Thus, the goal of maturity *in* Christ necessarily entails that believers belong to, and remain in, the Church that is advancing Christ's reconciliation.

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99. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ad Colossenses*, 275; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Colossians*, 601A/602A.

100. W.T. Wilson, *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians*, NovTSup 88 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

### 4.3 The Apostolic Goal (1.24–2.5): Paul and the Divine Economy

The present section will examine how Paul's apostolic ministry is coordinated with the Christology and ecclesiology of the hymn. In particular, it must be determined how Paul's ministerial efforts are directed towards the realisation of the reconciliation of all things *for* Christ through the growth of the Church. I will demonstrate that Paul presents his apostolic role as crucial to fulfilling the intentions of the divine mystery to incorporate the Gentiles within the scope of redemption. This role bestows upon him the responsibility of fostering to completion that intent with the ultimate goal of making an eschatological presentation of the believers under his care as mature in Christ. Furthermore, I will show that Paul then applies this role and responsibility to his readers, so that his labours are directed specifically towards establishing their congregation as a redemptive sphere within creation that preserves and encourages believers in anticipation of this future presentation.

#### 4.3.1 Apostolic Responsibility (1.24-29)

Following the hymn, a transitional pericope (1.21-23) establishes Paul's main concern for the Colossians that then gives way to an exposition of his apostolic labours for the Church in general (1.24-29) and the Colossians, Laodiceans and other unmet congregations in particular (2.1-5 – hereafter, just Colossians).<sup>101</sup> In order to determine the responsibility associated with Paul's apostolicity in general, I will examine his use of the term διάκονος (1.23, 25) as a self-designation and its relationship to the divine μυστήριον (1.26-27). I will argue that Paul's role as steward within the divine economy required that he fulfil the responsibilities incumbent upon him in the realisation of the intentions of God's mystery. Furthermore, given that maturity (1.28 – τέλειος) stands as the ultimate goal of Paul's efforts, I will assess how this concept relates to the redemptive goals of the letter. I will establish that it functions as an image of the eschatological state of believers in Christ, thereby indicating that the maturity of all believers stands as the eschatological goal of Paul's apostolic ministry.

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101. Lohse, *Kolosser*, 111-12; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 80-88; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 81; Wilson, *Colossians*, 168. Cf. Hay, *Colossians*, 70. Hay notes that 1.24–2.5 constitutes a unit 'by Paul's references to himself and his service on behalf of the gospel and the churches' as well as the inclusion created by his statements of rejoicing in 1.24 and 2.5.

#### 4.3.1.1 Διάκονος: Apostolic Stewardship

Even though Paul initially presents himself as an ἀπόστολος in the introduction of the letter (1.1), this designation gives way to his statement of becoming a διάκονος (1.23, 25). This shift is not insignificant in that the self-depiction as a διάκονος conveys a stronger sense of being responsible to, rather than a representative of (i.e. ἀπόστολος), a master.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the second of these two statements elaborates further that this role as διάκονος is according to the οἰκονομία τοῦ θεοῦ specifically given to him (1.25). It is the correlation of διάκονος and οἰκονομία that indicates the former term denotes ‘steward’ as opposed to its more common sense of ‘servant’. Yet, this argument requires an analysis of the import of the phrase κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς. Specifically, because each clause modifies Paul’s role as διάκονος, the nature of his stewardship can only be appreciated through a clarification of this pregnant statement.

The first clause of this modifying phrase, κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, is ambiguous when considering that οἰκονομία can denote either ‘the office of household administration’ or ‘plan of salvation’.<sup>103</sup> Hence, this clause could refer on the one hand to Paul’s office and the discharge of his assignment,<sup>104</sup> or on the other hand to God’s plan for redemptive history.<sup>105</sup> The former option seems to be supported by the subsequent clause τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, which in apposition indicates an οἰκονομία given to Paul. Yet, some scholars opt to combined both references,<sup>106</sup> so that Paul’s office as steward operates within the divine plan of salvation. John Reumann<sup>107</sup> supports this reading with the arguments that (i) οἰκονομία τοῦ θεοῦ was a common phrase in Hellenism used to denote God’s administration of the cosmos; (ii) the subjective genitive τοῦ θεοῦ indicates that Paul does not receive a generic οἰκονομία; and (iii) the preposition κατὰ implies a plan rather than office. The weight of these arguments suggests that the combined emphasis is preferable for interpreting the clause. The import of κατὰ τὴν

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102. Cf. H.W. Beyer, ‘διακονέω, διακονία, διάκονος’, *TDNT* 2:88-93; K.H. Rengstorf, ‘ἀποπέλλω, κ.τ.λ.’ *TDNT* 1:421-22.

103. Michel, ‘οἶκος, κ.τ.λ.’ 151-52.

104. Mitton, *Ephesians*, 92.

105. Dibelius, *Kolosser, Epheser*, 17; Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, 79.

106. E.g. Masson, *Colossiens*, 111: ‘le ministre selon le plan de Dieu don’t l’exécution m’a été confiée en ce qui vous concerne’.

107. J. Reumann, ‘Οικονομία-Terms in Paul in Comparison with Lucan *Heilsgeschichtē*, *NTS* 13 (1966-67), 162-63.



οικονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, therefore, is that Paul has been appointed as a steward of God's plan of salvation. This charges Paul's apostolicity with paramount significance in that he becomes critical to the realisation of the divine plan.

The second clause, τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, modifies the first by specifying that Paul received his role as steward according to the οἰκονομία τοῦ θεοῦ. Accepting a combined reference the οἰκονομία as both Paul's office and God's plan, however, requires a reconsideration of this clause. Reumann<sup>108</sup> argues that the combination δοθεῖσάν μοι is a common Pauline phrase used to denote the reception of insight into the divine plan. Yet, the interpretations of Gal. 2.9; Rom. 12.3; 1 Cor. 3.10; and Eph. 3.7<sup>109</sup> that he provides to support this claim misconstrue the texts. In each case, it can be seen that what is in question is Paul's responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles.<sup>110</sup> As such, whilst Paul's stewardship certainly required insight into the divine plan, this insight is not the object of δοθεῖσάν μοι. Instead, the initial sense of the clause as indicating that Paul was given his stewardship within the divine οἰκονομία fits with the common usage.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, this reading is confirmed by the fact that the role of διάκονος is extended to both Epaphras (1.7) and Tychicus (4.7). If being appointed a steward depended upon the reception of divine insight into the οἰκονομία, only Paul could have validly claimed the designation. However, by participating with Paul as his co-workers, Epaphras and Tychicus became stewards as well, so that Paul could appropriately use the first person, plural form of the verb καταγγέλλω (1.28) in describing their ministerial activities.

Finally, the clause εἰς ὑμᾶς indicates the purpose of Paul's office. In claiming that his appointment as steward of the divine οἰκονομία is 'for you' (i.e. 'for your sake'), Paul explicitly directs the object of his stewardship towards the churches under his apostolic care. This accords with the previous observation that he understood his appointment to be specifically concerned with the evangelisation of

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108. Reumann, 'Οικονομία-Terms', 163.

109. It is unclear why Reumann includes Rom. 7.3 given that δοθεῖσάν μοι does not occur and the passage is not concerned with Paul's apostolicity.

110. In Gal. 2.9, James, Cephas and John recognise the grace given to Paul in that he was called as an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 2.7). Rom. 12.3 is unclear, in that the grace given to Paul is the basis he provides for the exhortation to sober judgement. However, Rom. 15.15-16 clarifies that the grace given to him was to be a minister to the Gentiles. 1 Cor. 3.10 indicates that because of the grace given to Paul, he laid a foundation as a minister to the Gentiles upon which another was building. Finally, Eph. 3.7 states that Paul was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace given to him.

111. Dunn, *Colossians*, 117-18; Wilson, *Colossians*, 173.

the Gentiles. Thus, this clause delineates the scope of his stewardship responsibilities. Within the divine economy, Paul has been appointed as steward whose fundamental responsibility is for the Gentiles. Whilst this clarifies the nature of Paul's stewardship, it nevertheless leaves open the question of its scope and purpose. As such, the subsequent sections will assess further elements of 2.1-5 in order to clarify these concerns.

#### 4.3.1.2 Μυστήριον: Divine Mystery

The scope of Paul's stewardship within the economy of God is clarified by the subsequent infinitive clause πληρώσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (1.25). Given that the μυστήριον in 1.26 stands in apposition to 'the word of God' in 1.25, several scholars<sup>112</sup> opt to interpret the meaning of πληρώσαι in line with the latter statements that the mystery was hidden but is now revealed (1.26) and God's intention is to make it known to the saints (1.27). Hence, they argue that Paul's task according to 1.25 is 'to make fully known' the word of God. This seems to support Paul's concluding remark that he proclaims Christ (1.28). Yet, the restriction of πληρώσαι to a revelatory or kerygmatic act cannot be supported. Paul's exposition of μυστήριον in Colossians undermines attempts to narrow its scope to simply a message that is conveyed. As such, in order to determine how Paul fulfils the word of God, it is necessary to discuss the nature of mystery in Colossians.

The term μυστήριον occurs only four times in Colossians and bears a remarkably consistent meaning. The first instance in 1.26 is distinct in that it draws from Jewish apocalyptic thought as that part of the divine plan concealed in times past but now revealed to the saints.<sup>113</sup> The remaining three uses of μυστήριον then identify this revealed divine plan with Christ, the first of which (1.27) articulates a robust understanding upon which the subsequent occurrences (2.2; 4.3) are dependent. Thus, the statement of the mystery in 1.27 provides the key for appreciating the significance of μυστήριον in Colossians. God has chosen to make

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112. R.E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament*, FBBS 21 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968), 53; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 84; Dunn, *Colossians*, 118-119; Lohse, *Kolossier*, 118; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 82-83; Pokorný, *Kolossier*, 85; Schweizer, *Kolossier*, 86-87. O'Brien also adds that fulfilling the gospel does not describe the completion of a task, but rather the manner in which it is undertaken. Hence, Paul executed his task in word and deed to make known the gospel.

113. Brown, *Mystery*, 53; Dunn, *Colossians*, 119-21.

known the mystery to the saints, but this mystery is characterised as a wealth of glory amongst the Gentiles. By focusing the scope of the mystery upon the Gentiles, Paul alludes to the OT theme of God's intention to include the Gentiles within his redemptive plan in the Messianic age.<sup>114</sup> This divine intent has been realised in Paul's time when he clarifies that the mystery is Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν.<sup>115</sup> Christ's indwelling of Gentile believers verifies their incorporation into the redemptive scope of God's plan. Given this, the mystery is epitomised by Christ (2.2; 4.3) in that his very being, redemptive work on the cross, and present indwelling of believers now bring about the intent of God's μυστήριον.

The conclusion that God's mystery is Christ in his person and redemptive activities suggests that Paul more than proclaims him when he 'fulfils the word of God' (1.25). This is because the realisation of the mystery through Christ's indwelling of the Colossians entails ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης (1.27), which not only reinforces the riches of glory inherent in the mystery but also alludes to the hope laid up in heaven (1.5) and the hope of the gospel (1.23).<sup>116</sup> The premise that Christ is the hope of glory is confirmed by the eschatological revelation of believers with Christ in glory (3.4), which leads R. McL. Wilson to correctly observe: 'Christ is not the object of the hope, but rather the one who lays its foundation and gives it its *raison d'être*.'<sup>117</sup> The future glory of all believers therefore constitutes the hope of the gospel, and this hope, in turn, has its basis in Christ.<sup>118</sup> Thus, Paul perceived his apostolic responsibility not simply as one of proclaiming the gospel message about Christ, but also as one of establishing churches and nurturing them unto the final goal of appearing in glory with Christ. In this sense, Paul 'fulfils the word of God' in that his apostolicity to the Gentiles plays a pivotal role in the realisation of God's mystery within the Messianic age.

This understanding of the scope of Paul's apostolic work fits far better with its designation as a stewardship within the divine economy. In particular, a

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114. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 86.

115. Cf. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 86; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 122; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 87. O'Brien and Bruce rightly reject Lohse's argument that Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν means 'Christ among you' as indicative of Christ be proclaimed in Gentile regions. Yet, they overstate their case by treating ἐστιν as part of this phrase (i.e. 'Christ is in you') rather than as the verbal link with the relative pronoun ὃ.

116. J.-N. Aletti, *Saint Paul Épître aux Colossiens*, Ebib 20 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993), 59-61; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 41-42.

117. Wilson, *Colossians*, 88.

118. Brown, *Mystery*, 55-56; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 122.

steward was not responsible simply to accomplish a set number of tasks, but more broadly undertook a role entailing any number of household, political, economic or cultic responsibilities.<sup>119</sup> As such, Paul did not consider his responsibility to extend only so far as the preaching of Christ, but rather subsumed both evangelistic and pastoral activities under the umbrella of being a steward of God’s mystery. This is certainly evident in that his proclamation entailed both teaching and warning every person (1.28), both of which involved an ongoing responsibility towards existing congregations. Furthermore, the fact that Paul assumes responsibility for the Colossians, even though it is likely he did not establish the congregation (cf. 2.1), indicates that he regarded all Gentile congregations as falling within the scope of his stewardship responsibilities. Finally, this stewardship extends even further than simply teaching and warning believers given that he unceasingly prays for the churches under his care (1.9), encourages church leaders and exhorts them to fulfil their *διάκονία* (e.g. 4.17) and sends his co-workers for their benefit (4.7-9). Hence, Paul’s stewardship within God’s *οικονομία* entailed a robust responsibility to realise the intent of the divine mystery amongst the Gentile churches.<sup>120</sup>

#### 4.3.1.3 Τέλειος: Individual Maturity

That Paul considered his apostolic responsibility to encompass a final goal is expressly stated in 1.28 using a *ἵνα* purpose clause. His labours for the sake of the Gentile churches are all governed by the ultimate purpose that *παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ*. This brief comment, however, requires considerable interpretative work. First, consideration must be given to the reference of the phrase *πάντα ἄνθρωπον*. Second, the nature and temporal situation of the presentation that Paul is speaking about must be determined. Finally, because the term *τέλειος* may denote ‘perfection’, ‘completion’ or ‘maturity’, clarification is needed as to which sense is employed here. Resolving these issues will clarify the goal of Paul’s stewardship.

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119. J. Reumann, “‘Stewards of God’ – Pre-Christian Religious Application of *OIKONOMOS* in Greek”, *JBL* 77 (1958), 341-49.

120. Cf. O. Cullman, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. F.V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 1951), 163-64.

Common amongst interpretations of πάντα ἄνθρωπον is the attempt to discern what type of universality is implied. Most scholars<sup>121</sup> suggest that the threefold repetition reveals the universal offer of the gospel to everyone in contrast to the exclusiveness of the errorists. Alternatively, Barth and Dunn<sup>122</sup> argue that the repetition stems from the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's redemptive plan, thereby making the universality to be everyone irrespective of the ethnic categories of Jew or Gentile. Yet, both of these arguments would be supported better if Paul had used the phrase πάντες ἄνθρωποι.<sup>123</sup> Specifically, by focusing the universal scope of πάντα ἄνθρωπον on the inclusive nature of redemption in Christ, scholars operate with an implicitly corporate humanity. In other words, the gospel offered *en masse* to all people. Instead, the singular form suggests that the universality of πάντα ἄνθρωπον implies each person, so that Paul's apostolic efforts are directed towards the warning and teaching of every individual.<sup>124</sup> Confirmation of this claim is found when the apostolic goal of presenting πάντα ἄνθρωπον as τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ (1.28) is co-ordinated with Epaphras' concern that the Colossians be τέλειοι (4.12). Hence, the apostolic goal is that every individual believer be τέλειος, and the import of the individual effort will be clarified in my analysis of Paul's response to the error in the Colossian congregation.

Given that each person is the object of the apostolic ministry, it can be seen that Paul regards his stewardship as requiring an eschatological presentation of every believer under his care. Several scholars<sup>125</sup> argue that this verse refers back to 1.22, so that Christ's presentation of believers to himself now becomes the goal of Paul and his co-workers. However, David Hay<sup>126</sup> notes that the shift in subject indicates an apostolic presentation of believers as τέλειος prior to the confirming presentation of Christ. Whilst Hay's proposal overstates what can be concluded

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121. E.g. Abbott, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 235; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 124; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 83; Wilson, *Colossians*, 181.

122. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 267; Dunn, *Colossians*, 125.

123. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 88.

124. Masson, *Colossians*, 114 n. 1; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 88-89; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 89-90; Wright, *Colossians*, 93.

125. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 267; Wright, *Colossians*, 92. Cf. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 87-88; Dunn, *Colossians*, 124-26; Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 168; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 124; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 89-90; Wilson, *Colossians*, 181. Whilst these scholars are unclear on the relationship, they link Paul's presentation in 1.28 with Christ's in 1.22 so as to effectively imply they are the same, or at least highly co-ordinated, event.

126. Hay, *Colossians*, 77. Cf. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 83. MacDonald speaks of the presentation as demonstrating the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship.

about the temporal relationship between Christ's presentation and the apostolic one, I suggest that his interpretation more closely apprehends Paul's concerns. The language in 1.22 of Christ presenting all believers (i.e. 'you' – ὑμᾶς) as holy, blameless and beyond reproach before him (κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ) echoes Christ's presentation of the Church to himself as holy and blameless in Eph. 5.27, whereas 1.28 speaks of Paul and his co-workers making a presentation of every person as τέλειος to an unspecified recipient. Yet, given that this presentation is mentioned within a context of Paul's stewardship in God's οἰκονομία, I propose that envisaged here is an apostolic presentation of every believer to God as the fulfilment of responsibilities incumbent upon a steward of the divine mystery. As such, the presentation is an eschatological one, but there is no indication if this is antecedent to, contemporaneous with, or subsequent to Christ's presentation in 1.22. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that Paul expects to present to God every believer under his care as proof that he fulfilled his responsibility to evangelise and shepherd Gentile churches towards the eschatological goal.

Given these conclusions, it can be seen that the final state of believers as τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ takes on eschatological overtones. Yet, a survey of scholarly interpretations reveals divided opinions as to the sense of τέλειος in 1.28. Most scholars<sup>127</sup> argue that it should be rendered as 'perfect' because its link with παρίστημι recalls the final judgement in 1.22. In contrast, some scholars<sup>128</sup> prefer the meaning 'mature', arguing that what is envisaged is not ethical perfectionism but rather an integrity of lifestyle and confession. Alternatively, Dunn<sup>129</sup> proposes the sense of 'complete' in an attempt to incorporate the nuances of 'maturity' and 'perfect'. I suggest that the resolution of this can be attained when Paul's apostolic goal for believers in the Church (1.24-29) is considered in conjunction with his specific goal for the Colossians (2.1-5). This link is justified because Paul's apostolic rejoicing (1.24) and struggle (1.29) for the Church are restated inversely as

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127. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 267-68; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 87-88; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 124-25; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 89-90; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 90. Cf. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 168-69; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 124-25; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 83. Lightfoot and Lohse argue for the sense 'perfect' based upon a comparative analysis of the mystery religions. MacDonald utilises both arguments.

128. Hay, *Colossians*, 77; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 87. Cf. Carson, *Colossians*, 54; Martin, *Colossians*, 73; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 35; Wright, *Colossians*, 93-94. Wright and Martin provide no argument for opting to take the sense 'mature'. Scott and Carson argue against mystery religion comparisons and state that nothing deviates τέλειος from its general meaning of 'mature' in the NT.

129. Dunn, *Colossians*, 125-26.

his struggle (2.1) and rejoicing (2.5) for the Colossian church, so that these statements bracket an inner content of his goal-orientated labours.<sup>130</sup> Paul's goal for the Colossians in particular, stated in 2.2 through another ἵνα clause, is that their hearts be encouraged (παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν) by being knit together (συμβιβάζω) so that they will have full assurance (πληροφορία) in their insight into the divine mystery of Christ as a counter-measure against potential deluding arguments. That this goal for the Colossians is related to the nature of τέλειος is confirmed by the fact that he sends Tychicus to encourage their hearts (4.8 – παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν) and commends Epaphras as one who prays for the Colossians to be τέλειοι καὶ πεπληροφορημένοι (4.12).

The decisive keys to determining the sense of τέλειος is that their encouragement and full assurance is facilitated by the mutual experience of being knit together, which will defend against susceptibility to deluding arguments.<sup>131</sup> These two elements converge again in 2.19 during Paul's opposition to the deceptive efforts of the errorists in the comment that the body of the Church is knit together (συμβιβάζω) by Christ so as to grow. It is the correlation of Paul's eschatological goal for believers to be τέλειοι and his present goal for the Colossians to be incorporated within the body that grows that suggests that 'mature' is the best rendering of τέλειος. This is further substantiated by Paul's language in 1.6 about the gospel growing and bearing fruit (καρποφορέω καὶ αὐξάνω) in the world and likewise in the Colossians (καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν). Hence, within a context of growth, τέλειος takes a distinctive sense of maturity. Yet, this does not clarify the nature of maturity, or more specifically, what Paul envisions when he speaks of believers as eschatologically mature in Christ. As such, further analysis of Paul's apostolic labours is needed to elucidate what maturity is, and how it relates to the growth of the Church.

#### 4.3.2 Apostolic Labours (2.1-5)

Because Paul expected to make an eschatological presentation of believers as mature to God in fulfilment of his apostolic stewardship, the means that he sets

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130. Cf. Aletti, *Colossians*, 130-57. These bracketing statements follow a mildly chiasmic pattern of rejoicing (1.24) – struggle (1.29) – struggle (2.1) – rejoicing (2.5). Yet, Aletti's suggestion that further chiasmic parallels occur between 1.27 and 2.2 is unconvincing for its failure to appropriate the remaining verses (i.e. 1.25-26, 28; 2.3-4).

131. Dunn, *Colossians*, 130.

out in order to achieve this goal amongst the Colossians in 2.1-5 informs the nature of maturity. His labours are directed towards both a positive and negative end. Along the positive line (2.2-3), Paul seeks to establish the church as an encouraged (παρακαλέω) and cohesive (συμβιβάζω) community that fosters insight (σύνεσις) into the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of God's mystery. The negative thrust (2.4) of Paul's labours amongst the Colossians is his concern to prevent the deluding activities (παραλογίζομαι) of the errorists who use plausible arguments (πιθανολογία). It is immediately evident that there are epistemic implications in both matters, but the relationship of this to encouragement and cohesion in the community is not clear. Hence, I will assess the significance of Paul's goal for the Colossians in order to demonstrate that he regards the Church as the redemptive agent in the world. Specifically, I will show that the mutual encouragement found in the Church fosters a knowledge of Christ that grounds a believer's perseverance and ethics.

The first aspect of Paul's goal for the Colossians is that παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν. Whilst Otto Schmitz<sup>132</sup> opts to render the term παρακαλέω as 'to comfort' according to its common meaning, a few scholars<sup>133</sup> argue that this is too weak in the context of the deluding error implied in 2.4 and therefore prefer to apply the meaning 'to strengthen'. Whilst their critique is valid, the sense of 'strengthened' is unsupportable given that Paul never speaks of a person's heart being strengthened. Instead, when strengthening is explicitly stated (1.11 – δυναμόω) the object is the whole person. As such, the preferred rendering παρακαλέω is 'to encourage',<sup>134</sup> given that this negotiates a middle ground between comforting and strengthening. This option better apprehends Paul's purpose of sending Tychicus so that their hearts might be encouraged (4.8 – παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν), which is repeated verbatim in Eph. 4.22 where no such indication of an intruding error exists. It also concurs with the common concept of the heart in antiquity as the seat of the inner person where knowledge, emotion and volition are all rooted.<sup>135</sup> Whereas comforting connotes emotive consolation, and strengthening volitional reinforcement, encouragement conveys a sense of

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132. O. Schmitz, 'παρακαλέω, παράκλησις', *TDNT* 5:797.

133. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 275-76; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 93. Cf. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 90.

134. Cf. Lohse, *Kolosser*, 127.

135. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 130; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 93.



emotional, volitional and even epistemic affirmation and reinforcement.<sup>136</sup> Hence, Paul's desire is that the very core of each person,<sup>137</sup> where thought, emotions and decisions converge, would be encouraged.

The means of attaining this purpose is noted by the participle *συμβιβασθέντες* that represents a contemporaneous event.<sup>138</sup> A few scholars<sup>139</sup> interpret the participle with a pedagogical meaning (i.e. 'being instructed'). This sense is certainly attested in the LXX and Acts, and seems to accord with Paul's preoccupation with the Colossians' knowledge in opposition to the error. Furthermore, O'Brien notes that the clause is translated in the Vulgate as *instructi in caritate*. In contrast, most commentators prefer the unifying sense of 'being knit together' based upon its parallel occurrence in 2.19 within the metaphorical context of the body (cf. Eph. 4.16).<sup>140</sup> Also, the modifying prepositional clause *ἐν ἀγάπῃ* implies unity given that love in 3.14 creates unity (*ὁ ἐστὶν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος*; cf. Eph. 4.15).<sup>141</sup> I suggest, however, that this hermeneutical debate is propagated by a relative neglect of the conjunction *καί* between *ἐν ἀγάπῃ* and *εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος* in 2.2. Specifically, scholars treat the clause following *ἐν ἀγάπῃ* as introducing a new topic rather than functioning as a second prepositional clause that modifies *συμβιβάζω*. When the phrase is read with both clauses, it becomes 'συμβιβασθέντες in love and into all of the riches of full assurance of insight'. If this is accepted, the participle *συμβιβασθέντες* employs a combined sense of cohesion and instruction. I propose that this is intentional, so that the cohesiveness of believers who actively love one another<sup>142</sup> fosters a mutually instructive community that leads to the full assurance of insight, and perhaps reflexively to greater cohesiveness. This aligns with Paul's later exhortation in 3.16

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136. Cf. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 85; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 93.

137. Note the plural *αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν* (1.22).

138. See n. 79.

139. Dibelius, *Kolosser, Epheser*, 18-19; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 93; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 36.

140. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 277-78; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 90; Dunn, *Colossians*, 130; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 127-28; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 85; Martin, *Colossians*, 75; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 93.

141. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 130; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 89; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 93. *Pace* O'Brien, *Colossians*, 93; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 36. Based upon the interpretation of *συμβιβασθέντες* as 'instructed', Scott argues that it is the apostle's love for the Colossians whereas O'Brien provides the ambiguous interpretation as 'love in its full breadth of meaning, as the foundation of the Christian life.'

142. The prepositional clause *ἐν ἀγάπῃ* can take either a spatial or instrumental sense. A comparison with Col. 3.14 likely indicates the instrumental sense, i.e. active love of believers (cf. Eph. 4.15).

that the Colossians teach and warn one another (διδάσκοντες καὶ νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς) as the continuation of his own apostolic efforts to teach and warn every person. In effect, the Church is set out as a redemptive space in which believers are encouraged and instructed in faithfulness to Christ.

Verification of this conclusion occurs through the subsequent clause εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ that stands in apposition to εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως. Given that the mystery of God entailed the extension of the redemptive scope to the Gentiles through Christ dwelling in them (1.26-28), it is fitting that the full assurance of insight fostered through the activity of the Church is co-ordinated with the knowledge of God's mystery, Christ. Yet, it also aligns with Paul's intercessory prayer in 1.9 that the Colossians be filled with a knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of God's will through the reception of spiritual wisdom (σοφία) and insight (σύνεσις). Because all the treasures of wisdom (σοφία) and knowledge (γνώσις) are hidden in Christ (2.3), his indwelling of Gentile believers becomes the means by which Paul's intercessory concerns are accomplished. A union between Christ and the Church has been established so that Paul can speak of 'Christ in you' (e.g. 1.27) just as easily as he can of believers being 'in Christ' (e.g. 1.28). Hence, being filled with all spiritual wisdom is as much an event predicated upon Christ's indwelling presence as it is a process by which believers grow as they persevere and walk in him. This is certainly the implication of Paul's exhortation in 2.6-7, where the reception of Christ entails the consequent responsibility to walk in him and thereby be rooted and built up in him and established in the faith.

This conclusion accords with the two consequences that Paul expects to derive from his prayer that the Colossians be filled for a worthy walk in 1.9.<sup>143</sup>

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143. Cf. Lohse, *Kolossier*, 56; Martin, *Colossians*, 51-53; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 19; Schweizer, *Kolossier*, 40-43. These scholars differ on the relationship of the following participles to this singular request. O'Brien and Lohse treat περιπατήσαι in 1.10 as the purpose of the divine filling and the following four participles (1.10 – καρποφοροῦντες and αὐξανόμενοι; 1.11 – δυναμούμενοι; 1.12 – εὐχαριστοῦντες) as defining the manner of walking worthily. Schweizer and Martin regard the first three participles, along with εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, as part of a four-fold summons, whilst separating the final participle as part of the introduction to the Christological hymn. Both attempts to relate the participial clauses to the main request ignore an observable structure in 1.10-11:

First, the knowledge of God enables believers to be fruitful and grow in all good works into all favour (1.10). Second, the might of God's glory strengthens believers in all power into all patience and endurance (1.11). These two calls to be both pleasing and persevering are echoed again in 1.22-23 in preparation for Paul's exposition of his apostolic labours. In other words, when Paul brings his apostolic responsibility to bear on the Colossian church, he labours to produce the same relationship between their knowledge, ethical conduct and perseverance that he prays God will establish in them. Yet, he also seeks to establish the Church as the community wherein one believer's ethical conduct and perseverance encourages that of others, and vice versa, so that in a complex matrix of mutual cohesion and edification in love the full assurance of insight into the knowledge of God's mystery is produced. All of this comes about as Christ indwells the Church and the Church reciprocally remains and walks in him.

To be sure, the correlation of Paul's goal to present believers as mature in Christ with his goal that the Colossians be encouraged to persevere in righteousness (as they mutually grow in their knowledge of God's mystery) begins to sketch the contours of the eschatological nature of maturity. Yet, further analysis of Paul's paraenesis in 3.1ff is needed in order to fill in this sketch. Nonetheless, it can be seen that Paul's intentions for believers are aligned with the cosmic goals of redemption that he expressed in his introductory remarks and carried through the hymn until now. That the gospel also καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον in the world (1.6) in co-ordination with believers (1.6, 10), endows the image of fruitfulness and growth with both quantitative and qualitative import.<sup>144</sup> Because the Colossians were receptive to the initial proclamation of the gospel (1.7), Paul prays that they receive further knowledge of God's will that leads

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περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου  
 εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν  
 ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ  
 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ  
 εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν

The combination of καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον in 1.6 justifies taking the participles καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι in 1.10 together. Additionally, the clause μετὰ χαρᾶς at the end of 1.11 deviates from the preposition+πᾶς construction in this structure, so that 1.12 expresses the attitude of this walk whereas 1.10-11 elaborate the manner and goal. Hence, by the knowledge of God, believers will be fruitful and grow in all good works, which results in all favour. Likewise, according to the might of his (i.e. God's) glory, believers will be strengthened in all power, which results in all endurance and patience.

144. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 23.

to greater righteousness and perseverance.<sup>145</sup> In so doing, the Church will be established as the community through which the gospel will continue to permeate outwards into the world.

#### 4.3.3 Summary

This section has argued that Paul represents his apostolic role as a stewardship within the divine οἰκονομία, which will require that he make an eschatological presentation of the believers within the scope of his responsibility as mature in Christ. This presentation functions as verification that his responsibilities as steward of the divine mystery have been fulfilled. Paul's labours for the Church in general and the Colossians in particular, therefore, are geared towards nurturing believers towards a final state of maturity. Whilst maturity is understood as an eschatological state, Paul's specific concerns for the Colossians indicate that there are present implications for believers. His efforts to establish the Church as a cohesive community wherein believers are encouraged in righteousness and perseverance through mutual growth in knowledge imply something of the nature of this maturity. Thus, in order to clarify further the nature of maturity and its relevance to Paul's rhetorical goals, consideration of his response to the error in Colossae and his subsequent teaching is needed.

#### 4.4 The Colossian Error (2.8–3.4): Warning and Teaching

This chapter has thus far established the Christology and ecclesiology of the hymn in 1.15-20 with its cosmological and soteriological outlooks, as well as Paul's representation of his role within this redemptive programme. The purpose of this section is now to draw together these two strands in Paul's rebuttal of the Colossian error. In particular, my premise is that the Christology and ecclesiology of the hymn provide Paul with the substantive material to both warn the Colossians about the error and teach them about the appropriate ethical response to their salvation. I will demonstrate that he does this as the performance of his stewardship responsibility to foster believers toward their maturity. With respect to his warning, I will show that Paul refutes the error in Colossae by repeatedly directing believers back to the reality of the Church as the vehicle of redemption in

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145. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 47.

the world. Furthermore, I will argue that his teaching clarifies the eschatological nature of maturity as the glorious life awaiting believers in Christ, which therefore means their present way of life is an act of embodying in the present their eschatological maturity.

#### 4.4.1 Paul's Warning: The Trajectory of the Error

There are several initial indications in Colossians that Paul is rhetorically posturing himself to refute a problem in the Colossian church. For instance, J. B. Lightfoot<sup>146</sup> argued that the identification of the gospel received by the Colossian church as the one universally spreading throughout the whole world (1.6) was an indirect rejection of any distorted teachings unique to their locality. Another implicit indication is Paul's commendation of Epaphras as a πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν<sup>147</sup> διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (1.7) in the introduction to the letter,<sup>148</sup> which suggests the Colossians have encountered other 'ministers' that make it necessary to identify which one has faithfully presented the apostolic gospel. Additionally, Paul establishes a precarious setting when he leaves unspecified why he prays that the Colossians be strengthened for all patience and endurance (1.11). Further still is his application of conditionality to their redemption in Christ through the statement εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει (1.23). Finally, Paul explicitly opens the potential<sup>149</sup> that the Colossians are, or will be, confronted by deluding arguments (2.4).

Yet, despite all of these initial indications that an error besets the Colossians, there is relatively little material within Paul's opposition (2.8-23) that exposes the exact beliefs or origins of that error and its proponents.<sup>150</sup> Scholars have been

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146. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 132-33. Cf. Wilson, *Colossians*, 92. Wilson questions whether this critique would have been perceptible to the original recipients.

147. The manuscript evidence supports the first person pronoun ἡμῶν rather than the second person pronoun ὑμῶν. Considering that Paul also describes himself as a διάκονος twice in Colossians (1.23, 25) indicates that Epaphras' authority as a διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ is by virtue of being on behalf of Paul's authority. Pace Lohse, *Kolosser*, 54; Wilson, *Colossians*, 95-96.

148. This is the only occasion in any of the Pauline corpus where a commendation of an apostolic delegate occurs at the introduction of the letter.

149. That παραλογίζομαι occurs in the subjunctive mood requires that this verse indicate a potential event rather than a certain present or future event.

150. The references include: 2.4 – deluding activities (παραλογίζομαι), the use of 'plausible arguments' (πιθανολογία); 2.8 – taking captive (συλαγωγέω), by philosophy and empty deceit (διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης), based upon the cosmic elements and human traditions but not Christ (κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν); 2.16 – judging on matters of food, drink, festivals, new moons or Sabbaths (κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων); 2.18 – disqualifying (καταβραβεύω) based upon the desires for asceticism and the 'worship of angels' (θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων) as well as entering into visions (ἐώρακεν

undaunted by the relatively opacity of the material, however, and continue to provide proposals about the identity of the errorists and their beliefs. The reconstructions to date number well over forty<sup>151</sup> and can be organised according to the proposed origins in Gnosticism,<sup>152</sup> Judaism,<sup>153</sup> Hellenism,<sup>154</sup> or various syncretisms.<sup>155</sup> In contrast, Morna Hooker<sup>156</sup> argues that the calm tone of Paul's rebuttal, when compared to the tone of Galatians,<sup>157</sup> indicates either that there was no error in Colossae or at least that it did not pose a serious threat. She therefore proposes that Paul was concerned to present a general warning about, and inoculation against, possible opposition in the future rather than to refute a specific problem confronting the Colossian church. The number and variety of historical reconstructions lends credence to John Barclay's<sup>158</sup> critique that there is no methodology governing these various attempts, which therefore allows scholars

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ἐμβατεύων); 2.21 – commanding certain abstentions (Μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης); and 2.23 – promotes self-imposed religion, asceticism and severe treatment of the body (ἐν ἐθέλωθεισκά καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη [καὶ] ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος).

151. For a comprehensive list of proposals prior to 1973, see J.J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, NovTSup 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 3-4. The major new proposals since that time are included in the lists below.
152. E.g. G. Bornkamm, 'The Heresy of Colossians', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, trans. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 123-45; J.B. Lightfoot, 'The Colossian Heresy', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 13-59.
153. E.g. F.O. Francis, 'Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 163-95; Gunther, *Opponents*, esp. 314-17; S. Lyonnet, 'Paul's Adversaries in Colossae', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, trans. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 147-61. Cf. S.E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus*, JSNTSup 36 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 124-30; F.O. Francis, 'The Background of ΕΜΒΑΤΕΙΝ (Col 2:18) in Legal Papyri and Oracle Inscriptions', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 197-207; O'Brien, *Colossians*, xxxvi-xxxviii; C. Rowland, 'Apocalyptic Visions and the Exaltation of Christ in the Letter to the Colossians', *JSNT* 19 (1983), 73-83; Sappington, *Revelation*, 150-70; I.K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae*, LNTS 326 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 39-73.
154. E.g. M. Dibelius, 'The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites', in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, trans. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks, SBLBS 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 61-121; T.W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique*, JSNTSup 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 58-167; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 110-46.
155. E.g. Arnold, *Colossian Syncretism*, esp. 11-101; R.E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*, JSNTSup 96 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 98-133; Schweizer, *Kolossier*, 100-104.
156. M.D. Hooker, 'Were There False Teachers in Colossae?' in *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 121-36.
157. The problem in Galatians exhibits a similar mixing of Jewish practices with reflexion on the cosmic elements and spiritual powers.
158. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, 48-54.

to arbitrarily admit or dismiss evidence in the letter in order to impose a certain framework. Instead, he suggests that the evidence for a reconstruction is specific enough (e.g. 2.16-23) to undo Hooker's argument, but limited enough to prevent an exact identification because it could easily be a caricature of his opponents rather than a faithful representation of their views.<sup>159</sup>

I propose that the initial indications of Paul's concern to confront an error threatening the church, when combined with Barclay's valid argument about the opacity in the apostle's description of the error, both imply that Paul's effort to refute the error took priority over his effort to identify it. In other words, it is evident that Paul was not concerned to give a precise description of the error, but rather focused his words on opposing it. This rebuttal is concentrated in 2.8-19, seeing as the negative commands of the pericope are distinct from the positive ones in 2.6-7. Likewise, Paul's subsequent comments on the error in 2.20-23 not only shift in tone from warning to teaching, but also essentially reiterate comments previously made about the error (cf. 2.16, 18). Furthermore, 2.8-19 contains three negative commands that repeat common terminology (i.e. 2.8 – μή τις ὑμᾶς; 2.16 – Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς; 2.18 – μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς) and are followed by a rejoinder that employs Christological teaching and somatic terminology. Because of this, my analysis of Paul's warning about the error will be limited to his comments in 2.8-19. I will demonstrate that each of the three rebuttals shows how the error contradicts the Christological and ecclesiological truths espoused in the hymn. As such, I will argue that Paul's rejoinders refer believers back to a correct view of Christ and the Church for the sake of maintaining their qualification for eschatological maturity.

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159. As such, Barclay argues that there are four 'highly probable' (53) claims that can be made about the error:

1. It involved observance of the main elements of the Jewish calendar and some features of the Jewish food laws (2.16);
2. It claimed visionary experiences in association with worship, though the relationship of worship to the 'angels' is unclear (2.18);
3. It involved some regulation of physical activities (2.20-23);
4. It offered some form of 'wisdom' (2.8, 23);

and two more 'probable' (53-54) claims:

1. The proponents of the error were Christians (2.16, 18-19) who claimed superior status;
2. The error involved the veneration of cosmic entities including the angels (2.18), the powers (1.16; 2.9-10, 15), and possibly the elements (2.8, 20).

#### 4.4.1.1 Συλαγωγέω: Captivity

Paul's first exhortation for the Colossians' opposition to the errorists (2.8) utilises both a strange grammatical construct and a wealth of unspecific terminology. The combination of τις with the future tense verb, ἔσται, indicates either that this activity is a possible future event<sup>160</sup> or that it is current problem with durative potential. The latter option seems more likely given that the subsequent two commands (2.16, 18) use the present tense, third person imperatives. Hence, the participle συλαγωγῶν functions as a conative present, so that the command is for the Colossians to watch out so as to render ineffective ongoing present attempts to take them captive. Yet, the expressed means that are employed by this errant attempt (διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης), as well as its basis (κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου), both fail to specify either what the errorists espouse or hope to achieve. In other words, the effort to take believers captive through philosophy and empty deceit according to the cosmic elements and human tradition remains sufficiently opaque as to render unclear the exact nature of the teaching or its real goal. As such, there seems to be little in the command that will clarify the nature of Paul's rejoinder in 2.9-15. However, the significant statement made about the error is that it is οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν. This indicates that the primary problem of the error is that its teachings either do not derive from Christ's person and redemptive work, or indeed are antithetical to him.

I suggest that the rejoinder in fact clarifies some of the issues at stake in the exhortation. The remarks in 2.9-15 provide the initial basis for assessing the import of the rejoinder. Given that most ancient traditions saw the human body as constituted by the στοιχεῖα and therefore obligated to observe and submit to the will of their deified forms, the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι,<sup>161</sup> it seems safe to claim that the errorists espoused some form of ethic based upon these cosmic principles. In contrast, Paul levels a direct critique by claiming all deity is located in Christ (2.9).<sup>162</sup> The secondary remarks in 2.10-15 then extend the divine fullness to believers who are in Christ with the further explication that he is the head of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι. The compounding effect of this is evident. Paul does not stop

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160. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 146.

161. Cf. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 60-65.

162. Cf. Gal. 4.8 – οἱ φύσει μὴ ὄντες θεοί.



with the claim that the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are not divine, but goes on to argue that they are subordinate cosmic entities that are rightly ordered as *for* Christ.<sup>163</sup> Whereas the error based an ethic upon the στοιχεῖα and not Christ (2.8), Paul neuters these cosmic entities of any ethical implications by exposing the natural order in the cosmos.

Given this conclusion, it is possible to ascertain why death (νεκρός), trespasses (παράπτωμα), and the uncircumcision of the flesh (ἀκροβυστία τῆς σαρκός) are correlated and then juxtaposed with the circumcision of Christ (περιτομή τοῦ Χριστοῦ), forgiven trespasses (χαρισάμενος... τὰ παραπτώματα) and being made alive (συζωποιέω) with Christ in 2.11-15. It is possible that the ethic espoused by the errorists somehow linked the resolution of one's trespasses with obeisance to these cosmic principles. Whilst this cannot ultimately be verified, it is important that Paul represents the 'circumcision of Christ' as involving the putting off of the body of flesh (2.11 – ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός). Because believers participate with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, they also participate with his stripping off of the fleshly body that was subject to the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (cf. 2.15). Hence, he co-ordinates the forgiveness of trespasses as a matter attained by the crucifixion with his negation of the 'claims' these cosmic entities had on fleshly constituted bodies. In this way, his language reflects that of the σῶμα ψυχικόν and σῶμα πνευματικόν of 1 Cor. 15. By participating with Christ's resurrection, believers have now been reconstituted by the πνεῦμα so that death – the ultimate power of the στοιχεῖα in antiquity and the consequence of sins and trespasses in Judaism and Christianity – no longer holds sway (cf. 1 Cor. 15.54-56).

This reading of 2.9-15 also clarifies interpretive issues facing the statement καὶ ἔστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι in 2.10a. Whilst all commentators recognise a play on terminology between πλήρωμα (2.9) and πληρώω (2.10a), they are divided on the opinion of the content. Most scholars<sup>164</sup> opt to see πεπληρωμένοι as a reference to 'the fullness of life' or 'fulfilment' as the presence of salvation. However, a few scholars<sup>165</sup> draw the implication that the Church actually receives the divine nature

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163. See §4.2.2.2.

164. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 315-16; Dunn, *Colossians*, 152-53; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 152; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 98-99; Martin, *Colossians*, 80-81; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 113-14; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 103; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 44. Cf. Moule, *Colossians*, 94.

165. Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 101; Carson, *Colossians*, 64-65; Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 180-81.

by virtue of its union with Christ. I propose, however, a mediating interpretation. Because 2.10a is bracketed by statements concerned with the divine nature of Christ (i.e. 2.9, 10b), the attempt to treat *πεπληρωμένοι* as unrelated to the divine nature is unwarranted. Yet, the claim that the Church is now transfused with the divine nature, so that in essence it is deified, is equally invalid because of the grammar and terminology. Whereas 2.9 utilises a gnomic present when stating that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ, the periphrastic combination of the present tense *ἔστὲ* with a perfect passive participle implies a past event of being filled that is presently sustained.<sup>166</sup> In other words, whereas the dwelling of deity in Christ is inherent to his being, the filling of the Church is not an inherent reality of its existence. That the filling occurred at a specific point in the past and is progressively maintained in the present implies that being *πεπληρωμένοι* is not an essential quality of the Church's being but rather a benefit it enjoys by virtue of its union with Christ.

Paul's use of the term *σωματικῶς* in 2.9, therefore, provides a hermeneutical key to deciphering the passage. Some scholars<sup>167</sup> rightly treat this term as conveying a *double entendre* of both Christ's corporeal body and his ecclesial body. Whilst this could be taken to mean that all fullness of deity dwells (gnomic present) in Christ's ecclesial body in the same way that it does his corporeal body, I suggest that 2.10a is written for the sake of clarification. Because the Church is the body of Christ by virtue of its union with him, 2.10a clarifies that the divine nature 'dwells' in the Church as a result of its union with Christ. In other words, something more than the divine gifts and graces, or even life, now fills the Church. The ecclesial body in fact becomes the place in the world where God/Christ

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166. Dunn, *Colossians*, 153; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 113.

167. P. Benoit, 'Corp, tête et plérôme dan les épîtres de la captivité', *RB* 63 (1956), 5-44; Kim, *Origin*, 258; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 150-52; Masson, *Colossiensi*, 124-25; J.A.T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 58, 66-68. Cf. Hay, *Colossians*, 89; P.D. Overfield, 'Pleroma: A Study in Content and Context', *NTS* 25 (1979), 392. Hay argues that the term *σωματικῶς* carries the sense of 'substance', or 'in reality', therefore making 'all the fullness of God' a present reality in the world. Hence, he argues that it could be a reference to the Church. Overfield notes that *πλήρωμα* 'carried with it the concept of unity in its use by secular authors.' Thus, when it is applied to Christ via the adverb *σωματικῶς*, it implies a unique relationship with God. It is curious, therefore, that Overfield does not follow the implications of unity as a conceptual aspect of *πλήρωμα* into the subsequent statements of Christ's relationship with the Church. Pace Dunn, "'Body'", 175-76; Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, 122-23; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 23-27. Lohmeyer and van Kooten argue that *σωματικῶς* refers exclusively to the cosmos as Christ's body, and Dunn that it functions as a *double entendre* for Christ's corporeal body and cosmic body, based upon 2.10b that Christ is head of the *ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἔξουσία*. However, it was demonstrated in §4.2.2.2 that this is a misreading of 2.10-15.

resides,<sup>168</sup> and with that comes access to and experience of the gifts, graces, powers and life that are associated with the divine nature.<sup>169</sup> Hence, in contrast to the error that claims the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are deities to whom believers owe obedience, Paul argues that believers need look no further than the Church for an engagement with the divine and the power and encouragement it provides to ‘walk in Christ’.

#### 4.4.1.2 Κρίνω: Judgment

In contrast to the command in 2.8, Paul’s exhortation in 2.16 is fairly straightforward. It is safe to reconstruct a historical scenario wherein the errorists required certain dietary and calendrical observances, and therefore adopted a posture of being able to judge believers who failed or refused to follow these practices. Yet, the reason why they espoused these particular requirements is left unspecified. It is possible that Paul is quoting the errorists in 2.17a when he says that such observances are ‘a shadow of the things to come’ (σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων). Indeed, if it is not a quotation, then Paul’s essentially positive appraisal of the requirements here contradicts his rather sharp criticism of similar commands (i.e. Μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης) in 2.20-23. Put differently, if Paul himself regards the practices as anticipatory of the eschaton,<sup>170</sup> he allows for a potential benefit in observing them whilst restricting attempts to judge based upon them. But this would contradict his later teaching that submission to commands for abstention constitutes a negative act of living in the world even though one has died with

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168. Cf. Matt.18.20; Eph. 3.19. Additionally, the language of the Church growing into a ‘holy temple’ and ‘dwelling place for God’ in Eph. 2.21-22 is suggestive.

169. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1980), 190. Cf. Dunn, “‘Body’”, 176-77. Dunn insists that Christ is the point and means of access to the divine, but rejects any possibility that σωματικῶς in 2.9 refers to the Church. In other words, whilst Christ is the means of access to divinity, there is ironically no earthly manifestation of Christ in the world.

170. Pace Dunn, “‘Body’”, 177-78; Lähnemann, *Kolosserbrieff*, 136; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 140; Schweizer, *Kolosses*, 120; Wright, *Colossians*, 119-20. These scholars attempt to read 2.17a as a reference to an OT eschatological perspective. In other words, Paul adopts the perspective of Jewish eschatological expectation of the future Messiah, so that these distinctly Jewish practices become ‘a shadow of the things that were to come’. However, the grammar of the verse is set against this reading in that Paul uses the present tense verb ἐστίν and participle τῶν μελλόντων. Furthermore, these scholars argue that the reality pointed to is Christ, but fail to note that the participle occurs in the plural. Hence, even though they correctly translate it as the ‘things to come’, they implicitly treat it as stating the ‘one to come’. Finally, whilst it is fairly safe to argue that these requirements have their basis in Jewish practices, it must be noted that none of them are distinct to Judaism. In short, the only way that 2.17a can be read from a Jewish eschatological perspective is if it is taken to be Paul quoting his opponents who are adherents to that Jewish eschatological perspective (i.e. non-Christian Jews). This is unlikely given that the errorists most likely were Christians (see n. 159).

Christ to the στοιχεῖα (2.20-21). Hence, it is probable that the errorists claimed that these practices anticipated some future reality awaiting believers.

Determining the nature of Paul's rejoinder to the claims of the errorists, however, proves a complicated hermeneutical task. Whilst scholars<sup>171</sup> recognise that the addition of τῶν μελλόντων transforms the Platonic and Philonic metaphysical contrast between σκιά-σῶμα into an eschatological comparison, most interpretations still take Christ to be the 'substance' (σῶμα) by virtue of being the anticipated figure of distinctively Jewish practices.<sup>172</sup> However, Pierre Benoit<sup>173</sup> rightly notes that this sense may not be read here because it would require τοῦ Χριστοῦ to occur in the nominative case as the predicate of σῶμα. Furthermore, the conjunction δέ establishes a mild contrast between alternatives rather than a strong opposition between past-tense shadow and present-tense reality. As such, the grammar of the verse requires that σκιά τῶν μελλόντων and σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ be held as parallel alternatives. Yet, this reveals a discontinuity between the clauses in that there is no parallel pronoun or noun for ἃ in 2.17b.<sup>174</sup> In other words, whilst the verse follows a schema of 'A is a σκιά of B, but X is the σῶμα of Y', it leaves X unspecified. Hence, I suggest that Benoit's<sup>175</sup> proposal to treat 2.17b as an elliptical expression best read as τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ is essentially correct. This in effect treats σῶμα as another *double entendre* encompassing the two senses of 'reality'/'substance' and 'body' (i.e. 'Church').<sup>176</sup> Thus, whereas the errorists insist upon their practices as an anticipation of some future reality, Paul points to the Church as the body of Christ in order to claim, in essence, an inaugurated eschatology.

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171. E.g. Dunn, *Colossians*, 176; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 139-40.

172. Dunn, *Colossians*, 176; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 138. O'Brien undermines his own conclusion with a previous observation that the Torah gave no restrictions regarding drink. Similarly, Dunn notes that the Sabbath was not wholly distinct from Judaism.

173. Benoit, 'Corp', 12 n. 1.

174. Whilst it could be argued that a second discontinuity occurs when σῶμα is definite but σκιά is indefinite, a σκιά-σῶμα contrast is in fact conducive to message of the verse. Namely, shadows of a future reality are by nature nebulous and therefore indefinite, whereas identifying *the* substance expects a definite object.

175. Benoit, 'Corp', 12.

176. Whilst many scholars accept that σῶμα has this dual sense, most do not factor this into their interpretations. E.g. Benoit, 'Corp', 12; H. Conzelmann, 'Der Brief an die Kolosser', in *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*, eds. J. Becker, H. Conzelmann and G. Friedrich, NTD 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 192-93; Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, 122-23; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 171-73; Martin, *Colossians*, 91-92; Masson, *Colossians*, 131; Moule, *Colossians*, 102-103. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 176-77; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 120-22; Wilson, *Colossians*, 219-20; Wright, *Colossians*, 119-21. The latter group of scholars accept the possibility of this argument with reservations.

It can be seen, therefore, that Paul does not directly refute the errorist claim to anticipate a future reality, but rather trumps it with his own for an eschatologically anticipatory reality. This fits with the rhetoric of the exhortation as a whole. When the inferential conjunction οὖν of 2.16 is taken into account, Paul's command to oppose the errorists' attempts to judge believers becomes dependent upon the logic of first warning. Thus, the Church stands as substantive proof that the eschatological benefits and implications of Christ's redemption are already present in the world. This reality opposes attempts to judge believers according to worldly standards (cf. 2.20-21), because the Colossians should look no further than the Church in order to find the divine presence. Likewise, the Church's union with Christ entails participating with his death and resurrection that cancels the debt of legal demands and strips off the body of flesh. By claiming that the future reality of the eschaton is already present in the world in the form of the Church, Paul effectively reveals the inferiority of the errorist claim to follow practices that anticipate some future reality. Whilst they want the Colossians to be satisfied with foreshadowing requirements that wait for something, he sets before them the substance and claims it is already here.

#### 4.4.1.3 Καταβραβεύω: Disqualification

Whilst Paul's final warning bears a cumulative effect within this pericope, it is also notoriously difficult to interpret. For instance, scholars debate whether the θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων is an objective or subjective genitive construct, and likewise labour over the reading of ἃ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων.<sup>177</sup> However, the scope and aim of this chapter neither allows nor requires a resolution of these debates. More important to the present analysis is Paul's assessment of the errorists' attempts to 'disqualify' (καταβραβεύω) the Colossians. Even though this likely represents their self-conscious labelling as disqualified those believers who fail to meet the errorists' desires (θέλω), the nature of Paul's rhetoric opens the possibility that this also presents his evaluation of the situation should their efforts be successful. Paul already has described the Colossians' redemption as one of being 'qualified' (1.12 – ἱκανόω) by God for the inheritance with the saints of light, but conditions the final outcome of this qualification on their remaining in the faith (1.23). To be sure, there is no linguistic connection between ἱκανόω and καταβραβεύω. Yet, the

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177. E.g. Francis, 'Humility', 176-81; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 173-75.

common theological import may not be overlooked when Paul metaphorically describes the outcome of their desires as ‘not holding fast to the head’ (2.19 – οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν).<sup>178</sup> Given that the sense of the verb κρατέω here incorporates personal commitment with ‘keeping’ something, it seems that Paul is implicitly turning the errorists’ label of ‘disqualified’ back onto them. In effect, he claims that their efforts to disqualify believers paradoxically reveal their own disqualification. Yet, the further implication holds that believers who acquiesce to the errorists’ desires will equally be disqualified.

This conclusion is further substantiated when Paul draws out the implications of holding fast to the head to be the incorporation of the believer within the body that is ‘knit together’ (συμβιβάζομενον) so as to grow with a growth from God (2.19).<sup>179</sup> The repetition of συμβιβάζω rekindles Paul’s discourse on the goal of his apostolic labours for the Colossians to be knit together for the sake of mutual encouragement and edification into knowledge. The contrast that this has to the isolating effects of the error is evident. The individuated nature of the error is indicated by Paul’s use of μηδεὶς and the singular form of αὐτός. These individuals do not encourage, but rather disqualify others. Moreover, this leads them to be puffed up for no purpose by their own fleshly minds (εἰκῆ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ), which stands juxtaposed with mutually edifying knowledge found in the Church. In every way, then, the error inhibits the very goals that Paul has for the Church. Furthermore, because Paul’s goals for the Church are conducive to its growth, the inhibiting effects of the error could be depicted imaginatively as causing the atrophy of separate members of the body that results ultimately in their amputation. The final consequence of this disjunction from the body is that the believer no longer qualifies to be presented as mature in Christ, having forsaken the very source of encouragement and edification towards perseverance and righteousness.

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178. Best, *One Body*, 115-38. Best equates ‘holding fast to the head’ and ‘union with Christ’.

179. Dibelius, *Kolosser, Epheser*, 27; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 23-27. Whilst it is almost universally accepted that κεφαλὴ-σῶμα in 2.19 refers to the Christ-Church relationship, Dibelius and van Kooten argue to read σῶμα as a reference to the cosmos. Cf. F.B. Craddock, “‘All Things in Him’: A Critical Note on Col. I. 15-20”, *NTS* 12 (1965-66), 78-80. Craddock indirectly critiques van Kooten’s more substantive argument that relies upon a comparative analysis with Stoicism. Specifically, Craddock notes that the Stoics conceived of the cosmos as the body of Logos by virtue of the Logos permeating all things. Yet, their ‘he in all things’ formula is very different from the ‘all things in him’ concept of Colossians.

If this reading of 2.18-19 is accepted, it reveals a remarkable coherence to Paul's rhetoric and logic starting from 2.8 to its culmination in 2.19. Rhetorically, Paul exhorts his readers to oppose the errorists, and each time reinforces this exhortation via reference to the Church using somatic language. This common strategy produces a cumulative effect in the logic of Paul's warning. Whereas the errorists ascribed divine status to the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι, Paul demotes them to the status of creatures rightly ordered for Christ who is divine and makes that divinity present in the Church through its union with him. Therefore, the errorists' efforts to judge believers on dietary and calendrical matters that foreshadow some future state is absurd, because the actual substance of the eschaton, namely God dwelling with his people, is already present through the Church. Hence, it would be of the utmost detriment to believers if the errorists' succeeded in disqualifying them, because it disjoins them from the Church which is the source of growth and, therefore, the hope of glory.

It can further be seen how this warning draws upon the Christology and ecclesiology of the hymn as well as informs Paul's apostolic role as steward. Specifically, the pre-eminence of Christ within the created orders is applied to the particular question of the divine status of the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι. Similarly, Christ as sustainer of the new creation is evident in that it is from the head (2.19 – τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα...) that the whole body finds its coherence. The ecclesiology of the hymn is also maintained in that the Church is set out as the redemptive sphere of creation wherein God dwells with his people. Furthermore, the reason that Paul's apostolic stewardship is presented as a matter concerned with every individual believer is in response to the errorists' strategy. Because they seek to isolate individuals through deluding and deceptive methods, Paul applies his warning and teaching to every individual person so that he might present each of them as mature.

#### **4.4.2 Paul's Teaching: The Contrast of the Error**

In contrast to his emphatically negative commands in 2.8-19, Paul's tone in 2.20-3.4 changes to an interrogative engagement with his readers (e.g. εἰ ἀπεθάνετε... εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε). This shift suggests that he has now transitioned from apostolic warning to apostolic teaching (cf. 1.28). The parallel questions in 2.20 and 3.1 indicate that Paul intends to apply the death and resurrection of

believers with Christ (2.11-15) to the Colossians' ethical conduct.<sup>180</sup> This application follows a negative (2.20-23) and then positive (3.1-4) thrust. I will demonstrate that Paul's negative teaching exposes the inadequacy of the error as an ethical guide to believers. Over against this inadequacy, I will argue that Paul positively teaches believers to walk in accordance with a heavenly and eschatological perspective, or more pointedly, to embody their eschatological state of maturity in their present lives.

#### 4.4.2.1 Rejecting False Wisdom

Because Paul's teaching in 2.20-23 operates within a cosmological construct, a proper understanding of the believer's ethical life in relation to the world requires an analysis of this pericope. The question that Paul puts to the Colossians in 2.20 (τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε;) implies that the errant teachings have gained some foothold amongst believers in the church.<sup>181</sup> As such, Paul must now shift his focus from warning against the beliefs and practices of the errorists to teaching the Colossians how submission to their requirements is nonsensical. There are two significant features of this teaching. First, Paul outlines the ethical ramifications that participating in Christ's death holds for the believer's way of life in the world. Second, he demonstrates that the 'wisdom' of the error promotes wickedness and death rather than life and righteousness. Both of these elements recall previous themes in the letter and direct them towards the ethical implication that the Colossians should cease to submit to the allures of the error.

The implications that Paul derives from believers dying with Christ is seen in the assumed relationship between the στοιχεῖα, κόσμος and σάρξ. No mention of Christ dying ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου has occurred thus far in the letter. Yet, Paul's depiction of Christ's death as stripping off the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (2.15) in conjunction with stripping off the body of flesh (2.11) implies that he no longer possesses a body constituted by the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Provocatively, though, Paul applies this ontological status to believers through their participation with Christ. In other words, because the Colossians have died with him, they vicariously exist in a body that has been 'stripped' of the στοιχεῖα. The significance

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180. Dunn, *Colossians*, 188.

181. *Pace* Hooker, 'False Teachers', 123. Hooker's argument that this should be translated as 'why submit?' as opposed to 'why do you submit?' is supported by neither the indicative mood nor the permissive passive voice of the verb.



of this is that the στοιχεῖα no longer function as an ethical guide for believers.<sup>182</sup> Thus, by turning to an ethic based upon the στοιχεῖα, the Colossians have implicitly acted as though they are alive in the world and possess a σῶμα τῆς σαρκός. Essentially, the στοιχεῖα-based ethics of the errorists implies at least one of the following possibilities: (i) that Christ did not die to the στοιχεῖα; (ii) that believers do not participate in Christ's death to the στοιχεῖα; and/or (iii) that even if these things were true, they have no relevance for a believer's present life.

Before proceeding to the second element of his negative instruction, Paul comments on the irony of the errorist teachings. That the commands of the errorists are concerned with things destroyed in their use/consumption reveals simultaneously the foolishness of these human commands and the temporal nature of στοιχεῖα. Recalling that the στοιχεῖα were commonly perceived to hold authority over cyclical processes of birth and death, creation and destruction, it would have seemed wise to base an ethic in accord with their natural ordering of the world. Yet, Paul has shown that the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι are not divine entities, but rather created orders subsumed under Christ's headship. Having been stripped of any divine status, the στοιχεῖα are seen to be subject to the very processes they once were considered to control. Specifically, the στοιχεῖα are no more than 'elements' in Christ's creation, with their impotence being revealed in that they can be used or consumed. In other words, Paul exposes the foolishness of granting divinity to objects that can be acted upon and consumed. It is the transient and perishable nature of the objects concerned that indicates the absurdity of the errorists in granting significant import to them as a basis for religious precepts and teachings (2.22).<sup>183</sup>

Given this, Paul rightly advances the second aspect of his negative teaching, namely that the error represents false wisdom. This criticism is significant in that Paul is highly concerned with the source of wisdom and its ethical implications for believers throughout the letter. He has prayed for their reception of wisdom from God (1.9), has based his own apostolic efforts in the employment of wisdom (1.28) and encourages believers to conduct themselves in the same manner (3.16; 4.5). Most importantly, he roots all wisdom in Christ (2.3), and does so explicitly so

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182. Lohse, *Kolosser*, 180.

183. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 151.

that no one will delude the Colossians with persuasive arguments (2.4).<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, the wisdom hidden in Christ was also assessed to be significant to the ethical conduct and perseverance of believers.<sup>185</sup> In contrast to this is the false wisdom taught by the errorists, and the ultimate detriment of their ‘wisdom’ is that it leads to the ‘indulgence of the flesh’ (2.23 – ἄτινά ἐστιν... πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός).<sup>186</sup> The conflation of precepts based upon the στοιχεῖα with ‘indulging the flesh’ recalls the similar conflation of stripping off the cosmic principles and the forgiveness of debt accomplished in 2.11-15. This clarifies how Paul later commands the Colossians to put to death their ‘earthly’ parts (3.5 – Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) because they have ‘stripped off’ (3.9 – ἀπεκδύομαι) the old self. Whilst it cannot be assessed exactly how Paul related the στοιχεῖα-based precepts of the error with the wickedness indicative of life in the world and flesh, it can be concluded that he did in fact relate them. Thus, the false wisdom of the errorists is in every way opposed to the goals Paul has for believers by taking them captive to human traditions of the στοιχεῖα and promoting the wicked nature of their flesh.

#### 4.4.2.2 Embodying Glorious Life

Paul’s negative teaching about the effects of the error give way to positive teachings about the proper foundation for the believer’s ethical life. In 3.1-4, he sets before the Colossians an ethical programme that aligns the soteriological, cosmological and eschatological themes of the letter as whole. Because this ethic is then engaged primarily within the Church (3.5-17), I suggest that it co-operates with both the ecclesiology of the hymn and Paul’s goal to present believers as mature. Specifically, Paul’s intent that the Colossian church be a redemptive sphere in the world wherein believers are encouraged and edified (2.1-5) will now be fostered through his teaching and paraenesis. As such, I will demonstrate that what is taught here is pertinent to understanding the nature of Christian maturity.

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184. The reference of τοῦτο in 2.4 is his statement in 2.3 that εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι in Christ. Hence, his rooting of wisdom in Christ is explicitly stated for the purpose of opposing the error that appears to be wise. Cf. O’Brien, *Colossians*, 97.

185. See §4.3.2.

186. B. Hollenbach, ‘Col. II. 23: Which Things Lead to the Fulfilment of the Flesh’, *NTS* 25 (1979), 254-61. Whilst Hollenbach’s analysis does not resolve all the grammatical questions, his rendering of the verse seems the most plausible: ‘which things leads, even though having a reputation for wisdom in the areas of self-made worship, humility and severity to the body, without any honour whatsoever, to the fulfilment of the flesh.’

Significant to Paul's teaching is the conflation of soteriology and cosmology entailed by his instructions to 'seek' (3.1 – ζητέω) and 'set their minds on' (3.2 – φρονέω) the 'things above' (3.1, 2 – τὰ ἄνω). The basis of these activities is found in his claim that believers have died and been raised with Christ (2.11-15). However, unlike 2.20-23 that focused on the negative side of this, namely that death with Christ means death to the world, 3.1-4 shifts primarily to the positive aspect that being raised with Christ entails that the Colossians' life is hidden with him. Given the elaboration that the 'things above' are 'where Christ is' (3.1 – οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστίν), as well as the contrast between 'things on earth' and 'things above' (3.2), it is justified to take τὰ ἄνω as synonymous with 'the things in heaven' (cf. 1.16, 20 – τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).<sup>187</sup> Apparent in this cosmic juxtaposition is an ethical and spatial dualism between heaven and earth. Lincoln observes:

Owing to Christ's exaltation heaven highlights the superiority of the life of the new age, so that 'the above' becomes the source for the rule of Christ (3:1), for life (3:3), for the new man (3:10). The earth, on the other hand, has in this verse [3.2] taken on the connotation of the sphere of sin and of the present evil age.<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, because believers have risen with Christ into the heavenly realm, their 'thoughts and aspirations from which actions are determined'<sup>189</sup> must be conformed to the new sphere of their existence. In other words, because believers have died, been raised and now have their life hidden with Christ in the heavenly realm, it is fitting that their way of life on earth should reflect the reality of their heavenly life in Christ.

There is also an eschatological trajectory to this ethical programme. Paul states that Christ's Parousia will entail the commensurate event of believers appearing with him in glory (3.4). Given that believers currently have their life hidden in Christ, I suggest that Paul understood Christ's return as a revelatory event wherein the hidden, glorious life of believers in Christ is made manifest and consummated with their earthly life. It is significant, therefore, that the object of the positive instructions to 'seek' and 'set one's mind on' is the plural τὰ ἄνω. The

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187. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 202; J.R. Levison, '2 Apoc. Bar. 48:42–52:7 and the Apocalyptic Dimension of Colossians 3:1–6', *JBL* 108 (1989), 93–108. Both scholars argue for regarding τὰ ἄνω from an apocalyptic perspective, so that Paul attempts to modify the apocalyptic error of his opponents within a Christological frame. This is questionable for its identification of the Colossian error as fundamentally an apocalyptic system. Nevertheless, an apocalyptic perspective does little to negate the heavenly origin of what the Colossians are to seek and set their minds on.

188. Lincoln, *Paradise*, 126.

189. Lohse, *Kolosser*, 194. My translation of 'das Denken und Trachten, von dem das Handeln geleitet werden soll.'

objects specifically entailed by τὰ ἄνω are left unstated so that the believer's mind and aspirations are focused on unspecified 'things' in the heavenly realm. I propose that these unspecified objects are the believers' eschatological selves. The only two 'objects' that are noted to be in proximity to Christ in the heavenly realm are God (3.1) and believers whose life is hidden with Christ (3.3). Yet, Paul neither directs believers to seek and reflect on Christ or God specifically, since that would require the singular 'one who is above', nor on heavenly entities such as the ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι, since that would contradict his response (2.8-23) to the error. Furthermore, the claim that the Colossians' glorious life will be revealed with Christ (3.4) likely would have elicited anticipation, and therefore contemplation, of that new nature. Additionally, the passage contains two statements that locate believers as proximate *with* Christ, which suggests that the 'things above... where Christ is' (τὰ ἄνω... οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστίν) are best taken to be the Colossians' glorious identities entailed by the hidden life with him.<sup>190</sup> Hence, Paul presents an ethic that is not simply rooted in the heavenly realm, but all the more in the eschatological realities of their life in the heavenly realm.

There is still further evidence to support this claim. Paul's subsequent exhortations to the Colossians follow a pattern of negative (3.5-11) and positive (3.12-17) commands similar to that of the negative and positive teaching. Important to the present analysis is that Paul rounds off his negative exhortations against earthly vices (3.5, 8) with indicative statements that believers have put off the old man (3.9 – ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and have put on the new (3.10 – ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον). Given that ἀπεκδύομαι in 3.9 recalls its previous uses in Paul's rebuttal that co-ordinated Christ's 'putting off of the body of flesh' with the believer's participatory death with him, it is reasonable to suggest that what is envisioned by 'putting on the new' in 3.10 alludes to the believer's participatory resurrection to life with Christ. Yet, this indicative state of having put on the new gives way to commands to put on commensurate virtues. It is the combination of identifying the 'new' as the resurrected life with the indicative-imperative interaction that substantiates this proposal. Just as the resurrected life can be described as having put on the new that entails putting on virtues, so too seeking and setting one's mind on the things above functions as an ethic derivative from the reality that one's glorious life hidden with Christ.

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190. Cf. Wilson, *Hope of Glory*, 110-31.

Paul, however, is not simply restating his ethical teaching in 3.1-4 with imperatives in 3.10ff. Whereas 3.1-4 instructs believers to align their lives with their eschatological identities, his exhortations in the following paraenesis are concerned with their corporate identity. The statements that believers have ‘put off the old man’ and ‘put on the new’ in Col. 3.9-10 closely resembles the teaching in Eph. 4.22-24 ‘to put aside the old man’ (ἀποθέσθαι... τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and ‘to put on the new man’ (ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον). Within Ephesians, the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος is an anthropological metaphor for the Church (cf. Eph. 2.15). Thus, the parallel putting on of the new in Colossians is endowed with a corporate sense.<sup>191</sup> This is substantiated when νέος in 3.10 is elaborated in 3.11 to be a corporate context where (ἔργου) human divisions no longer exist because of Christ.<sup>192</sup> As such, putting on the new in Colossians is a provocative image of believers having been incorporated into the corporate identity of the Church. Not surprisingly, therefore, Paul’s resulting imperatives in 3.12-17 pertain to virtues conducive of community. The ultimate of these virtues is love (3.14), because it ‘is the outer garment that holds the others in their places.’<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, it can be seen that the vices Paul compels believers to reject (3.5, 8) are divisive and detrimental to community. That Paul identifies these vices as the remnant of the earthly life, and further highlights the rejection of lying, recalls the deceptive practices of the errorists that were based upon false world-bound wisdom. Because the error weakened and diminished the Church body by separating believers from it, it can be seen that Paul’s exhortations seek for the Colossians to shun vices and practice virtues that are conducive to the growth of the Church.

Furthermore, Paul’s command to put on the new is concerned with Church growth in that it overlaps with his apostolic goals in 2.1-5. First, the exhortation to

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191. Pace Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 410-11; Bruce, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 146-48; Carson, *Colossians*, 84; Dunn, *Colossians*, 220-23; Lohse, *Kolosser*, 205-207; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 137-38; Martin, *Colossians*, 108; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 190-91; Pokorný, *Kolosser*, 142-43; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 147-49; Scott, *Colossians, Ephesians*, 68-69; Wilson, *Colossians*, 251-53; Wright, *Colossians*, 137-38. These scholars all interpret νέος as the ‘new person’, ‘new self’ or ‘new nature’, based upon the juxtaposition of νέος with παλαιόν. Whilst this contrast certainly validates finding individual implications in the term νέος, the significance of the parallels with Ephesians are overlooked. Cf. Moule, *Colossians*, 119. Moule finds some corporate element for both παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον and νέος by interpreting them as the ‘old humanity’ and ‘new humanity’.

192. Aletti, *Colossians*, 232-33; Dunn, *Colossians*, 223; Pokorný, *Kolosser*; Wilson, *Colossians*, 255; Wright, ‘Adam’, 139. Pace Lohse, *Kolosser*, 207; Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 149. Both scholars disregard the term ἔργου and emphasise the individuality of the ‘new’. See also §4.2.2.1.

193. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 220. The accusative τὴν ἀγάπην is still governed by ἐνδύσασθε, so that love is the virtue to be put on that Paul emphasises in his exhortation.

put on love (3.14) recalls his goal that the Church be knit together in love (2.2) for the sake of growth. Second, Paul subsequently exhorts the Colossians to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts as the result of being called into one body (3.15). This resembles the concern for encouragement of heart (2.2) that Paul seeks to foster in the Church through their being knit together in love. Third, the exhortation to let the word of Christ dwell in them is accomplished by the teaching and warning of one another (3.16), which effectively extends to the Colossians the responsibility of carrying on Paul's apostolic labours for the Church in 1.28. Finally, the νέος put on in 3.10 is being renewed εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν.<sup>194</sup> That the Church as a united entity is being renewed into knowledge recalls Paul's goal that the Church be knit together in love and encouraged in heart so that it will grow into knowledge (2.2). Hence, the numerous points of common concern indicate that Paul's exhortations are directed towards the growth of the Church.

I propose that the numerous points of overlap between Paul's presentation of his apostolic labours for Church growth (1.24–2.5) and his subsequent extension of that goal to the Colossians through his paraenesis (3.1ff) clarifies the nature of Christian maturity expressed by the letter. I have demonstrated that maturity in Christ (1.28) is an eschatological state that held present implications for the life of believers. In particular, it required that believers encourage one another to persevere in righteous living through their mutual growth in the knowledge of God's mystery, which in turn fostered the quantitative and qualitative growth of the Church in the world. The paraenesis in 3.1ff follows essentially the same trajectory. Paul exposes the eschatological state of believers in and with Christ, and exhorts them to the grow in their knowledge of this mystery so that it has present implications for their way of life. The product of this is the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Church in the world. Because of this, the clearer eschatological state of believers in 3.1-4 clarifies the eschatological state of maturity in 1.28. In short, the nature of Christian maturity in Colossians is the

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194. See O'Brien, *Colossians*, 191; Wilson, *Colossians*, 252; Wright, *Colossians*, 137. These scholars rightly argue that κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν modifies ἀνακαινούμενον, but incorrectly conclude that it is the individual believer being renewed according to the image of God. The parallel with Eph. 4.24, where the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος is created after the likeness of God, indicates that the νέος is being renewed according to the image of its creator here. Yet, both the καινὸς ἄνθρωπος in Ephesians and the νέος in Colossians are corporate entities. Given this, it seems likely that both passages envisage the Church as a return to the Edenic state of unity prior to the fall.

eschatological, glorious life of believers hidden with Christ in the heavenly realm. Given this, it can be seen that Christian maturity in Colossians operates in the eschatological turn of the ages. On the one hand, believers are already τέλειος ἐν Χριστῷ in that they have died, been raised and now have their maturity hidden with him in the heavenly realm. On the other hand, they are not yet τέλειος ἐν Χριστῷ in that they must still await the eschatological revelation of that maturity in Christ's Parousia. This accounts for Paul's apostolic labours and concerns regarding the error, as well as his ethical programme for believers. The goal of persevering in righteous living is an act of continuously embodying the eschatological maturity in the present life. In other words, it is an act of remaining qualified for the eschatological revelation of maturity. This is fostered by believers mutually growing in their knowledge of God's mystery, Christ, in whom one may find all wisdom and with whom one may see their eschatological maturity.

Finally, it can be seen that the embodiment of maturity pertains to the reconciliation of 'all things' in two distinct ways. First, by embodying the hidden heavenly life within the world, believers set out the Church as a redemptive sphere in the world that is directed *for* Christ. In other words, the reconciliation of believers to Christ holds significance for the earthly realm. By living the heavenly life within the world, believers draw the ethical implications of Christ's pre-eminence 'down' to earth, so that the heavenly and earthly ethical tension is resolved. However, there are no explicit theological principles in Colossians to explain how the non-human creation is reconciled *for* Christ. Yet, just as with Ephesians, I suggest that non-human creation is folded into the reconciliatory event by virtue of its human representatives. Hence, the cosmic reconciliation of all things is already manifest in the Church, so that the earth benefits from the representative role of believers just as much as it is damaged by the representation of 'outsiders'. Second, the growth of the gospel further into the world is not just a matter of extending its message, but also of embodying maturity in spheres distinct from the Church. This is evident first in the application of a Christian ethic to the household (3.18–4.1), so that any role may be creatively reinterpreted through embodying maturity as done in service of the Lord.<sup>195</sup> Likewise, embodied maturity seems to be behind Paul's encouragement that the Colossians be wise in

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195. J.M.G. Barclay, 'Ordinary but Different: Colossians and Hidden Moral Identity', *AusBR* 49 (2001), 34-52.

their dealings with those outside the Church (4.5-6). As such, it must be concluded that the embodiment of maturity is intended to take place not only within the Church, but also outside it as a reconciliatory influence in the world. Thus, the Church as the sphere of new creation wherein the heavenly life is manifest on earth extends into unreconciled spaces, and then expands as more individuals are incorporated into it. Consequently, it can be seen that Christian maturity pertains to God's intent that all things be reconciled *in, through* and *for* Christ.

#### **4.4.3 Summary**

An analysis of the error in Colossians reveals that determining its exact identity and origins should not have first priority. Such an effort misjudges Paul's intentions in that he did not expose all of the beliefs and deceptive practices of the error, most likely because he deemed it either unnecessary or dangerous. Instead, the apostle was concerned to reveal how the error impacted the believer's relationship with Christ and the Church. Remaining qualified for eschatological maturity, therefore, involves not only a correct view of the pre-eminence of Christ, but also an appreciation of its implications for his body, the Church. In other words, remaining qualified in Christ for the inheritance of the saints is commensurate with remaining in the Church. Within the Church, believers are bound together so as to grow in knowledge and persevere in righteousness in Christ. This is a way of life in which believers creatively embody their glorious maturity and extend the influence of that embodiment further into the world. Because of this, Paul's concern to refute the error is ultimately aimed at the preservation and fostering of every believer's maturity.

#### **4.5 Conclusion: Christian Maturity in Colossians**

The purpose of this chapter was to assess the nature of maturity in Colossians and its relevance to the letter as a whole. This was accomplished by demonstrating that Colossians constructs maturity with respect to Christ, the Church and the cosmos. Maturity is bound up with Christ because it is the glorious life hidden with him in heaven. Moreover, it is fostered through the Church wherein believers encourage and edify one another by embodying their eschatological maturity in Christ. It also has cosmic ramifications in that the embodiment of maturity promotes the reconciliation of all things by creating a



sphere in the world where all things are directed appropriately *for* Christ. Because of this, Paul wrote to the Colossians in order to counter the effects of the error that disqualified believers from their eschatological maturity. As such, Christian maturity is a significant theological concern in Colossians. Paul is not only concerned to fulfil his stewardship responsibility to foster maturity in Christ, but also to impart to his readers an understanding that Christian maturity itself fulfils the divine intent to reconcile all things *for* Christ.

This conclusion confirms my observation in the previous chapter that Paul constructed Christian maturity using a common set of reference points within antiquity. Specifically, Christian maturity in Colossians is co-ordinated with the divine plan to reconcile all things for Christ through the Church, which means that this construction also employs the divine (Christ), social (Church) and cosmic (All Things) reference points. Again, there are significant differences between this construction of maturity and those found in the other ancient traditions, but the more intriguing dissimilarities are between the constructions of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians. Colossians differs from the emphasis on corporate maturity in Ephesians by focusing on the individual nature of Christian maturity. Also, the way in which the cosmos is morally structured and the implications this has for Christian maturity vary significantly between the letters. However, I suggest that these differences may be understood when the distinct features of Christian maturity in comparison to the other ancient traditions are taken into account. Moreover, these distinctives will provide a more informed position for my subsequent work to appropriate this theology of Christian maturity in the modern world.

## Chapter 5 Christian Maturity in Antiquity

### 5.1 Introduction

The thesis has now assessed the manner in which several ancient traditions constructed maturity. To some extent, the similarities and dissimilarities between these various constructions may be apparent already. Nonetheless, the purpose of this chapter is to identify and develop the distinct features of Christian maturity in comparison to the other ancient traditions. In order to accomplish this task, it is necessary that I expand upon the points of commonality between each of the ancient constructions so that the distinct features of Christian maturity will be apparent. Given the premise of this thesis that the modern discourse has disregarded the genealogy of maturity, the value of the present exercise will be its potential to illuminate the main contours of the ancient discourse and the distinctive contours of the construction of Christian maturity. Whilst this analysis is arranged according to broad categories, I suggest that there are significant discontinuities between the modern and ancient discourses even when operating in generalisations. Thus, by linking this discussion to the common framework for the construction of maturity in antiquity, and the distinctive features of the construction of Christian maturity within that framework, the points of continuity and discontinuity between the ancient and modern discourses will become clear. This will inform the means for recovering elements of the construction of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians for our modern context.

I will organise my evaluation in this chapter according to the common framework of reference points. The analyses in the previous chapters revealed that each of the ancient constructions of maturity refers to a divine figure, the cosmos and a social group. To be sure, the relative priority or weight of each of these elements cannot be assessed. Furthermore, even though the analyses identified these common reference points for each tradition, it does not necessarily follow that every philosophical or religious system in antiquity constructed maturity within the same framework. Nonetheless, because the ancient traditions were selected primarily for their influence throughout the world of antiquity, it is

defensible that these common reference points were a significant feature in the ancient discourse on maturity. As such, they provide the best means of assessing both points of commonality between traditions and the distinctive elements of Christian maturity.

## 5.2 Divine Referent and Union with Christ

In using the language of a divine reference point, I intend to suggest that the ancient traditions assessed in this thesis developed their beliefs about human teleology in co-ordination with their theological reflection on the nature and activity of a divine figure. The import of the divine reference point for maturity is that it accounts for human origins and constitution, thereby endowing humanity with a specific ontology and teleology. Stoicism constructs maturity with reference to divine reason that has created humanity as rational agents.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Stoics should cultivate their rationality so that their way of life is directed towards the same purposes as those of divine reason.<sup>2</sup> The Second Temple Jewish texts of *1 Enoch* and *Sirach* both construct maturity with reference to the God of Israel who has created humanity in his image.<sup>3</sup> Yet, they derive different teleologies from this human ontology. Whilst *1 Enoch* espouses a *telos* of righteous living because God is the righteous judge,<sup>4</sup> *Sirach* sets out a teleology of walking in wisdom because God has created and continues to act through wisdom.<sup>5</sup> In Ephesians and Colossians, the primary referent is Christ (Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.28), though God and the Spirit are also divine agents relevant to the theology of maturity (e.g. Eph. 1.3-14; Col. 1.3-14). Because of Christ's work, believers are now new creatures in him (Eph. 2.1-10; Col. 1.3-14, 21-23; 2.20-3.4) and should therefore walk in accordance with this new existence (Eph. 4.1-3, 17ff; Col. 2.6-7; 3.5ff). As such, the divine figure constitutes persons ontologically in such a way that a natural teleology ensues.

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1. E.g. *ND* 1.39; *SVF* 1.536.

2. Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 41-42.

3. Even though neither text speaks explicitly to human ontology, their main subject matter derives from OT passages with creation implications (i.e. *1 En.* 6-16 from Gen. 2-3; *Sir.* 24 from Prov. 8-9). As such, these texts assume the OT narrative of human origins and ontology. Cf. C.A. Newsom, 'Genesis 2-3 and *1 Enoch* 6-16: Two Myths of Origin and Their Ethical Implications', in *Shaking Heaven and Earth: Essays in Honor of Walter Brueggemann and Charles B. Cousar*, eds. C.R. Yoder, et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 14.

4. Hartman, 'Apocalyptic Timetables', 12; Nickelsburg, 'Epistle of Enoch', 341.

5. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 91-94.

Whilst the reference to a divine figure is shared amongst these traditions, there is a distinct feature to the divine reference point of Christian maturity. Certainly, it is not the activity of multiple agents within the reference point that is distinctive. This simply reveals the complexity of divine agency that occurs when theological beliefs involve a polytheistic system or, in this case, a theology later described as trinitarian monotheism. What is distinctive about the divine reference point of Christian maturity is the repeated emphasis on *union with Christ*.<sup>6</sup> The import and implications of believers being united with Christ for Christian maturity does not have a parallel in the other ancient constructions of maturity. *Sirach* does not present a programme of becoming wise *in* Ben Sira, the high priest, or even wisdom itself, but rather makes it a function of pursuing a relationship with wisdom. Likewise, *1 Enoch* does not express a state of maturity *in* the patriarch Enoch, the Son of Man, or God, but rather makes maturity something eschatologically vindicated by God. Finally, being a sage in Stoicism does not entail being *in* divine reason, but rather involves attaining maturity by using the rational faculty given to human beings. Thus, union with Christ is a distinct feature of Christian maturity, which means that its significance must be explored.

In order to assess the implications of union with Christ for Christian maturity, an important work to consider is that of Lewis Smedes.<sup>7</sup> This is because Smedes demonstrates an awareness of the scholarly trends in exploring the import of union with Christ when he outlines three different Christological emphases operating behind the discussion. One of the emphases is a Sacramental Christology, which focuses on Christ's incarnation and its implications for the exaltation of humanity into a new existence in relation to divinity. Another emphasis is a Transaction Christology, which focuses on the atoning work of Christ before God the Father and its implications for human salvation and ethics.

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6. This is not only explicitly stated in the Colossian letter (1.28 – τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ), but also implicitly developed using repeated language (ἐν αὐτῷ/ἐν ᾧ/ἐν κυρίῳ) throughout the letter. Whilst maturity is not explicitly stated to be ἐν Χριστῷ in Ephesians, I suggest that there is sufficient reason to regard it as equally operative. For instance, the eulogy lists the many blessings of redemption that believers have received ἐν Χριστῷ (1.3, 12), ἐν αὐτῷ (1.4, 9), ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ (1.6), and ἐν ᾧ (1.7, 11, 13). More importantly, because the attainment of Christian maturity in Ephesians is equated with the realisation of the divine ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, it is significant that God intends to unite all things ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ (1.10, reinforced again with ἐν αὐτῷ). Thus, it stands that the growth of the Church to maturity also takes place *in* Christ.

7. L.B. Smedes, *Union with Christ: A Biblical View of the New Life in Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, rev. ed., 1983), 4-25.

The third emphasis is a Situation Christology, which focuses on the changed redemptive-historical situation that Christ has effected for humanity. Whilst Smedes acknowledges that these categories overlap, his analysis nevertheless tends to favour the Situation Christology emphasis. However, I suggest that each of these Christological emphases provides a helpful heuristic for assessing the import of union with Christ for Christian maturity. As such, my analysis of future identity, attainment dynamics and ideal figures will draw from these categories in order to develop the distinctiveness of union with Christ.

### 5.2.1 Union with Christ and Future Identity

Several scholars have recently made observations about the construction of identity in Ephesians and Colossians.<sup>8</sup> Whilst there is considerable merit to their work, they nevertheless understand identity as something that is progressively constructed through the interpretation of present circumstances and experiences.<sup>9</sup> I propose, however, that identity is also developed by interpreting what persons will become in the future. Put differently, the traditions assessed in this thesis construct identity not only through the interpretation of present circumstances, but also in light of an anticipated future existence. Given this, maturity may be described as that future identity yet to be attained. Yet, the relationship between present identity and future identity requires analysis. I will argue that whilst each tradition equates maturity with future identity, the construction of Christian maturity is distinct in that present and future identity overlap by virtue of union with Christ.

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8. E.g. J.M.G. Barclay, 'Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First-Century Judaism and Christianity', in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed. D.G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 289-307; A.R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and Moral Life in Colossians*, JSNTSup 226 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 53-121; W.S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, LNTS 322 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), esp. 159-73; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991), esp. 230-59; B.H. Dunning, 'Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2', *HTR* 99 (2006), 1-16; M.Y. MacDonald, 'The Politics of Identity in Ephesians', *JSNT* 26 (2004), 420-21; G. Theissen, 'Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor 11:17-34', in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed. D.G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 249-73; Yee, *Ethnic Reconciliation*, 71-218.

9. For instance, Barclay utilises deviance theory in order to determine not only how social groups constructed and protected identity by labelling unacceptable persons as deviants, but also how those deviants then turn that label into a new identity marker. Dunning contends that Paul's use of 'stranger' and 'alien' terminology drew from Roman citizenship language in order to redefine how believers conceived of their identity within God's kingdom. Theissen argues that the sacramental liturgy incorporates individuals into a new corporate identity of the Church.

The ways in which future identity, or maturity, inform present identity differ to some degree between the ancient constructions. One way is when future identity becomes the goal towards which present identity should progressively develop. For instance, future identity in Stoicism is that of the sage (σοφός), which entails that a Stoic holds a present identity of making progress (προκοπή).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, being a wise Israelite is the future existence promoted by *Sirach*, but this requires a present and ongoing pursuit of wisdom as a faithful Jew.<sup>11</sup> Another way of relating the two is when future identity proleptically dominates present identity. The future identity of ‘the righteous ones’ so informs present identity in *1 Enoch* that unrighteousness in the Enochic group is marginalised and placed outside the community by assigning it primarily to the religious leaders of Israel.<sup>12</sup> Intriguingly, Ephesians and Colossians inform present identity with future identity in both ways. For instance, the future identity of the Church in Eph. 4.13 as the cosmic fullness of Christ that is internally united is set out both as the goal of present growth (e.g. 4.14-16) and as proleptically true about the Church (e.g. 1.23; 2.15). Likewise, in Colossians, the future existence of the glorious life in Christ is both the goal of a believer’s individual growth (e.g. 1.23; 2.6) and a present reality (e.g. 3.3). Thus, it is necessary to determine how union with Christ brings about this distinctive feature of Christian maturity.

Smedes’ category of Sacramental Christology is particularly illuminating when determining how union with Christ relates present and future identity. Specifically, this Christological emphasis focuses on the union between divine and human natures. For Tillich,<sup>13</sup> the historical and personal incarnation of Christ introduced a ‘New Being’ for humanity, one in which human nature could dwell in unity with the divine nature without confusion between the two. The focus of this Christological category is on the communication of Christ’s glorified human nature to those who are united with him.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Norman Douty states:

The foundations of the Christian’s union with Christ lie embedded in the eternal purpose of God concerning man. It is through this union, and not otherwise, that that

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10. Lee, *Body of Christ*, 60-62; Sellars, *Art of Living*, 64.

11. Beentjes, *Collected Essays*, 87-106; Di Lella, ‘Fear of the Lord’, 132-33.

12. Cf. R.A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment*, SBLEJL 8 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 167-210; L.T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91-108*, CEJL (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 71-72.

13. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 118-50.

14. Cf. J. Daniélou, *Christ and Us* (London: Mowbrays, 1961), 59-60.

purpose, formed antecedent to creation, will find its full realization in the ages to come.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, God's purpose for humanity to live in glory with him has now been realised in Christ and applied to believers through their union with him. Tillich, therefore, describes union with Christ as entering into participation with his 'New Being', which redefines and reshapes the present existence of estrangement from God in terms of a future and final union.<sup>16</sup> As such, the present identity is not indicative of the believer's union with Christ, because it still experiences estrangement. Rather, by virtue of union with Christ, the glorious life that will be true of the believer in the future, is proleptically applied to the present.

This proleptic relationship can be seen to be operative in Ephesians and Colossians. For instance, both letters refer to believers as previously dead, but now made alive in Christ (Eph. 2.1-5; Col. 2.13-14). Yet, this being made alive in Christ entails a secondary and future event of being exalted with him (Eph. 2.6; Col. 3.1). Thus, the future identity of living and exalted existence is proleptically applied to present circumstances, especially when either text exhorts believers to put on 'the new person' (Eph. 4.24; Col. 3.10).<sup>17</sup> Given that this 'new person' being put on contrasts the 'old person' being put off (Eph. 4.22; Col. 3.9), the nature of the future identity is best seen as radically altered from the nature of the present identity.<sup>18</sup> This is distinct from the other traditions assessed in this thesis in that they do not present any disjunction in nature between the present and future identity. For instance, the state of being wise in *Sirach*,<sup>19</sup> or being a sage in Stoicism,<sup>20</sup> involves the progressive development of an unchanged nature into its ideal existence. Even *1 Enoch* speaks of the Enochic community as already righteous,<sup>21</sup> so that the future identity of eschatological righteousness becomes a confirmation and vindication of what is already true. The future identity of Ephesians and Colossians, however, is

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15. N.F. Douty, *Union With Christ* (Swengel, PA: Reiner Books, 1973), 5.

16. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 176-80.

17. A.R. Brown, 'Character Formation or Character Transformation? The Challenge of Cruciform Exegesis for Character Ethics in Paul', in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. W.P. Brown (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 264-89; M.V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought*, SNTSMS 119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 233-34.

18. J.S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion* (New York, NY: Harper, 1963), 186-203.

19. Deutsch, 'Sirach 51 Acrostic', 405.

20. Reydam-Schils, 'Human Bonding', 223.

21. E.g. 'Concerning the children of righteousness and concerning the elect of the world and concerning the plant of righteousness' (1.1).

distinct in that their glorified nature is *already* true about believers in union with Christ, but *not yet* true in their temporal existence. This operation of identity within the eschatological turn of the ages, though, necessitates a consideration of how it informs the dynamics of attaining maturity.

### 5.2.2 Union with Christ and Attainment Dynamics

The analyses of Ephesians and Colossians in the previous chapters revealed a complex interaction between two different dynamics for the attainment of Christian maturity, namely progressive growth and eschatological embodiment. However, these attainment dynamics are not distinct when compared to the other ancient traditions assessed in this thesis. For instance, the dynamic of progressive growth is evident in both of the wisdom traditions. The Stoics teach that one's identity follows a trajectory from being a fool to being one who is making progress, which culminates in the goal of becoming a sage.<sup>22</sup> Even though the end goal of being a sage remains elusive, it nevertheless is the identity that all Stoics strive to attain through progressive growth in their use of reason. The programme for becoming wise in *Sirach* follows much of the same logic, though Ben Sira considers it possible to attain this future identity in old age.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, *1 Enoch* is concerned with the embodiment of one's eschatological identity. Whilst the text recognises that members of the Enochic community are not without sin,<sup>24</sup> their inclusion within the community entails their redefinition as the righteous ones. Thus, *1 Enoch* assumes the eschatological identity of the righteous community and exhorts them to live in accordance with it, or embody its reality,<sup>25</sup> rather than calling them to progressive growth in righteousness. What this reveals is that the construction of Christian maturity is not distinct for its employment of these two dynamics for the attainment of maturity.

What is distinct about Christian maturity, however, is that the dynamics of attainment are interdependent. Put differently, whereas the other constructions of maturity in antiquity employ only one dynamic, Ephesians and Colossians employ

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22. Brouwer, 'Sagehood', 181-224.

23. Deutsch, 'Sirach 51 Acrostic', 400-409.

24. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91-108*, 64.

25. In conversation with Prof. Loren Stuckenbruck (Westcott Professor of Biblical Studies, Department of Theology & Religion, Durham University) regarding his commentary on *1 Enoch* and the Enochic group's construction of identity.



both dynamics in a complex interaction. Ephesians, for instance, employs the dynamic of progressive growth when it depicts the Church as attaining to its corporate maturity as believers build it up (4.16). Yet, their activity is described as ‘embodying the truth in love’ (4.15 – ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ), which is significant in that ἐν ἀγάπῃ denotes the sphere that believers exist in before God (esp. 1.4; 3.17).<sup>26</sup> Thus, when Ephesians exhorts believers to ‘put on the new person, created according to God’ (4.24), it effectively calls them to embody the truth of their eschatological identity that is *already* realised in union with Christ. Colossians, likewise, employs both dynamics. The Church is depicted as growing with a growth from God (2.19), and believers are encouraged to mutually edify one another in knowledge and wisdom (2.2-3; 3.16). Yet, believers are also called to a way of life in the earthly realm that conforms to their eschatological identity *already* realised in Christ in the heavenly realm (3.1-17). In other words, the dynamic of eschatological embodiment is operative, which is made explicit through the command to ‘put on the new’ (3.10). Thus, it is necessary to determine why union with Christ produces this interaction between the two dynamics for the attainment of Christian maturity.

I suggest that that Smedes’ category of Situation Christology illuminates this dual dynamic of attainment through union with Christ. According to Smedes,<sup>27</sup> this Christological emphasis focuses on Christ’s redemptive work on the cross that decisively defeats death and overturns the powers of the ‘flesh’ and ‘rulers and authorities’ (cf. Col. 2.11-15). Whilst this event takes place in history, it also affects history in that it ushers in a new age. Yet, the passing of the old age and the beginning of the new do not occur in serial progression, but rather overlap. Smedes argues that the signal of the climax of history, or the final end of the old age, is Christ’s Parousia. This is why Paul exhorts believers to await Christ’s return which will usher in the glorious existence of the new age. However, this does not mean that there is nothing new about the present situation of believers. Instead, because of their union with Christ, believers are ‘transferred into a new world, a world which differs *toto genera* in all its character, its whole environment... from the present world.’<sup>28</sup> It is the overlap between these two situations in which the

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26. See also §3.3.3.

27. Smedes, *Union with Christ*, 15-25.

28. G. Vos, *Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: P&R Publications, 1992), 150.

believer exists that gives rise to both dynamics being operative for the attainment of Christian maturity. In speaking of the new age as something eschatologically future, believers are called to the dynamic of progressive growth towards its realisation in the present world. As something eschatologically realised, however, believers can actually embody the reality of existing in the new age within the present. These two dynamics intertwine to such a degree that it is difficult to disentangle them in either Ephesians or Colossians. Thus, Smedes is correct to claim that:

The new creation is both future and present. ... For Paul, tomorrow is the day of salvation because today is the time of salvation. Paul does not look ahead because today is empty of meaning. Tomorrow is full of hope because today's *reality* assures him that tomorrow's reality means the 'new creation' in which Christ is all in all.<sup>29</sup>

What this suggests is that the complex interaction between progressive growth towards, and eschatological embodiment of, Christian maturity is the result of the overlap between today's and tomorrow's reality that are experienced by virtue of union with Christ.

### 5.2.3 Union with Christ and Ideal Figures

Related to the two dynamics for the attainment of maturity in antiquity is the way in which the ancient traditions assessed in this thesis employ ideal figures. In particular, two types of ideal figures were identified in the preceding analyses: models and representatives. The former operates as an exemplar of the ideal state of maturity.<sup>30</sup> Thus, a model embodies both the potential future identity of individuals and the way of life commensurate with that identity.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the latter functions as a mediatorial representative between the social group and divine figure.<sup>32</sup> As such, a representative not only demarcates the boundaries, and embodies the nature, of the community that is eligible for maturity, but also reciprocally embodies the divine figure's provision of the means necessary for the attainment of that maturity. In short, one imitates a model, but identifies with a representative.

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29. L.B. Smedes, *All Things Made New: A Theology of Man's Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 41-42 (emphasis original).

30. E.g. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 38; Sellars, *Art of Living*, 59; R.A. Wild, S.J., "'Be Imitators of God": Discipleship in the Letter to the Ephesians', in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. F.F. Segovia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 127-43.

31. Cf. V.A. Copan, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director: An Analysis of the Concept of the Imitation of Paul* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2007), 219-28.

32. Collins, 'Heavenly Representative', 113-14.

The analyses of ancient traditions in the preceding chapters revealed that these two types of ideal figures are employed in different manners. In Stoicism, there is a general agreement that Socrates is a model of the ideal status of sage.<sup>33</sup> Hence, those who are making progress are exhorted to imitate him in their thinking and conduct,<sup>34</sup> with the aspiration that they might attain to the same cosmic perspective and way of life as his. In contrast, *1 Enoch* employs the Son of Man and the antediluvian patriarch Enoch as representatives of the elect community.<sup>35</sup> Enoch's representative role, whilst limited, is due to God recognising him as righteous and granting him special revelation. The representative role of the Son of Man, however, sums up in his person the righteousness and perseverance of the community. Thus, identifying with these two figures both requires membership in the righteous community that they represent and assures the righteous that God will vindicate them in the eschaton. Even though the goal of becoming wise in *Sirach* resembles the Stoic programme, it nevertheless employs both types of ideal figures.<sup>36</sup> With regards to models, Ben Sira presents himself as a wise man so that faithful Israelites should imitate him in their pursuit of wisdom. The high priest, however, is introduced as a representative figure because Ben Sira's conception of maturity requires faithful membership within Israel. Thus, the high priest represents the nation before God in the temple liturgy and, reciprocally, God's wisdom to the people. However, being a faithful Israelite does not ensure that one will become wise, which means that an individual's pursuit of wisdom should be modelled after Ben Sira's way of life. What this suggests is that these ancient constructions make use of one or both types of ideal figures to promote the attainment of maturity.

Given this, Ephesians and Colossians do not present a distinct construction of maturity because they employ both types of ideal figures. Rather, it is distinct because they identify Christ as both representative and model for Christian maturity. He functions as a representative akin to the Son of Man in *1 Enoch*. As the image of God (Col. 1.15), the co-regent with God (Eph. 1.20; Col. 3.1), the one

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33. Brown, 'Socrates', 275-77; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 29, 40-41.

34. E.g. *Ench.* 33.12.

35. Collins, 'Heavenly Representative', 112-24.

36. D.J. Harrington, 'The Wisdom of the Scribe According to Ben Sira', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, eds. J.J. Collins and G.W.E. Nickelsburg, SBLSCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 183-85.

who is filling all things (Eph. 1.23), and the one who will be revealed in glory (Col. 3.4), he represents the divine to the Church. Furthermore, because the Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1.23; Col. 1.18-19; 2.9-10, 17, 23), he demarcates the boundary of the community that is eligible for maturity and will be revealed in glory with him (Col. 3.4). Moreover, because believers participate with his death, resurrection and exaltation (e.g. Eph. 2.5-6; Col. 2.11-15), the Church is bound to Christ who is its representative in the heavenly realm. At the same, Christ functions as a model for the Christian way of life. Whilst nothing as explicit as ‘imitate Christ’ occurs in these letters,<sup>37</sup> Christ is presented nevertheless as a model for love (Eph. 5.2, 25) and forgiveness (Col. 3.13; cf. Eph. 4.32). This dual role of Christ as model and representative converges in Paul’s exhortation that the Ephesians be imitators of God as beloved children in Eph. 5.1. That this leads immediately to Christ as the exemplar of love (5.2) suggests that the means of imitating God is to look to the divine representative, Christ, as the model.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it is necessary to consider why Christ is both the representative of, and model for, Christian maturity.

I suggest that Christ’s role as representative and model is derivative from the believer’s union with him. Smedes’ observations on the Christological emphasis of Transaction inform the reasons why this dual role occurs.<sup>39</sup> Specifically, he argues that there are two distinct trends within this category. The first is evident in the work of John Calvin,<sup>40</sup> who focused on the moral transaction of this category. Calvin is concerned to determine how the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work are appropriated by human beings. He argues that as long as individuals are not united with Christ, ‘all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value’.<sup>41</sup> Thus, for Calvin, Christ’s suffering and death completed a transaction between humanity and God, and this becomes effective for individuals only when they are united with Christ. Yet, beyond this, Christ’s exaltation means not only that he has now become the source of

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37. E.g. 1 Cor. 11.1; 1 Thess. 1.6.

38. Cf. Wild, “Imitators”, 136-37. Wild downplays Christ’s role as an exemplar in favor of the imitation of God as forgiving in Eph. 4.32. However, the exhortation *χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν* makes it unclear which divine agent comes to the fore as the model of forgiveness.

39. Smedes, *Union with Christ*, 23-30.

40. J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles, LCC 20 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.1.1.

41. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1, 537.

righteousness that empowers believers, but also that those who are united with him are assured of their exaltation to glory.<sup>42</sup> This provocatively outlines how Christ functions as a representative figure of Christian maturity. Given that maturity is the eschatological, glorious life of believers, the only way in which it is attained is through union with him. Within this union, Christ represents humanity before God in his redemptive work on the cross, and likewise represents God to humanity by bestowing upon believers through the Spirit the divine qualities needed to attain to maturity.<sup>43</sup>

There is another aspect to this Christological emphasis, namely the personal benefits of union with Christ. Karl Barth<sup>44</sup> focused on this aspect when he described Christ as truly human because his actions were done in perfect partnership with God. This is because Barth regards the essence of human existence as action, and true human existence as one done in obedience and gratitude to God. Thus, he views Christ's life and redemptive work as an activity that is done in participation with God's purpose to serve humanity. Likewise, his exaltation entails that what he did was not isolated to a specific point in history, but rather became eternal history in which human beings now exist. When individuals are united with Christ, though, it entails a new activity for them commensurate with his activity. Specifically, believers are to participate with God's purpose to serve humanity in the same manner as Christ did. His actions are to become their actions. In this way, Barth's Christology highlights the manner in which Christ functions as a model for Christian maturity.

I have demonstrated, therefore, that Christ's role as both representative of, and model for, Christian maturity derives from believers being united with him. The importance of this for the construction of Christian maturity is his capacity to indicate future identity. Christ is a model for believers by presenting the way of life commensurate with the future identity of maturity. Yet, Christ is also the representative of Christian maturity in that he embodies and communicates the divine qualities necessary for its attainment. He also identifies with believers so as to re-orientate their *telos* towards their future identity. Finally, it should be recognised that as model and as representative, Christ indicates the nature of

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42. Cf. Douty, *Union With Christ*, 216-37.

43. E.g. Col. 1.8-9; Eph. 3.16. Cf. Harris, *Descent*, 143-97.

44. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936-77), III/2, IV/1.

maturity in different ways. Thus, his role as both types of ideal figures is conducive to the two dynamics of eschatological embodiment and progressive development for attaining maturity.

#### **5.2.4 Summary**

This section has argued that the union between believers and Christ is a distinct feature of Christian maturity in comparison to the divine reference point of the other ancient constructions. Moreover, I have demonstrated that being united with Christ leads to further distinctives for Christian maturity in terms of future identity, attainment dynamics, and ideal figures. Whilst the analysis has followed along the dividing lines of Smedes' Christological categories for heuristic reasons, it should be noted that no such divisions occur in the biblical texts. Given this, these Christological emphases must be combined into a singular whole in order to apprehend the full import of the believer's union with Christ for Christian maturity. By his incarnation, Christ has elevated humanity into a new relationship with the divine that creates a new nature for those who are united with him. Yet, believers not only receive a new nature, but also exist in a new situation in relation to personal and heavenly powers. Both of these, the new nature and new situation, are bound up in the eschatological turn of ages so that believers must grow towards their new existence in the eschaton whilst also embodying its reality in the present. Within this dynamic, Christ serves as a representative between God and believers and as a model for the believer's new way of life. All of this derives from being united with Christ.

### **5.3 Social Referent and the Church**

In speaking of a social reference point, I intend to suggest that each of the ancient traditions assessed in this thesis constructs maturity in co-ordination with certain beliefs about society and a particular social group. The existence of the social group affirms their philosophical or religious beliefs that they have been established by the divine figure, thereby indicating the community that shares a construction of maturity and encourages the attainment of it. Moreover, the social group provides a hermeneutical context in which one may understand individuals and other communities outside of it. The social group in *1 Enoch* is a sectarian

movement within Judaism that considers itself to be the righteous community.<sup>45</sup> This accounts for the group's separation from Israel, which had fallen into wickedness,<sup>46</sup> as well as its construction of maturity as eschatological righteousness that will be vindicated by God.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, *Sirach* affirms citizenship within Israel, because it is God's elect nation wherein his wisdom uniquely dwells.<sup>48</sup> This both explains why other nations have only a partial share of God's wisdom,<sup>49</sup> and directs the pursuit of wisdom towards faithfulness to God's Law and the cultic liturgy of the Temple.<sup>50</sup> Whilst the Stoics believe that all of humanity belongs to the *cosmopolis*, they regard themselves as a distinct social group of people who are 'making progress' as rational agents within that universal community.<sup>51</sup> As such, the rest of humanity were fools who followed after their own self-interests,<sup>52</sup> whereas Stoics were those who utilise their reason with regards to the universal social order.<sup>53</sup> The social reference point, therefore, demarcates the community that recognises the divine figure and the implications this belief has for the ontology and teleology of humanity.

With regards to the construction of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians, the social reference point is the Church. It was established in the preceding chapters that the community of believers provided the essential social context for understanding the nature of Christian maturity. In Ephesians, believers build up the corporate body so that it progressively attains to maturity, which is the eschatological state of the Church in internal unity and cosmic fullness in Christ (4.13-16). In Colossians, believers edify one another so that all may embody their mature state, which is the eschatological, glorious life in Christ (1.24-2.5; 3.1-4). Thus, it can be seen that Christian maturity cannot be conceived of without reference to the Church. Furthermore, the Church becomes the context for understanding the world. Those who are 'outside' the community continuously threaten to distract and/or misdirect believers from their attainment of maturity.

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45. Nickelsburg, 'Epistle of Enoch', 341.

46. Sutter, 'Fallen Angel', 115-35.

47. Hartman, 'Apocalyptic Timetables', 12-13.

48. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 69-113.

49. Whybray, 'History', 144.

50. Rogers, "It Overflows", 117.

51. Vogt, *Cosmic City*, 65-110.

52. Sellars, *Art of Living*, 61-64.

53. Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 58; Reydams-Schils, 'Human Bonding', 221-51.

However, unbelievers may be evangelised and incorporated into the Church. Hence, the Church is not only the place where maturity is understood and fostered, but also is a dynamic entity that engages the outside world.

I suggest that the social reference of the Church, however, is distinct in comparison to the other ancient constructions. This is because the Church is the somatic fullness of Christ by virtue of union with Christ. The unity between Christ and believers establishes a solidarity identified as Christ's σῶμα. As such, the Church is not just a community of individual believers, but rather becomes an organic entity in which believers and Christ are joined together as a somatic whole.<sup>54</sup> The implications of this for Christian maturity are twofold. First, the somatic nature of the Church entails that Christian maturity is attained through the interdependency of individual believers. In other words, believers cannot attain maturity independent or irrespective of one another. Second, the somatic nature of the Church entails that the incorporation and excommunication of individuals affect the divine plan for the cosmos. Because the maturity of the Church is tantamount to the goal of this divine plan, corporate growth is an essential component of the unification and reconciliation of all things *in* and *for* Christ. I will substantiate these observations and then demonstrate that their implications are distinct from the other traditions assessed in this thesis.

The interdependency of individual maturity has already been indicated in the previous section when it was argued that the dynamics of eschatological embodiment and progressive growth are intertwined. As believers embody their eschatological maturity in the present, the Church is built up towards its maturity in the eschaton. This implies, however, that each member of the community embodies their eschatological self in such a way that the corporate body is edified. Put differently, corporate growth is dependent upon the proper and co-ordinated working of all members. This is seen in the statements of Church growth in both letters (Eph. 4.13; Col. 2.19) wherein its members are joined together by Christ. Indeed, Ephesians makes explicit that this growth is dependent upon each member working appropriately according to its measure (κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου; cf. 4.25 – ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη). Likewise, Paul's desire for the unity of

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54. Douty, *Union With Christ*, 238. Cf. Gundry, *Sōma*, 226-28; S. Hanson, *The Unity of the Church in the New Testament: Colossians and Ephesians*, ASNU 14 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1946), 119. Gundry is careful to not collapse Christ's individual body and his 'ecclesiastical' body into one single entity.



believers in the Church for its edification is expressed in Colossians (2.1-5; 3.12-16). Furthermore, unity in both letters functions as a deterrent to the susceptibility of individuals to external deceptions (e.g. Eph. 4.11-16; Col. 2.1-5). This suggests that the corporate growth of the Church to its eschatological maturity is interdependent with the maturity of individual believers. The Church as a corporate entity will not attain to its maturity of internal unity and cosmic fullness independent of the state of believers that compose it. Moreover, it indicates that an individual believer's attainment of maturity is interdependent with all other believers. All of this derives from the somatic nature of the Church by virtue of its union with Christ.

The proposal that the interdependency of individual and corporate Christian maturity is distinct requires an assessment of the relationship between the individual and the social group in the other traditions. First, it must be assessed whether the traditions in question articulate or imply some form of corporate maturity. I suggest that neither Stoicism, nor *Sirach*, gives any indication of a corporate maturity. Specifically, the social group in either tradition provides a context wherein individual maturity is encouraged, but this does not progress the group as a corporate entity towards some end goal. Whilst the individual Stoic's progress is socially concerned and benefits from another's teaching and encouragement,<sup>55</sup> the social group of the προκόπτοι neither receives a corporate *telos* nor grows as a corporate group. Likewise, whereas *Sirach* is concerned with the individual's faithful participation in Israel's Temple worship,<sup>56</sup> this participation does not produce any form of corporate growth in the nation. Thus, both of these traditions do not indicate any form of corporate maturity.

A corporate element of maturity may be inferred, though, in *1 Enoch*. The fact that the community is represented by the Son of Man – whose present hiddenness and future revelation correlate with the afflictions and vindication of the community – entails that the community as a corporate entity awaits the revelation of eschatological maturity.<sup>57</sup> Yet, the relationship between this corporate maturity and that of individual members is seen through the circumstances leading to the formation of the Enochic community. Specifically, *1 Enoch* justifies

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55. Cf. Sellars, *Art of Living*, 59-61.

56. Cf. Calduch-Benages, 'Trial Motif', 136-37; Sanders, 'Ethics of Caution', 79-80.

57. Collins, 'Heavenly Representative', 113-15.

the separation of the Enochic group from Israel by critiquing the Jerusalem priesthood and rulers as corrupted by foreign control. Thus, Israel is regarded as having abdicated its role as the righteous community of God, which in turn requires the formation of the Enochic community as the true Israel. This presupposes, however, a hierarchical relationship between corporate identity and that of the individuals. Just as Israel is corrupted as a whole due to the corruption of the rulers and priests, the Enochic group is righteous by virtue of its teachers adhering to Enoch's revelation.<sup>58</sup> As such, the identity of the community is not dependent on that of the individual member, but rather upon the identity of its religious leaders. In order to substantiate this more fully, it is necessary to turn to another implication of the distinctiveness of the Church within the construction of Christian maturity.

The teleological goal of the Church correlates with God's intention to unite all things *in* (Eph. 1.10) and reconcile all things *for* (Col. 1.20) Christ. What makes this distinct from the other traditions is that this goal is accomplished not only through the qualitative growth of the Church, but also through its quantitative growth. Because human beings function as representative stewards of creation, the unification and reconciliation of all things is advanced as individuals are incorporated into the Church body. Yet, the reverse is also true in that loss of members from the Church body is in contradiction to these goals. It is the rejection of union and reconciliation. Because Ephesians focuses primarily on qualitative growth, the loss of members is most clearly seen in Colossians. Specifically, Paul teaches and exhorts the Colossians to maintain unity and seek mutual encouragement in order to counter an error that isolates and separates individuals from the Church. In short, the loss of members does damage to the Church's progressive growth as a body towards its eschatological maturity.

It can be readily demonstrated that this same dependency is not operative in the other traditions studied in this thesis. Nothing inherently changes in any of the social groups should an individual member separate from it. The Stoic community is not altered in its purpose to practise rationality if one of its members rejects the philosophical system. Likewise, nothing in *Sirach* suggests that Israel will be unable to fulfil its Temple functions if individuals reject their citizenship to the nation. The same is also true for the Enochic community, which accounts for the

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58. Cf. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, 167-210.

lack of interdependency between the individual and the corporate aspects of maturity in *1 Enoch*. Specifically, the corporate community remains qualified for the eschatological vindication of its righteousness even when one of its members leaves. Given this, there is no equivalent principle in these traditions to that of the somatic interdependency of believers in the Church.<sup>59</sup> To be sure, these ancient constructions do make the attainment of maturity interrelated in that individual members mutually encourage and edify one another. However, the traditions do not make this interrelatedness a matter of interdependency where one individual's attainment of maturity (e.g. Stoicism or *Sirach*), or the group's attainment of corporate maturity (e.g. *1 Enoch*), is bound together with the attainment of all other individuals within the group.

The Church, by virtue of its union with Christ, places believers in relationship with Christ and with one another in a somatic comprehension of unity.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the individual attainment of maturity is interdependent with that of the corporate, which means that neither may be achieved separate from the other. Indeed, this interdependency is so pronounced that the incorporation of new members into the Church advances it towards the goal of maturity, whereas the loss of members counteracts corporate growth. Moreover, this interdependency entails that believers need one another in order to attain their individual maturity. This stands distinct from the other traditions assessed in this thesis in that they view the attainment of maturity as individually interrelated, but not interdependent. Thus, Christian maturity is distinct in that it is predicated upon the interdependency of believers in the body of the Church as the means of attaining both individual and corporate maturity.

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59. Certainly, somatic metaphors were commonly used to describe the *polis* and cosmos. Thus, it could be argued that the interdependency of members of a particular social group, or citizens within a nation, was simply part of the conceptual milieu surrounding the construction of maturity in the ancient world. However, given the prevalence of somatic metaphors in the ancient world, it is striking that the other traditions do not employ the metaphor to describe their social groups. Indeed, it was noted that the body metaphor is used by Stoicism (§2.2.1), but this is particularly in reference to the entire cosmos. Hence, the somatic metaphor in Stoic philosophy does not entail a corporate conception of those who are making progress in their use of rationality, but rather the dependency of all things on divine reason.

60. Usami, *Somatic Comprehension*, 185-86.

## 5.4 Cosmic Referent and the Divine Mystery

Each of the preceding analyses also noted that ancient constructions of maturity have a cosmic point of reference. Awareness of the cosmic order, and of the divine figure's intention for the cosmos, informs the nature of maturity in each tradition. Even though the beliefs about the cosmos differ radically between traditions, the cosmic reference point is significant to the construction of maturity by co-ordinating human teleology with the *telos* of the cosmos. In other words, the divine figure not only creates the cosmos with specific intentions for it, but also directs the *telos* of human beings towards participation with those intentions. Therefore, human teleology is aligned with the divine intent for the cosmos, which makes the cosmic reference point relevant to the maturity of persons.

Given the differences in cosmological beliefs amongst the ancient traditions assessed in this thesis, it can be seen that human teleology varies accordingly. In Stoicism, divine reason governs the order and processes of the cosmos,<sup>61</sup> which requires a Stoic to obtain a cosmic perspective on personal circumstances in order to participate with the purposes that divine reason has for all things.<sup>62</sup> In *Sirach*, the creation of the cosmos involved its ordering according to God's wisdom.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the pursuit of wisdom is an act of learning faithfulness to God within the context of his elect nation where wisdom dwells and completes the creational intentions of the cosmos.<sup>64</sup> Cosmological speculation in *1 Enoch* reveals that the cosmos has been ordered in accordance with God's faithfulness, because he has built justice into the cosmic structure.<sup>65</sup> This cosmological reality guarantees the eventual vindication of righteousness and judgment of wickedness, thereby prompting the elect to steadfast righteousness.<sup>66</sup>

Within the construction of Christian maturity, the cosmic reference point establishes the goal for believers who are to participate with God's redemptive intentions. Through the use of the dative, plural form οὐρανοῖς (e.g. Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.16, 20), both Ephesians and Colossians reflect Jewish conceptions of a stratified

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61. E.g. *SVF*1.536. See §2.2.1.

62. *Med.* 7.48; 9.30; 12.24.3.

63. Hermisson, 'Creation Theology', 35-57.

64. Fletcher-Louis, 'Theological Anthropology', 69-113.

65. Nickelsburg, 'Apocalyptic Construction', 56.

66. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 51.

heavenly realm that implies God's role as creator of all things.<sup>67</sup> However, the moral order of the cosmos differs between the two letters. In Ephesians, both the earthly and heavenly realms are inherently fractured by wickedness so that the Church may expect opposition from either cosmic order (e.g. Eph. 5.15; 6.12). In Colossians, though, wickedness is specifically assigned to the earthly realm, whereas the heavenly realm enjoys the authoritative rule and life of Christ (e.g. Col. 3.1-5). Two implications derive from this difference in the cosmic reference point. First, the effects of Christ's redemptive work for the heavenly realm are represented differently in the two letters. The 'rulers and authorities' in the heavens already have been reconciled according to Colossians (2.8-15),<sup>68</sup> whereas they are still wayward powers that oppose the redemptive work of the Church in Ephesians (6.10-20). Second, the letters endow the representative stewardship of humanity with differing cosmic scope and efficacy. Whilst the redemption of representative humanity has implications for the unification of all things in both the earthly and heavenly realms in Ephesians,<sup>69</sup> it holds implications in Colossians specifically for the reconciliation of all things within the earthly realm. Thus, even though the implications of God's redemptive intentions for all things in Ephesians and Colossians are complementary,<sup>70</sup> the articulation of cosmic reference point and its implications for the construction of Christian maturity differ between the two letters.

I suggest that these differences indicate the final distinctive feature of the construction of Christian maturity. In comparison to the other traditions assessed in this thesis, the implications of the cosmic reference point for Christian maturity remain partially undisclosed in the divine mystery. The divine mystery links Christian maturity with the redemption of all things. In Ephesians, the mystery is God's plan to unite all things in Christ that will be realised through the redemption of the Church.<sup>71</sup> In Colossians, the mystery is Christ's indwelling of the Church that establishes the hope for the glorious, heavenly life to be embodied

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67. Dunn, *Colossians*, 59-60; Wilson, *Colossians*, 89. Beyond this, the Christological hymn in Colossians implies God as the creator of all things in Christ (1.15).

68. See §4.2.2.2.

69. See §3.2.2.2.

70. Barton, 'Unity', 246-47. Barton notes how the language of reconciliation and unification overlap in the letter of Ephesians, which means that God's intentions to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1.10) and reconcile all things for Christ (Col. 1.19) are more similar than they are distinct.

71. See §3.2.2.3.

in the present, earthly life.<sup>72</sup> However, this mystery has been revealed to the saints conclusively in Christ (Eph. 1.9; 3.5; Col. 1.26), but not exhaustively in that there remain undisclosed aspects of the mystery (Eph. 5.32; Col. 1.27). It is this undisclosed aspect to the divine mystery that is distinct in comparison to the other traditions. Put differently, the cosmic reference point is distinct in that its implications are contingent upon the context in which it is articulated,<sup>73</sup> which cannot be said for the other traditions given that their constructions of maturity depend upon fixed cosmologies.<sup>74</sup> Neither Stoicism nor *Sirach* contains any form of mystery,<sup>75</sup> so that the implications of their cosmologies remain fixed. Likewise, even though there is a divine mystery in *1 Enoch*, it is fully disclosed to the patriarch Enoch through God's revelation of the hidden places of judgment. As such, because the divine mystery is partially undisclosed in Ephesians and Colossians, the eschatological realities that are stilled veiled in that undisclosed mystery lay beyond the limits of human comprehension and experience. In other words, believers cannot fully anticipate or articulate the eschaton in the present. As such, I will demonstrate that the construction of Christian maturity in relation to the divine mystery entails that the manner in which it is articulated and anticipated is contingent upon the context of the believer.

The first indication of the contingency inherent in the divine mystery occurs with regards to the eschatological maturity of the Church. Specifically, the implications of God's mystery are operative when Paul uses the term ἀνὴρ in Eph. 4.13 to depict the mature state. However, scholars disregard the relevance of mystery when addressing the masculinity of this statement. Interpretations of the passage that take this as a reference to Christ in his human male body, or as directly influenced by emerging Gnosticism, have already been dispensed with in ch. 3.<sup>76</sup> Beyond this, scholars have also disregarded the masculine aspect, in

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72. See §4.3.1.2.

73. I.e. The likelihood that Ephesians is an encyclical letter provides a potential explanation as to why it presents opposition as routed in the heavenly sphere rather than in a particular, local context. Similarly, because Colossians is written to a local congregation besieged by errant teachings that are concerned (at least partially) with the heavenly rulers and authorities, the letter most likely intends to present Christ's reconciliation with the heavenly realm as resolved.

74. Cf. Hermisson, 'Creation Theology', 35-57; Lapidge, 'Stoic Cosmology', 184; Newsom, '1 Enoch 6-19', 310-29; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 25-30.

75. Cf. Harrington, 'Wisdom', 185.

76. See §3.3.2.3.

essence treating ἀνὴρ as ἄνθρωπος so that it reads as the ‘mature person’.<sup>77</sup> Another method is to de-emphasise the masculinity of the ἄνδρα τέλειον by accentuating the adulthood of the man juxtaposed to the children of 4.14.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, some scholars juxtapose the multiple metaphors of the text and thereby argue that no one metaphor is dominant.<sup>79</sup> Hence, the masculine metaphor in 4.13 is relativised by the feminine metaphor of the bridal Church in 5.22-33. Finally, some scholars attempt to disentangle the metaphor from masculinity, arguing that Paul’s use of ἀνὴρ reveals his entrenchment within the chauvinistic and patriarchal anthropology of antiquity.<sup>80</sup>

It can be seen these modern interpretative manoeuvres endeavour either to present maturity in Eph. 4.13 according to a Pauline anthropology that is subversive in antiquity, or to extract that maturity from a Pauline anthropology that is best left in antiquity. I suggest, however, that these efforts fail to appreciate the significance of this masculine metaphor for his ancient readers. First, his use of the masculine metaphor for the maturity of the Church draws upon ancient views of the body as symbolic of the cosmos and society. Ancient medical and philosophical theory held that whilst all bodies were constituted by the four

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77. G.W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33*, BIS 30 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 163; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 554-56; L. Nortjé, S.J., ‘The Meaning of ἌΝΔΡΑ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ in Ephesians 4:13: A Full-Grown Person, as Perfect and Mature as Christ’, *EP* 77 (1995), 57-63; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 187-88. Cf. F. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 245.

78. E.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 256; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 293; O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 307. O’Brien attempts to justify this with comparisons to the same sense in Philo (*Sobr.* 9; *Cher.* 114) and Xenophon (*Cyrop.* 8.7.6). Yet, only *Sobr.* 9 uses similar terminology, whereas the other two texts either juxtapose the τέλειος ἀνὴρ with a νεανίος (*Cher.* 114) or set it within a developmental spectrum of παῖς, νεανίσκος, τέλειος ἀνὴρ (*Cyrop.* 8.7.6). Furthermore, *Sobr.* 9 juxtaposes the ἄνδρα τέλειον to the νήπιον παιδίον during an allegorical interpretation of Isaac and Ishmael (respectively) about the superiority of wisdom over sophistry. That Ishmael is also referred to as a παιδίον νεανίας suggests that the child terminology is of less import than the slavishness of sophistry that he represents. Furthermore, both of these terms occur in the singular and refer to a male figure, whilst Eph. 4.13 uses the plural form in reference to a general conception of infancy. Hence, even though *Sobr.* 9 does contrast the ἄνδρα τέλειον to a νήπιον, the significant differences indicate that the context of the contrast is important when considering an issue such as gender.

79. E.g. P.S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), 222: ‘If no figure dominates the stage, all figures gain in import by sharing that stage.’ Also R.Y.K. Fung, ‘Some Pauline Pictures of the Church’, *EvQ* 53 (1981), 105: ‘a full picture of the Church will emerge only if all the images are taken at once.’ cf. S.F. Miletic, ‘One Flesh’—*Eph.* 5.22-24, 5.31: *Marriage and the New Creation*, AnBib 115 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1988), 92; A. van Roon, *The Authenticity of Ephesians*, NovTSup 39 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 319-25. The analyses of van Roon and Miletic both should be classified ultimately as Christologising the referent of 4:13. Yet, their method and language frequently compare the mature man and bridal Church in a way that relativises gender.

80. E.g. L. Nortjé-Meyer, S.J., ‘Questioning the ‘Perfect Male Body’: A Critical Reading of Ephesians 4:13’, *Scriptura* 90 (2005), 731-39.

elements, the male possessed an excess of heat and dryness whilst the female body was cold and wet.<sup>81</sup> The male body, therefore, was active in comparison to the passive female body, which was evidenced by the belief that the female genitalia were an inverted and interiorised version of the male genitalia. Being active, the male body became normative of power, strength and the capacity to attain perfection.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, notions of the transcendent androgynous existence towards which human beings were oriented was paradoxically male. It is this capacity of the male body to symbolise perfection that gave notions of the transcendent ἄνθρωπος as the embodiment of the cosmos and society a distinctively masculine gender.<sup>83</sup> The transcendent male symbolised the cosmos in its perfect order and society in its perfect unity and workings.

These observations on the construction of gender in antiquity make intelligible Paul's use of a masculine metaphor for the eschatological maturity of the Church. Given that the Church in Ephesians is the sphere of the cosmos that is already united in and filled by Christ, the metaphor of the ἄνδρα τέλειον depicts the growth of the 'one new person' (Eph. 2.15) into its eschatologically perfected form. Indeed, this anthropological metaphor would have been preferable precisely for its capacity to incorporate both social and cosmic categories in ways that the architectural and agricultural metaphors in Ephesians could not. Moreover, Paul's subsequent use of another anthropological metaphor for the Church, namely the Church as bride, reinforces the masculinity of the metaphor in 4.13 because of the agency implied by either passage.<sup>84</sup> In 4.13, the masculine metaphor derives from the fact that it is the Church that is building itself up towards the ultimate goal of the ἄνδρα τέλειον (4.12, 16). In contrast, the feminine metaphor of the bridal Church in 5.22-33 is passive, being cleansed and purified entirely by the agency of

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81. D. Boyarin, 'Gender', in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. M.C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 122; L. Nortjé-Meyer, S.J., 'The Male Body versus the Female Body in Ephesians 4:13 and 5:26-27', *EP85* (2003), 136-37.

82. Cf. M.W. Gleason, 'The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.' in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. D.M. Halperin, J.J. Winkler and F.I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 389-415. This provided the basis for assessing one's gender in that bodily presence (i.e. a person's physical characteristics and appearance, mannerisms, composure and conduct) conformed to notions of the perfect male body determined how truly male a man actually was. The explanation provided for persons who conformed or deviated from the ideal were based in human origins and/or reproduction.

83. S. Fischler, 'Imperial Cult: Engendering the Cosmos', in *When Men Were Men: Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, eds. L. Foxhall and J. Salmon (London: Routledge, 1998), 165-83; Nortjé-Meyer, 'Questioning', 731-39; Nortjé-Meyer, 'Body', 135-36.

84. Cf. Nortjé-Meyer, 'Body', 135-40.



Christ. In other words, the juxtaposition of these metaphors reinforces, rather than relativises, the masculinity and femininity of either because the active-passive/male-female contrast agrees with ancient notions of gender. As such, Paul's use of these metaphors would not only be intelligible and evocative for his ancient readers, but also would unite together two seemingly opposed means of attaining the eschatological state.

Paul's use of anthropological metaphors in effect makes the body a symbol of eschatological realities. Yet, because these eschatological bodies are ensconced in the divine mystery, they depict realities beyond what one is able to comprehend or express. Thus, the semiotics of gendered bodies may only signify in part the fuller eschatological reality. Yet, because antiquity charged the binary system of male/female with active/passive and perfect/imperfect significance, these gendered bodies provided different means of depicting the attainment of the eschatological state. Paul utilised these ancient gender constructs when employing the body as a symbol of the eschaton. Thus, the Church was not to become a mature *male* any more than it was to become a purified *female* according to ancient standards. The operation of these gendered bodies as symbols for the undisclosed mystery means that neither in itself can fully depict what lies waiting at the eschaton.

Another indication of the contingency inherent in the divine mystery occurs with regards to the eschatological maturity of individual believers. This is observable in the household codes (Eph. 5.22-33; Col. 3.18-19). The considerable number of parallels in both Jewish and Hellenistic traditions reveals that addressing the household roles between husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and slaves was not unique to Ephesians and Colossians.<sup>85</sup> However, Barclay<sup>86</sup> argues persuasively that the Colossian code is unique in that it reinterprets these roles in the light of one's new identity in Christ. Thus, the individual believer's performance of generally accepted duties is redirected by a new signification. Yet, Barclay's description of this as living in accordance with a hidden *moral* identity unnecessarily restricts this to an ethical frame. Instead, it is better to regard this as the eschatological identity currently hidden with Christ precisely because he constitutes the divine mystery. In other words, the future

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85. D.L. Balch, 'Household Codes', in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. D.E. Aune, Sources for Biblical Study 21 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 25-50.

86. Barclay, 'Ordinary', 35-52.

identity of believers is not exhaustively disclosed to them, but rather requires their creative reflection of this identity in the present as their perception of it grows through the mutual edification of the Church. As such, the embodiment of eschatological maturity entails creatively aligning one's life with the partially unveiled divine mystery.

This same dynamic is also found in the Ephesian code.<sup>87</sup> The divine mystery is explicitly invoked in 5.32 in order to interpret the relational dynamic between husband and wife. Just as believers are members of Christ's body, so too should husbands regard their wife as though she were a member of his body. Hence, the act of caring for the wife is encoded symbolically as an act of caring for one's own body. This is reciprocated in that the wife is to regard her husband as head, in the same way that Christ is head of the Church, so that her submission symbolises that of the Church's submission to Christ. This symbolic performance of the Christ-Church dynamic in the husband-wife relationship is solidified when Paul interprets Gen. 2.25 as the divine mystery of Ephesians.<sup>88</sup> Even though the verse provided the aetiology for human marriage, Paul now employs it to describe the unique union between Christ and the Church through which the intent of the divine mystery to unite all things in Christ is realised. Thus, the marital relationship between husband and wife is now charged with an embodiment of the divine mystery. Put differently, these household roles are now charged with symbolic potential, so that the embodiment of eschatological maturity in seemingly mundane roles becomes a performance of the mystery.

It can be seen, therefore, that Christian maturity according to Ephesians and Colossians is uniquely embedded in the divine mystery. Neither the cosmic order, nor its relationship with corporate or individual Christian maturity, is fully comprehensible in the present. To be sure, the integration of cosmology and anthropology into the divine mystery is derivative as well from union with Christ. Indeed, both Ephesians and Colossians speaks of the mystery in terms of union with Christ (Eph. 3.6; 5.32; Col. 1.27), and relates it to the cosmological structure (Eph. 3. 9-10; Col. 1.5; 3.1-4). Thus, the nature of divine mystery partially veils the eschatological maturity of believers and its implications for the cosmic order

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87. D.K. Darko, *No Longer Living as the Gentiles: Differentiation and Shared Ethical Values in Ephesians 4.17-6.9*, LNTS 375 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 71-108.

88. Cambier, 'Grand Mystère', 85-86; Sampley, 'One Flesh', 88-96.

because their union with Christ creates an existence that is partially realised and partially hidden due to the eschatological turn of the ages. What this suggests is that ancient cosmology and anthropology could not fully anticipate the implications of eschatological Christian maturity. The divine mystery entailed that what human beings will be, how they will relate to one another and the implications of these things for the cosmos are in some ways continuous with human existence in the present, but in other ways discontinuous. It cannot be determined conclusively, however, where these continuities and discontinuities occur. Thus, the operation of Christian maturity within the divine mystery moderates attempts to claim that one's present contexts perfectly anticipate the eschaton.<sup>89</sup>

## **5.5 Conclusion: Christian Maturity in Antiquity**

This chapter has assessed both the common features of several ancient constructions of maturity and the distinct features of Christian maturity in comparison to those commonalities. It was shown that maturity was commonly constructed via a triadic reference to a divine figure, the cosmos and a social group. Moreover, maturity was associated with future identity that is dynamically attained through progressive growth and/or eschatological embodiment. This attainment was directed by the representative and/or model figures. Even though these common features sketch the broad contours of the ancient constructions of maturity, their heuristic value will be seen in the subsequent evaluation of the genealogy of the modern discourse about maturity. Yet, to further aid the assessment of how one might translate specifically Christian maturity from the ancient discourse to the modern one, several distinct features of its construction in antiquity were identified. In particular, Christian maturity was distinct for its theological basis in union with Christ, interdependency within the Church, and contextual contingency because of the incomplete disclosure of the divine mystery. As such, these distinctives of Christian maturity are important to the effort to recover the significance of the ancient construction of Christian maturity in the modern world.

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89. Cf. S. Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 59-70.

## Chapter 6 Christian Maturity in Modernity

### 6.1 Introduction

This thesis has now attended to the manner in which maturity was constructed by several prominent traditions within antiquity. It has been demonstrated that there are several common features governing the particular constructions of maturity in the Hellenistic philosophy of Stoicism, the Second Temple Jewish texts of *1 Enoch* and *Sirach*, and the Christian texts of Ephesians and Colossians. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to substantiate the premise of this thesis that the modern discourse on maturity, and even Christian maturity, has disregarded its own genealogy. In particular, I will show that Enlightenment philosophy significantly altered the discourse about maturity. Moreover, I will argue that modern works on the nature of Christian maturity have adopted this new discourse with only slight modification. Thus, I will contend that contemporary works on Christian maturity have not understood how it is constructed within biblical texts due to an ignorance of the ancient discourse. Finally, I will propose the best means for recovering some of the elements of the ancient discourse so that the theological significance of Christian maturity within Ephesians and Colossians will be re-introduced into the modern discourse.

### 6.2 The Enlightenment Shift

The preceding studies of ancient constructions of maturity revealed that each tradition understood human persons as having the potential to attain to an ideal state. This could perhaps be restated that persons in antiquity were perceived as able to engage in some dynamic of attaining to the goal of their existence. Nonetheless, the differing conceptions of what that goal amounted to does not resemble the modern construction of human maturity as individual autonomy. The attainment of personal maturity in antiquity did not occur independent of, or isolated from, a broader range of divine, cosmic and social realities that informed

human existence. As such, I will demonstrate that the Enlightenment produced a substantial shift in the genealogy of maturity.

In her survey of the genealogical development of maturity, Christie Kiefer<sup>1</sup> credits Thomas Hobbes with the initial step that led to the later shift in the discourse about maturity. Being a deist, Hobbes held a ‘mechanised’ view of the cosmos in that he regarded it as operating according to standard and inherent processes. Hobbes’ unique contribution to psychology, however, was when he applied the same mechanical beliefs to the human mind.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, he made human growth and learning an act of adaptation to one’s environment through a mechanised rational process of the mind. Put differently, Hobbes redirected the question of maturity away from the consideration of nature and identity towards a functional conception of human existence. As Kiefer puts it, within Hobbes’ and later Enlightenment notions of growth and development, ‘function dictates form’.<sup>3</sup> Intriguingly, Hobbes’ view of human growth implicitly references a divine figure and the cosmos. The god who created the universe to operate according to a set of laws also created humanity to function according to a similar set of processes. However, Hobbes’ mechanisation of the human person created a partial disjunction between the human person, divine figure and the cosmos that later Enlightenment thought expanded into a sharp cleavage. Thus, by the time of Kant’s formulation of individual autonomy, the foundations were already laid for a human teleology that was constructed primarily, if not exclusively, through reference to a functional view of humanity. What constituted proper human growth was not primarily the emergence of a particular character or identity, but rather the correct set of functional processes (i.e. how one used their own reason).

It is this functional view of human existence and teleology that reveals the sharp differences between the modern construction of maturity and the constructions found in antiquity. The most notable difference is the way in which the modern construct has been stripped of certain points of reference. For instance, neither Kant’s basic formulation of individual autonomy, nor subsequent modern psycho-social development theory,<sup>4</sup> requires reference to a divine figure that has

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1. C.W. Kiefer, *The Mantle of Maturity: A History of Ideas About Character Development* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 72-75, 133-52.

2. T. Hobbes, ‘Human Nature’, in *Readings in the History of Psychology*, ed. W. Dennis (New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), 32.

3. Kiefer, *Mantle of Maturity*, 72-75, 133.

4. See §1.2.1.

created humanity and therefore endowed it with a certain teleology. Indeed, even Fowler's faith development theory – which would be the most amenable to a divine reference point – constructs maturity solely with respect to the human function of 'faithing'.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, there is no need in modern constructions for the cosmic reference point of maturity. Because there is no divine reference point, the co-ordination of human teleology with that of the divine *telos* for the cosmos is unnecessary. In contrast, a social reference point is still operative in that the modern constructions of maturity make it culturally determined.<sup>6</sup> What maturity is considered to be is determined by particular social or cultural groups. Yet, it should be noted that the social reference point has been marginalised to that of accidental import. The social group's conception of maturity is a function of collective acknowledgement to the degree that it becomes negotiable. In other words, because the construction of maturity is not directed by reference to a transcendent divine figure, it evolves through the negotiation of individuals within community. Thus, the Hobbesian mechanisation of humanity entails that the ancient reference points (other than a marginalised social one) do not feature significantly, or at all, when constructing maturity.

Derivative from the loss and marginalisation of reference points for maturity in the modern discourse is the loss and marginalisation ideal figures in comparison to the ancient discourse. By surveying the development theories outlined in the introduction to the thesis,<sup>7</sup> it can be seen that the representative figure has been lost. Whilst this may be partially credited to the loss of a divine reference point, the notable absence of representatives should primarily be attributed to the modern idealisation of individual autonomy. This is because a representative sums up in his person the represented community before the divine figure.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the modern emphasis on the individual's attainment of maturity marginalises the social community as a corporate reality to the degree that no corporate summation is possible.<sup>9</sup> In other words, because there is neither a divine figure, nor a particular community related to that divine figure, there is no need

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5. E.g. Fowler, *Stages*, 14.

6. Reber and Reber, 'Maturity'416; Stuart-Hamilton, 'Maturity'93.

7. See §1.2.1.

8. Cf. Collins, 'Heavenly Representative', 116.

9. Cf. S.M. Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 133-60.

for a representative between the two. Yet, the modern emphasis on autonomy also contributes to the loss of a representative figure for maturity. This is because identification with a representative necessarily entails some form of dependency. This dependent relationship is not only between the individual and the representative, but also the individual and the divine figure that is implicated by the representative. Put differently, if maturity is bound to, or a consequence of, one's relationship with another person, and therefore a divine figure, then it is ultimately not autonomous.<sup>10</sup> Both aspects of individual autonomy, therefore, resist the conditioning of one's own self-determined maturity within the representation of a community to a divine figure. These observations, though, further indicate that the exemplary function of a model figure is circumscribed by individual autonomy. Specifically, because the goal of maturity in modernity is to become one's own self-determined person,<sup>11</sup> a model may not be imitated indefinitely. To do so would be counterproductive to self-determination. Rather, the model's benefit is at best a temporary one past which persons should develop into their own individually determined functioning.<sup>12</sup> In short, individual autonomy precludes or severely restricts any type of permanent relationship between maturity and ideal figures.

The final crux of the modern shift in the genealogy of maturity is the manner in which its functional basis weights the dynamic of attainment to one side. Specifically, in recalling the psycho-social development theories that dominate the modern discourse,<sup>13</sup> it can be seen that the dynamic of future/eschatological embodiment is lost. Instead, the dominate dynamic of attaining maturity is that of progressive growth. I contend that this is due to the Hobbesian mechanisation of human persons, which the Enlightenment and later psychological theory used to make maturity a form of functional ascendancy. Thus, according to Freud, the mature individual overcomes any neuroses fixed in the person during childhood.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the mature individual thinks a certain way,<sup>15</sup> makes moral decisions a

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10. Cf. Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?' 41-42.

11. Cf. Hampson, 'Autonomy', 1-2.

12. E.g. Jung, *Development*, 47-62, 167-86; Kohlberg, *Moral Stages*, 5-42; Levinson, *Seasons*, 3-63; Tillich, *Dynamics*, 30-54.

13. See §1.2.1.

14. Freud, *Normality*, 54-107. Cf. Freud, *Psychoanalysis*, 383-403.

15. Piaget and Inhelder, *Psychology*, 3-151. Cf. Sutherland, *Cognitive Development*, 7-28.

certain way,<sup>16</sup> views the world a certain way,<sup>17</sup> and/or even ‘faiths’ in a certain way.<sup>18</sup> Even when Erikson, Jung and Levinson articulate certain stages of personal development in terms of identity,<sup>19</sup> it can be seen that a functional view of human persons still governs their theories. In other words, they regard identity as something formed through a series of processes correctly handled by individuals, rather than as something already established and grown into. Thus, the modern construction makes the attainment of maturity a dynamic of progressive growth in individual functionality. To be clear, I am not arguing that human functionality (i.e. what one does, how one thinks, etc.) is mutually exclusive with human identity (i.e. who someone is and/or will be). Rather, I am proposing that the two are interrelated in human existence. However, whereas the ancient constructions of maturity predominately made human functionality a product of human identity,<sup>20</sup> the modern constructions have reversed this order so that human identity becomes a product of human functionality. As such, the psycho-social emphasis on personal development so dominates the modern discourse that identity is primarily, if not entirely, a product of the individual’s self-determined progressive growth.

What this assessment suggests is that the modern construction of maturity as developing individual autonomy radically differs from the ancient constructions. There are affinities between the social reference point and models, and progressive growth is amplified so that maturity becomes individualistic and self-determined ascendancy. Indeed, this construction of maturity has so permeated the contemporary conceptual milieu that modern persons now naturally, and often tacitly, conceive of maturity in individualistic and functionalistic categories. As such, I contend that the ancient constructions of maturity may seem foreign because of an ignorance of the genealogy of maturity. This argument is in the same vein as that of Alasdair MacIntyre,<sup>21</sup> who has demonstrated that a radical shift in

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16. Kohlberg, *Moral Stages*, 5-42.

17. Tillich, *Dynamics*, 30-54.

18. Fowler, *Stages*, 119-213.

19. Erikson, *Childhood*, 247-74; Jung, *Development*, 47-62, 167-86; Levinson, *Seasons*, 3-63.

20. For instance, the Stoics interpret human thought and actions within their anthropological belief that persons are rational animals. Thus, the derivative identities of fools and sages explicate actions: fools do foolish things and sages do wise things. This also provide the context in which the intermediate identity of ‘making progress’ accounted for a mixture of foolish and wise actions and thought. Cf. Sellars, *Art of Living*, 55-85.

21. A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1984), 36-50.



the discourse on morality occurred during the Enlightenment, so that the ancient concern with virtue was altered into the modern concern with the 'emotivist self'. In the same way, the Enlightenment altered the ways in which maturity was constructed in antiquity into a modern construction of developing individual autonomy. Because of this, it is necessary to assess how the modern works on Christian maturity compare against this underlying construction.

### 6.3 The Christian Adaptation

In speaking of a Christian 'adaptation' of the modern construction of maturity, I do not intend to ascribe intentionality and/or consciousness to the way in which contemporary works on Christian maturity have addressed the modern discourse. Instead, recalling that Christianity is now a sub-culture within the post-Christian Western world,<sup>22</sup> I intend to suggest that works on Christian maturity modify certain features of the modern discourse to suit their own purposes. Whether this adaptation is conscious and purposeful, or intuitive and accidental, is beside the point. In my evaluation, though, the works on Christian maturity introduce one major change to the modern construction that gives rise to two further implications. I will outline each of these separately before assessing the modern works on Christian maturity as a whole.

The significant alteration to the modern construction of maturity that occurs in the Christian adaptation is the recovery of a divine reference point. Each of the works surveyed in this thesis constructs Christian maturity with reference to Christ. Yet, the relevance of this reference operates on a spectrum from being of central import to being acknowledged in only a cursory manner. For instance, Jenkins argues that the nature of Christian maturity has been revealed in Christ,<sup>23</sup> and Samra assigns significant import to the divine referent when he claims that conformity to Christ is the central theme of Christian maturity.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Jacobs equates Christian maturity with 'the fullness of Christ',<sup>25</sup> but neglects to expand this notion when expositing the nature of maturity. Nevertheless, all of the modern works assessed in the introductory chapter do construct Christian

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22. See ch. 1, n. 2.

23. Jenkins, *Christian Maturity*, esp. 116.

24. Samra, *Conformed*, 168.

25. Jacobs, *Fullness of Christ*, esp. 21-46, 62-137.

maturity with some reference to Christ. Yet, the spectrum reveals the deficiency of this reference in the modern constructions: they fail to appreciate the significance of *union with* Christ for the theology of maturity. Even when Underwood identifies principles for Christian maturity from Col. 2.6-7 (i.e. walking in Christ, rooted in Christ, built up in Christ), he disregards the unitive dimension of these statements in favour of the actions implied.<sup>26</sup> Thus, even though the recovery of the reference to Christ in the modern constructions leads to further recoveries of some elements of the ancient construction, it will be demonstrated that the neglect of union with Christ undermines the appreciation of these recovered elements as well.

Whilst there are several potential implications that could derive from the way these works neglect the significance of union with Christ for Christian maturity, I find that two of these implications consistently manifest themselves across the spectrum of constructions. The first is that progressive growth is still the only observable attainment dynamic within these modern constructions, and this naturally entails that Christ's role as an ideal figure of Christian maturity is limited to that of model. The recovery of a divine figure partially curbs the modern ideal of autonomy in that it situates human development in a relationship that is accountable to Christ. Yet, the disregard for any further teleological implications of the divine reference point circumscribes its relevance within the modern concerns of individuality and progressive growth. As such, Christ becomes the superlative example of human activity, and therefore functions primarily as the model of Christian maturity. This is readily observable in the works of Jenkins and Häring,<sup>27</sup> both of whom explicitly refer to Christ as the exemplar of Christian maturity. It also appears to be a governing principle for Jacobs,<sup>28</sup> when he equates maturity with the fullness of Christ's ethical life, and Underwood,<sup>29</sup> with his language of walking with Christ. Carson,<sup>30</sup> however, turns to Paul as a model of Christian maturity, arguing that the apostle's attitudes and actions should be imitated by believers. Yet, it is likely that Carson has as the basis for this imitation

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26. Underwood, *Christian Maturity*, 1-126.

27. Häring, *Christian Maturity*, 9; Jenkins, *Christian Maturity*, 116.

28. Jacobs, *Fullness of Christ*, 21-46, 62-137.

29. Underwood, *Christian Maturity*, 1-126.

30. Carson, *Christian Maturity*, 139-58.

of Paul the premise that the apostle is imitating Christ.<sup>31</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that Carson regards Christian maturity as modelled primarily after Christ's way of life, and secondarily after other persons such as Paul who function as a model of Christ. Finally, it should be noted that Samra's language of believers living in accordance with their new status in Christ seems to approach notions of eschatological embodiment and Christ's role as a representative figure.<sup>32</sup> However, Samra makes this a function of being conformed into the image of Christ, which he understands as the believer's growth in bringing their thoughts and actions into correspondence with Christ's example. The deficiency in these constructions, therefore, is that Christ's role as a representative figure is still missing, and with it the implications for Christian maturity as eschatological identity. Thus, autonomy is still partially operative in that the responsibility for growth remains squarely assigned to human agency.

The second consistent implication is that there is a deficient appreciation of the Church's import for the construction of Christian maturity. The recovery of Christ as the divine referent of Christian maturity leads to a partial recovery of the social reference point of the Church. Some scholars, such as Samra and Jenkins,<sup>33</sup> explicitly refer to the Church as the context where believers mutually support and encourage one another in the attainment of maturity. Likewise, Carson and Häring<sup>34</sup> seem to appreciate the relevance of the Church for Christian maturity when they construct it with respect to qualities and virtues primarily observable in the Christian community. However, the Church is not explicitly crucial to their constructions. The remaining works on Christian maturity give minimal scope to the social reference point of the Church. In my estimation, this limited and inconsistent recovery of the import of the Church directly corresponds to the neglect of the relevance that union with Christ has for Christian maturity. By restricting Christ's role to that of a model for the believer's way of life, the community of believers becomes a place wherein the progressive growth of individuals occurs alongside all others who are engaged in the same process. As such, scholars may recognise that this reality entails mutual encouragement in attaining maturity and can support this readily from any number of NT passages.

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31. E.g. 1 Cor. 11.1; 1 Thes. 1.6.

32. Samra, *Conformed*, 3.

33. Jenkins, *Christian Maturity*, 11-34; Samra, *Conformed*, 152-65.

34. Carson, *Christian Maturity*, esp. 139-58; Häring, *Christian Maturity*, 9.

Yet, this indicates that insufficient attention has been given to the organic nature of the relationship between believers in the somatic unity of the Church.

It can be seen that these modern works are unaware of the genealogy of maturity and, consequently, the way in which the modern discourse influences their construction of Christian maturity. Whilst the recovery of Christ as the divine reference point of Christian maturity has led to an appreciation of his role as a model and the partial recovery of the social reference point of the Church, it by no means has recovered all of the significance that Christian maturity holds within Ephesians and Colossians. This is evident in the striking lack of any cosmic reference point for Christian maturity. Moreover, the still one-sided attainment of maturity through progressive growth and the lack of Christ's representative role reveals the significant shortcoming of the missing relevance of union with Christ for Christian maturity. Thus, these works on Christian maturity resemble the modern constructions of maturity more than they do the constructions found in Ephesians and Colossians. What these deficiencies suggest is that a new proposal is needed for the construction of Christian maturity in the modern world.

#### **6.4 A New Proposal**

Given the conclusions of the preceding section, I suggest that the task of providing a new construction of Christian maturity will not be accomplished simply by modifying and expanding an existing work. Even a study with much to commend it, such as Samra's work, is still significantly indebted to the modern ideal of developing individual autonomy. Instead of correcting the Enlightenment shift in the discourse about maturity, the Christian adaptation has construed the biblical texts within a parasitic dependence upon the modern discourse. As such, rather than attempting to correct these modern works, it is best to advance a new proposal for constructing Christian maturity in the modern world. To be sure, I am not proposing a *return* to the pre-modern discourse about maturity. It is neither possible, nor desirable, to pretend as though the Enlightenment shift has not influenced the way human teleology is understood in the modern world. However, it is possible to make essential corrections to the modern discourse now that the genealogy of maturity has been exposed. This will require that certain elements of the ancient construction of Christian maturity be recontextualised for a world on this side of the Enlightenment. I propose that the best means of

accomplishing this is to recover within the modern discourse the distinct features of Christian maturity in antiquity.

#### 6.4.1 Christian Maturity and Union with Christ

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the way in which union with Christ redirects the modern discourse about maturity in a more fruitful direction. In order to accomplish this, I will draw from the full range of Christological emphases that are operative within the theology of union with Christ. It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that this distinct feature indicated the way in which the eschatological identity of Christian maturity is the believer's status as a new creature in Christ. Moreover, union with Christ entails that believers attain to Christian maturity through the complex interaction between progressive growth and eschatological embodiment. Being united with Christ also gives rise to his role as both representative and model for Christian maturity. Beyond this, I will show that the recovery of this distinct feature benefits from an expanded significance and distinctiveness in the modern discourse precisely because of the radical difference in comparison to the ancient discourse. Finally, it can be seen from the previous chapter that union with Christ provides the basis for the other two distinct features of Christian maturity in the ancient discourse. As such, I contend that union with Christ is the essential feature of Christian maturity in need of recovery within modernity.

One of the consequences that the recovery of union with Christ holds for the construction of Christian maturity in modernity is that it roots maturity within eschatological identity. The previous sections demonstrated that the modern discourse primarily, if not entirely, makes identity a construct of the functional activities of individuals (i.e. how they think and act). The pattern found in Ephesians and Colossians, however, makes the functional activities of believers a construct of their new identity in Christ.<sup>35</sup> In other words, the indicative of identity precedes the imperative of function.<sup>36</sup> This indicative is that believers are now new creatures, having died, been raised, and exalted with Christ.<sup>37</sup> What this suggests

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35. E.g. Eph 4.1; Col. 2.6, 20; 3.1.

36. V.P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 225; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. J.R. de Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 253-58.

37. E.g. Eph. 2.4-6; Col. 2.20-3.4.

is that the eschatological events that believers will experience are already proleptically true about them through their union with Christ.<sup>38</sup> For instance, John Webster states:

[C]entral to its account of human identity is the regenerative work of God, effected in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, realized through the work of the Holy Spirit and signified in Christian baptism. Christian anthropology concerns the new creature of God; its ontology of the human is shaped by that eschatological event in which the creature's goal is confirmed even as the creature is put to death and made alive in Christ. Thus Christian anthropology... will be concerned with convertedness, that newness of life bestowed by the Spirit in which true human being is to be found. I am what in Christ through the Spirit I become.<sup>39</sup>

The significance of this is that both Ephesians and Colossians equate Christian maturity with this eschatological identity.<sup>40</sup> Three implications derive from this for the construction of Christian maturity in modernity. First, maturity is not something autonomously constructed by the individual, but rather is something received by a prevenient act of God in Christ. Second, maturity as eschatological identity indicates that what believers have received is a fundamentally new nature in Christ, rather than simply a moral improvement of their old nature. Third, the attainment of Christian maturity may not be reduced to personal autonomous ascendancy within a particular time frame of life. Instead, because union with Christ entails that believers exist in the eschatological turn of the ages, they are rightly understood as simultaneously *already* and *not yet* mature in him.<sup>41</sup> Yet, this final implication demands a consideration of what these two realities imply for the attainment of Christian maturity.

The second consequence that the recovery of union with Christ has for Christian maturity is that both progressive growth and eschatological embodiment are operative dynamics of attainment. The dynamic of progressive growth is easily co-ordinated with the modern construction of maturity, whereas that of eschatological embodiment appears to be an alien concept. The various works on Christian maturity speak repeatedly about believers growing in the capacity to act and think in certain manners,<sup>42</sup> but neglect to use any language that approximates that of 'put on the new person' in Eph. 4.24 or Col. 3.10. I suggest that the reason

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38. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 176-80.

39. J. Webster, 'Eschatology, Anthropology and Postmodernity', *IJST* 2 (2000), 14.

40. E.g. Eph. 4.13; Col. 3.1-4. Cf. L.A.G. Trost, 'Rethinking Freedom', *Dialog* 39 (2000), 252-56.

41. Cf. Phil. 3.12-16 where Paul claims to have not yet been made a τέλειος (3.12 – τετελείωμαι) whilst considering himself to be amongst those who are τέλειος (3.15 – ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τούτο φρονῶμεν).

42. E.g. Häring, *Christian Maturity*, 9; Jenkins, *Christian Maturity*, 116.

why progressive growth features so strongly in the present works on Christian maturity is because it is most conducive to the modern ideal of autonomy. Specifically, progressive growth can be construed to entail that human agency is solely operative within the attainment of maturity. Eschatological embodiment, however, necessarily entails that a divine agency is also operative because it is predicated upon the reception of a new nature in Christ. To be sure, human agency is invoked by union with Christ so that believers are responsible to bring their character and way of life into conformity with that of Christ's.<sup>43</sup> Yet, it is intriguing that this human agency is bound together with divine agency so that believers 'act in the presence of, in response to, and under the tutelage of the new reality which has been established in Jesus Christ'.<sup>44</sup> This is perhaps most evident in Eph. 2.10, where it is incumbent upon believers to walk (human agency) in the works 'which God prepared beforehand' (divine agency). Even more, though, the divine agency is operative in the dynamic of progressive growth in that the Spirit is active within believers to nurture qualities of maturity (e.g. knowledge, wisdom, love, unity, strength).<sup>45</sup> The implications of this for the construction of Christian maturity in modernity are twofold. First, believers do not autonomously grow into their maturity, but rather are active participants with the divine agencies of God, Christ and the Spirit that are also bringing about their attainment of maturity. Second, the attainment of maturity is directed by the divine agent in the sense that believers do not autonomously construct their own maturity, but rather receive it through a prevenient act of God. Thus, this second implication demands an investigation of how believers 'receive' their maturity in Christ.

The third consequence that the recovery of union with Christ holds for the modern construction is that it reveals Christ's role as both model and representative of Christian maturity. In the previous chapter, I proposed that being united with Christ both qualifies believers for eschatological maturity and presents them with the example of the way of life commensurate with that maturity. The foundation for this is Christ's life and redemptive work. On the one hand, union with Christ qualifies believers for eschatological maturity when his

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43. Samra, *Conformed*, 3.

44. J. Webster, 'Reading Scripture Eschatologically', in *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*, eds. D. Ford and G. Stanton (London: SCM Press, 2003), 248.

45. Cf. Webster, 'Eschatology', 14.

faithfulness towards God is redemptively applied to believers.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Christ functions as a representative of Christian maturity. On the other hand, union with Christ also entails that this redemptive application of his faithfulness to believers should evoke the same type of faithfulness from them.<sup>47</sup> Put differently, it can be seen that believers are assured of their eschatological maturity, because they are united with their representative who already lives in eschatological glory.<sup>48</sup> Reciprocally, because believers live in union with Christ, it necessarily follows that their way of life derives from their identity in him, and therefore will be in like manner to his way of life.<sup>49</sup> Two implications derive from this for the modern construction of Christian maturity. First, becoming qualified for Christian maturity is based in union with Christ, which means that believers are not autonomous in that they must be identified with Christ. Second, believers are not autonomous in determining what faithfulness towards God looks like, but rather have Christ's example to guide them in new circumstances. This leads to the final consequence that union with Christ holds for Christian maturity in the modern world.

Because the modern discourse differs significantly from that of the ancient discourse, the recovery of union with Christ has a further distinctive consequence for the construction of Christian maturity in modernity. Specifically, it leads to a renewed awareness of the cosmic reference point. Being united with Christ involves not only the believer's reception of its benefits, but also the reception of its purposes. It is the divine intent to bring about the redemption of the entire created order *in* Christ (Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.19). Because the redemption of believers occurs through union with Christ, they are drawn into participation with God's plan to effect cosmic redemption within that union. What this suggests is that union with Christ entails the alignment of human will to that of the divine will. According to Stanley Hauerwas,<sup>50</sup> believers are 'to attend to reality' in the light of

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46. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1, 537; Douty, *Union With Christ*, 216-37.

47. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, IV/1.

48. B. Witherington, III and G.F. Wessels, 'Do Everything in the Name of the Lord: Ethics and Ethos in Colossians', in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, BZNTW 141 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 305.

49. Cf. F. Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 279-88. Watson's language that 'we learn from Jesus what it is to be human' reveals that Christ's role as model cannot be reduced simply to his activities.

50. S. Hauerwas, 'The Significance of Vision: Toward an Aesthetic Ethic', in *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1974), 46.



their relationship with a redemptive God and its implications for his creation. In other words, believers attain to eschatological maturity not solely for their own sake, but all the more for the sake of participating with God's intention to redeem all things. In this sense, the attainment of Christian maturity involves 'a regular and willed practice of ceding and responding to the divine',<sup>51</sup> because of the recognition that the divine will intends for cosmic redemption to take place through the redemptive activities of believers. Thus, union with Christ carries a further implication that believers are not autonomous within the purpose of their maturity. Instead, they attain to maturity according to God's redemptive purpose for all things.

In summary, the primary corrective that the feature of union with Christ has for the modern discourse is that Christian maturity is not autonomous. Put differently, Christian maturity is not self-determined, but rather has been preventively planned and established by God. Likewise, it is not entirely self-attained, seeing as it involves both human and divine agents in the work of coming to maturity. It is also not self-directed in that Christian maturity will be realised through the alignment of human will with that of the divine will. Yet, this is not intended to define Christian maturity through negations only. Instead, several positive affirmations can be made. Christian maturity is the eschatological identity of the glorious life that is secured for, and proleptically applied to, believers who are united with Christ. Moreover, because of their union with Christ, believers actively participate with the divine agents who have planned, effected and directed the attainment of Christian maturity. Finally, the attainment of Christian maturity is part of a larger redemptive goal in that it is an important (if not the central) event in the realisation of the divine plan to redeem the entire creation. In other words, maturity stands as the culmination of God's redemptive intentions that esteems persons by being concerned for their maturity and by calling them into participation with the divine plan.

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51. S. Coakley, 'Kenōsis and Subversion: On the Repression of "Vulnerability" in Christian Feminist Writing', in *Swallowing a Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity*, ed. D. Hampson (London: SPCK, 1996), 107.

#### 6.4.2 Christian Maturity and the Church

It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that the somatic nature of the Church is derivative from the union of all believers with Christ. Nonetheless, the relevance of this ecclesiological feature of Christian maturity is being assessed separate from the preceding section because it was determined to be a distinct feature of the ancient construction. I contend that the recovery of this distinct feature corrects the modern construction of Christian maturity in that the somatic nature of the Church entails the interdependency of believers in the attainment of maturity. Moreover, I suggest that this view of the Church revives the recognition that Christian maturity has a corporate aspect, which in turn informs, directs and encourages the individual aspect of maturity. Both of these implications, therefore, will be drawn together in order to correct the modern construction of maturity and provide greater clarity as to the means of attaining Christian maturity.

Because believers are united with Christ, it naturally follows that a unitive dimension exists between them.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, it is described by Ephesians and Colossians as an organic relationship that sets out the community of believers, the Church, as Christ's body (Eph. 1.23; 4.16; Col. 1.18; 2.19). Yet, these same passages (esp. Eph. 4.16; Col. 2.19) express that the organic relationship between believers entails that their attainment of maturity is interdependent.<sup>53</sup> Specifically, it is only as each member of the body works properly and in unity that all other members are encouraged in their attainment of maturity.<sup>54</sup> As such, the somatic nature of the Church indicates that each believer's attainment of maturity is inextricably linked to that of every other believer. What this means is that mutual encouragement is not simply an act of individual benevolence, but rather a necessary feature within the dynamics of attaining maturity. When believers live in unity with one another, a progressive growth in knowledge, wisdom, love, and hope (i.e. the divine qualities) naturally ensues. At the same time, however, this growth enables a better perspective on one's eschatological identity, which is then embodied in the present and improves growth. Thus, the interdependent relationship between believers creates reciprocity between the two dynamics of attaining maturity. It also

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52. Douty, *Union With Christ*, 238; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 387-95.

53. Cf. J.M. Howard, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 90 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 89-98; Usami, *Somatic Comprehension*, 185-86.

54. Cf. Smedes, *Union with Christ*, 169-71; A. Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 34-48.

indicates that separation from this mutual encouragement effectively impedes these dynamics.

The other implication of the organic relationship between believers is that the Church has a corporate identity. The union of an individual with Christ also entails the incorporation of that individual into membership with Christ's body.<sup>55</sup> Thus, believers have not simply been redeemed from alienation and waywardness with respect to Christ, but also alienation and waywardness with respect to God's people.<sup>56</sup> The redemption of individuals into a corporate people therefore indicates that one's new identity pertains not only to the individual, but also the corporate reality of the single new humanity in Christ.<sup>57</sup> Given this, the mutually encouraging activities of believers lead both to the individual growth of the members of the body, and the corporate growth of the body as a whole. Indeed, this corporate growth of the Church is an essential part of the realisation of God's redemptive plan for all things (e.g. Eph. 4.13). Moreover, the corporate growth of the Church reciprocally informs and encourages individual growth in the same manner as individual mutual encouragement. As the body grows quantitatively, its redemptive effects in the cosmos are confirmed, which therefore encourages the growth of its individual members (e.g. Col. 1.6). Yet, it also grows qualitatively, which affirms to believers the reality that the Church is an eschatological and heavenly entity that is being embodied in the present, earthly sphere (Col. 1.4-6, 12).<sup>58</sup> This, too, fosters perseverance in mutual encouragement within the Church.

In summary, the somatic nature of the Church provides a corrective to the modern discourse, namely that maturity is not exclusively individualistic. To be sure, there is an individual aspect of Christian maturity, but this aspect is circumscribed by an interdependency between individual believers and by the corporate aspect of Christian existence. I propose, therefore, that the somatic nature of the Church has four implications for the attainment of Christian maturity in modernity:

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55. Douty, *Union With Christ*, 244-46.

56. Smedes, *Union with Christ*, 163-64.

57. M.J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 349-67; F.S. Malan, 'Unity of Love in the Body of Christ: Identity, Ethics and Ethos in Ephesians', in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. J.G. van der Watt, BZNTW 141 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 259-61.

58. Cf. P.T. O'Brien, 'The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity', in *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*, ed. D.A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1987), 88-119.

1. Every believer is responsible for their own attainment of individual maturity.
2. Every believer is responsible for every other believer's attainment of individual maturity.
3. Every believer is responsible for the growth of the Church as a body to its corporate maturity.
4. The progressive attainment of both individual and corporate maturity reciprocally encourages every believer.

Furthermore, in recognition that the somatic nature of the Church derives from union with Christ, I suggest that this individual and corporate growth is not simply a function of human agency. Divine agency is also at work in order to bring the Church, in both its individual and corporate aspects, to Christian maturity.

#### **6.4.3 Christian Maturity and Divine Mystery**

Because the feature of the divine mystery was distinct within the ancient constructions of Christian maturity, I will clarify how it too provides a distinct corrective to the modern discourse. It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that existence within the divine mystery is also a product of union with Christ. As Barclay notes, 'the ultimate reality (God), the eternal secrets (of all time) and the deepest truths (of wisdom and knowledge) are all revealed in Christ.'<sup>59</sup> Yet, whilst the mystery has been revealed conclusively in Christ, it has not been revealed exhaustively in him.<sup>60</sup> Thus, to be united with Christ is to be brought into an existence that is partially veiled within the divine mystery. I will argue that this reality should inform the manner in which believers negotiate the attainment of Christian maturity within a social context of changing values. Likewise, I will show that it provides perspective on the difficulties encountered when appropriating the cosmic implications of Christian maturity in co-ordination with a modern cosmology. In short, I will contend that the partial veiling of Christian

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59. Barclay, 'Ordinary', 35.

60. E.g. Eph. 5.32; Col. 1.27. It is important to note that the divine mystery not only partially veils knowledge temporally, but also ontologically. Specifically, in both Ephesians and Colossians, the attainment of Christian maturity and its implications for all things brings about the realisation of the divine mystery, temporally speaking. However, the mystery is also identified with Christ, and therefore is something ontologically bound within the divine nature that is not accessible to human beings. As such, even after the eschatological attainment of Christian maturity occurs, there will still remain undisclosed, or perhaps infinite, aspects of God's mystery. Cf. C. Rowland, 'Apocalyptic: The Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge', in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, eds. W. Horbury, W.D. Davies and J. Sturdy, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 796-97.

maturity in the divine mystery engages believers in a continuous act of creatively adapting its implications for the present life to their particular circumstances.

I argued in the previous chapter that because the divine mystery is still operative, the manner in which Christian maturity pertained to cosmological realities in the ancient world could be adapted to the specific circumstances of believers. I propose that this contextual adaptability is still available to the present task of constructing Christian maturity when attempting to draw out its implications for the radically different cosmology of modernity. To be sure, one can find examples of the way in which scholars have attempted to re-articulate the biblical message in light of present cosmological concerns.<sup>61</sup> Yet, it is not within the scope of this thesis to express *how* the differing cosmologies of Ephesians and Colossians could be co-ordinated with a modern cosmology. Instead, it is important to consider *why* the construction of Christian maturity should involve a continuous and creative adaptation of its relevance to modern cosmology. In particular, a common feature between both ancient and modern cosmological investigation is the impulse to determine if and how humanity is significant within the cosmos.<sup>62</sup> The modern construction of Christian maturity holds the potential to address this impulse by expressing that, within the divine mystery, God has co-ordinated the realisation of Christian maturity with his broader redemptive intentions towards the cosmos. In other words, human beings are significant within the cosmos because the divine plan has co-opted them into the redemption of all things.

Another implication that the divine mystery holds for Christian maturity is that its modern construction may be adapted to changing social concerns. It was shown in the previous chapter that the partial veiling of Christian maturity within the divine mystery enabled Paul to use the semiotics of sexually differentiated bodily existence within antiquity to depict the eschatological state of believers. Moreover, it was argued that the partial veiling of eschatological maturity within

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61. E.g. P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*, trans. N. Denny (London: Collins, 1959), 97-123; P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. B. Wall (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1959), esp. 39-52, 213-26. For more recent discussions, see also J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1984); K. Tanner, 'Eschatology Without a Future', in *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*, eds. J. Polkinghorne and M. Welker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 222-37.

62. In conversation with Dr. David Wilkinson (Wesley Research Lecturer in Theology and Science, Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University).

the divine mystery enabled believers to symbolically encode their way of life as directed for Christ in a range of gender and social relationships. Thus, human existence was charged with semiotic potential as believers creatively adapted and embody the realities of their eschatological maturity in their present circumstances. Again, I propose that this creative adaptability of the semiotic potential of Christian maturity is still operative today due to the partial veiling in the divine mystery. However, a consideration of the ways in which that creative adaptation could be applied to gender and social relationships in the modern world lies beyond the scope of this thesis. This is because the ways in which the semiotics of human existence engage gender and social relationships will vary between cultures and sub-cultures. The embodiment of eschatological maturity, therefore, should be an act wherein believers creatively adapt the significations of their bodies and actions to their own unique circumstances.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, recalling the conclusions of the preceding section, this creative act should also be responsive to an interdependent discourse between believers in the Church.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the embodiment of eschatological maturity will be an activity not only uniquely crafted to the individual believer's circumstances, but also one that encourages, and is encouraged by, other believers in their own specific circumstances.

The divine mystery, therefore, provides another corrective to the modern construction of maturity. Specifically, it reveals that Christian maturity may not be standardised, either by being mapped along a series of developmental stages or by being reduced to a set of functional processes that each person undergoes. In other words, I am proposing that individuals are unique, and that uniqueness is not removed in the attainment of Christian maturity. Rowan Williams argues much the same when he moves from the temporality involved in reading a text to its implications for the complexity and temporal nature of human existence:

To speak of the 'inner life' of a product or a person is to presuppose its capacity to make us 'take time' with it or them; otherwise we are likely to fall captive to the mythology of an essential core of truth from which accidental material and external forms may be stripped away.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Cf. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 142.

64. Wells, *Improvisation*, 59-70. Cf. F. Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 107-23.

65. R. Williams, 'The Literal Sense of Scripture', *MT* 7 (1991), 129. With thanks to Dr. Michael Lakey, who brought this essay to my attention.

Whilst Williams' juxtaposition of the 'inner life' and 'external forms' could be misconstrued, I suggest that his concern is to undo a suspicion of complexity that gives rise to a systematised interpretation of persons, things or texts. Thus, in agreement with Williams, I am arguing to put an end to the modern myths of an 'accidental material' of a person, which can be 'stripped away', and an 'essential core of truth' about their maturity, which is nothing more than a series of standardised processes. Instead, Christian maturity is the eschatological life of believers that is partially veiled in the divine mystery. As such, the complexities involved in their attainment of Christian maturity, with all of its implications for individual believers, the Christian community, the outside world and the entire creation, are infinitely intensified rather than systematically reduced.

The proposal that Christian maturity is the glorious, eschatological life of believers in essence claims that it is their glorious selves and their glorious environment that is *already* eschatologically realised, but *not yet* attained. Furthermore, because this maturity is partially veiled in divine mystery, the attainment of it involves a temporal process of creative, personal, and interpersonal interpretation.<sup>66</sup> Believers must 'take time' to reflect on their glorious life in Christ so that they can creatively adapt it to their particular circumstances. The somatic union between believers, though, means that this creative act is not only concerned with their individuality, but also their corporate existence. Even more, it indicates that the creative interpretation and adaptation of the eschatological life are caught up in a dialogue between believers.<sup>67</sup> Finally, this dialogue within the Church will also engage the cosmic implications of Christian maturity. Given that the cosmos itself is a product of God's creative activity, and an object of God's redemptive intent, it too bears a complexity that requires a creative interpretation of what the glorious environment will be and how to live in light of it. In other words, the attainment of Christian maturity involves the creative engagement with complexity, because the divine mystery entails that the eschaton is known only to God.<sup>68</sup> However, it also involves a hopeful instillation of the eschaton in the

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66. Cf. C. Rowland and Z. Bennett, "Action is the Life of All": New Testament Theology and Practical Theology', in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan*, eds. C. Rowland and C. Tuckett (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 186-206.

67. Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 204-25.

68. Cf. A.K.M. Adam, 'Poaching on Zion: Biblical Theology as Signifying Practice', in *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation*, eds. A.K.M. Adam, et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 17-34; Williams, 'Literal Sense', 125, 132.

present, because the attainment of Christian maturity ‘sets present and past in the light of [God’s] eschatological arrival, an arrival which means the establishment of his eternal kingdom, and his indwelling in the creation renewed for that indwelling.’<sup>69</sup>

#### **6.4.4 Summary**

Recovering the distinct features of the ancient construction of Christian maturity provides several correctives to the modern discourse. I have shown that Christian maturity is not autonomous, that it is not exclusively individualistic, and that it cannot be standardised. Instead, through their union with Christ, believers not only have been qualified for their eschatological maturity, but actually participate in it within the eschatological turn of the ages. As such, believers are engaged in the two dynamics of progressive growth and eschatological embodiment in the attainment of their maturity that is informed and guided by Christ as representative and model of that maturity. The union of believers with Christ, though, also entails that they are united to one another. Thus, there is both an individual and a corporate aspect to Christian maturity, which means that the dynamics of attainment are dialogically interdependent within the Church. This dialogue will encompass each believer’s creative adaptation of their eschatological maturity within their present circumstances due to the partial veiling of maturity within the divine mystery. In other words, I have argued that because believers participate in their eschatological maturity through their union with Christ, they actually participate within the divine mystery. Given this, their creative adaptation of their eschatological maturity in their present circumstances both reveals and applies the realities hidden the mystery in the present world. The culmination of this ongoing participation with the divine mystery is the attainment of Christian maturity and the realisation of God’s redemptive intentions for all things.

#### **6.5 Conclusion: Christian Maturity in Modernity**

The twofold purpose of this thesis was to explore how Christian maturity was constructed in antiquity and then consider how that ancient construction

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69. J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1996), 23.



offers potential correctives to the modern discourse. I have accomplished these tasks by directing the purpose of each chapter towards the satisfaction of three aims. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 satisfied the first aim of this thesis to assess the construction of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians. Likewise, chapters 2 and 5 satisfied the second aim to contextualise these constructions of Christian maturity within the broader ancient discourse by assessing the manner in which other traditions constructed maturity in antiquity. Finally, this chapter and chapter 1 have satisfied the third aim to consider how certain features of the ancient construction of Christian maturity challenge and modify the modern discourse. It can be seen, therefore, that the thesis has followed the trajectory of analysis set out in the introductory chapter. The goal in this effort has been to provide a historically and theologically sensitive analysis of the construction of Christian maturity in both the ancient and modern worlds.

I have demonstrated the premise of this thesis that modern constructions of Christian maturity have largely disregarded, or been ignorant of, the genealogy of maturity. Through an assessment of several prominent traditions in antiquity, I have argued that maturity was constructed through the use of divine, cosmic and social reference points towards a future identity that the individual attains to through progressive growth or eschatological embodiment. The Enlightenment, however, introduced a major shift in the genealogy of maturity so that modern constructions of maturity set out the ideal of human existence as individual autonomy that is attained through standardised developmental stages of functional activities. Thus, modern constructions of Christian maturity – which regard it as the individual believer’s progressive growth into a set of functional activities that resemble Christ’s – are more akin to modern constructions of maturity than any of the ancient constructions assessed in this thesis. The consequence of this is that the theology of Christian maturity expressed in the biblical texts is misunderstood and therefore misconstrued into a significantly different message.

When the theology of Christian maturity in Ephesians and Colossians is considered within the framework of the ancient discourse, however, a far more robust message comes forth. The goal of Christian maturity is co-ordinated with the goal of the divine plan to redeem all things in, through and for Christ so that the attainment of Christian maturity is tantamount to the realisation of cosmic redemption. This means, first of all, that Christian maturity is possible only

through union with Christ. Being qualified for maturity requires the redemption of the individual according to the divine plan, which entails that they must be redeemed in, through and for Christ. Yet, secondly, it means that Christian maturity pertains to the Church. Because believers are united with Christ, they are also united to one another as members of Christ's body. Thus, the attainment of Christian maturity involves a multifaceted interdependency between every believer's attainment of individual maturity and the growth of the Church into its corporate maturity. Finally, Christian maturity is eschatological, which means that it is something attained only in the eschaton. However, because believers are united with Christ, and Christ exists in eschatological glory, their maturity is proleptically applied to the individual believer and the corporate Church in the present. This reality engenders not only anticipation of eschatological maturity, but also participation with the divine plan of redemption. The end goal of this redemptive programme is that all believers, both individually and corporately, attain maturity in Christ.

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