

Paul's Ecclesial Leadership and Body Life in the Letter to the Ephesians

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Advanced Introduction to the New Testament

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There are a lot of ideas floating around currently in circles of ministry about what church leadership of the next generation ought to look like. From market-driven and seeker-sensitive mega church models like those seen at Willow Creek Community Church or Saddleback Church in California to the emergent, missionally-focused strategies as seen in works by Alan Roxburgh, we are in an age where Christians are scrambling to make sense of their changing world, and are developing leadership structures to confidently march forward.

Another model recently proposed comes from mission-minded ministers from Australia, perhaps one of the most postmodern Western cultures on our globe. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch's *The Shaping of Things to Come* makes no pretense; their book makes the case that moving the church forward in a healthy way will come from what they call an "apostolic leadership" structure. Working from Ephesians 4:1-16, Frost and Hirsch coordinate a matrix of leadership based on the charismatic giftings Christians are given by Christ's grace. Through the diverse functions of *apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher* the church is able to strive toward unity under Christ's head. "The Pauline logic that asserts the church is gathered around *one Lord/faith/baptism* is the same logic that says God has specifically and deliberately (and with purpose) placed this pattern of ministry/gifting in his church."<sup>1</sup> For Frost and Hirsch, Paul's vision of a Christian community without a five-fold ministry leadership mechanism in place *cannot* mature. Furthermore, a developing Christian community will also have within its genes the capacity for the *entire* church to reflect apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and didactic characteristics. For this they site Ephesians 4:7, 11: "But to *each one of us* grace

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 168.

has been given as Christ apportioned it...” and in verse 11, “It was *he who gave some* to be apostles, *some* to be prophets...” and so on. These two layers of this text are referred to by them as the “leadership matrix” and the “ministry matrix”, conferring that it is the entire church that does the works of ministry and service, not just an ordained few.

Frost and Hirsch describe this five-fold ministry model as an “ecology of missional growth”. Organic, reproducible, and self-sustaining are the major principles in systems theory, but for the two authors the ministry model written by Paul in Ephesians shows a tendency toward these principles as well. The images of ecology are seen throughout the Ephesian letter (the body, ligaments, unity-diversity balance), and the authors claim that it is through the DNA of the diverse leadership where the balance, unity, and mission can once again be found in the church.

Is this model of leadership proposed by Frost and Hirsch truly the intention of the Apostle Paul? From Paul’s missions to the farthest corners of the known world, we know he was interested in getting the message of Christ out to everyone who would listen. Can a five-fold ministry develop a healthy, sustaining church network that reaches the entire globe? Was a charismatic, diverse model of functionality throughout a church system what Paul had in mind for the churches he planted throughout the Roman Empire? In the pages that follow, I plan to investigate this theory, holding it up next to the Scriptures that pertain to it. Through tracking the development of Paul’s leadership discussions, and focusing on the Ephesian pericope in question (4:1-16), I aim to establish a clearer sense of Paul’s idea of leadership in the community.

To ascertain a picture of Paul’s ideal community of Christ-followers, we have to take into account his socio-historical setting. The culture that raised the Apostle Paul was

a Greco-Roman world characterized by variety and syncretism. On the cusp of a sprawling Roman Empire, the cultural influences of Alexander and the Greeks in the Middle East were mixing wildly with Roman and Jewish worldviews. Many Jews were struggling to understand the correct response a “holy nation” should give in their pluralistic circumstance.

“The cities were where the power was. They were also the places where the changes could occur.”<sup>2</sup> People of this age were flocking to the cities, many leaving their farmlands behind to become cosmopolitans of the new world culture. Language was shared, but that was not all: poetry, glassware, decorations, and paintings spread all over the vast empire. Mobility allowed for this, as most involved in business and leisure found themselves traveling with great regularity and convenience.<sup>3</sup>

While people of that time were “of the city”, they found their primary source of community within the household. This came from an increasing “disenchantment with the *polis*” as fewer and fewer aristocrats held on to more and more power over the regions. “To some extent the household community was the beneficiary of this exclusion from the real bodies where civil power resided.”<sup>4</sup> For the burgeoning Christian group, the household was the most obvious and necessary locus for worship, church leadership, and communal life.

It will always be uncertain how much influence Greco-Roman and Jewish religious structures had on the Apostle Paul, however, we know that he had interactions with both throughout his life, (Greek mystery cults; Acts 19:24-27) (Pharisaical

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (London: Yale, 1983), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Meeks, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: Revised Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 7.

education; Acts 22:3). As for the Christian communities Paul helped initiate, it must be assumed that Paul's guiding religious influences of the mystery cult and the Jewish synagogue were the primary sources for inspiration when developing a new Christian community structure.

The reader must ask, "Why would Paul call Christians to meet together at all?" It is likely that the Jerusalem church provided precedent, since it was already established when Paul was converted. The leaders of this "church" (the term of which will be examined later) were Peter, James, and John, the "pillars" of the faith community, (Gal. 2:9). For Paul, a distinctiveness in his development of community emerged as he contemplated the Gospel of Christ. Theologically, Paul intermixed the theory of "salvation" and the praxis of "community". These terms were inseparable for him.

Paul closely associates "freedom" with the salvation brought about by faith in Christ Jesus. This freedom is described on multiple levels throughout his epistolary library, but sums it up nicely when he proclaims, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom," (2 Cor.3:17). Before following Christ, Paul describes humanity as being enslaved to sin, the Law, and to the supernatural powers among other things. Christ frees his people *from* these masters, and provides an avenue to become "slaves to Christ" (Eph. 6:6). A Christian's dependence on Christ and the Spirit demands that their lives fall in line with that of Christ's, and that their purposes now become his. Christ does not free his people and then let them go on their way. According to Paul, Christ not only frees his people *from* bondage, but *for* works of service and love. Paul says, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible," (1 Cor.9:19). Christ hands his followers the gift of freedom from oppression, and then puts

their hand to the plow. Paul exalts this, saying that Christians now work and slave for God and for others, rather than for their own selfish desires. It is from these texts that we can see that the connection of faith in Christ for salvation, and interdependence in community go hand in hand for Paul the apostle.

Paul's theology of salvation and freedom in Christ resulted in giving divine significance to the love-centered communities that were already forming around him. However biased Luke's description of the first gathering of Christ-followers as seen in Acts 2:42-46 may be, we know that from the very moment the Spirit descends at Pentecost those who believe in Christ *meet together* to remember their leader. Over time, leaders and more coherent structures begin to appear within these spontaneous communities. The Apostle Paul makes his dramatic conversion while the Jerusalem church is still in the forming stages. As seen in the major undisputed works of Paul, the apostle wrestles with the concept of Spirit-led leadership and organization in the Christian communities he helped plant. Since much of Paul's theology unfolds in retrospect to what simultaneously emerges in the Christian movement, we will chronologically examine the development of Paul's theories on leadership as he writes letters to various churches.

Paul's first known letter correspondence was written to the Thessalonian church. While the term *ekklesia* ("church") informally was used culturally to mean a gathered group or crowd, over time the Apostle Paul developed a higher sense of that word in his letters. However, in his still burgeoning ecclesiology Paul only speaks of the "church" in his first two letters to Thessalonica in terms of the "*local gathering in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*" (emphasis mine) (1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1).

In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, readers do not find evidence of official leadership, or ordination, but there is a direct reference to “those laboring among you and taking your lead,” (1Th 5:12). After only a few months since their church began, we hear the words of Paul exhorting the Christians meeting to respect and love those who find themselves regularly leading and encouraging the larger body.<sup>5</sup> Were these people leaders in an official sense? The participles used in 1Th. 5:12 describe the *functions* of those who lead, rather than official titles and roles. Interestingly enough, Paul is writing to a church in which he assumedly did not have enough time to develop leaders, and yet within only a few months, he is referring to a leadership within the community. Essentially, those referred to by Paul are the hosts of the house churches meeting in that city. They are more than likely the people of means who Paul sought out and converted while visiting Thessalonica, and now these new converts regularly and *voluntarily* house and take care of the less fortunate Christians in their community.<sup>6</sup> As seen in this passage as elsewhere, Pauline churches did not function without leadership and structure, and yet Paul seemed specific in not appointing a hierarchy. Further in the text, 1Th. 5:14 reaffirms what is congruent with the rest of Pauline literature; that every member is to contribute to the entire community.

This theme is also seen later in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 when Paul is writing to remind the Christians in Corinth that the spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of the whole community, rather than for one’s own enjoyment. Apparently, these gifts that were to be shared were spiritually endowed, meaning that Christians shared not only physical possessions, but should also share spiritual gifts given by God, Christ, and the Spirit.

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 197.

<sup>6</sup> Gehring, 200.

The term *xari/smata*, (“gift”), was a favorite used by Paul to describe what the Spirit gives to the church. For Paul, *xari/sma* in the church given by the Spirit was the basic approach Paul had to the dynamics in the church.<sup>7</sup>

Paul writes freely and haphazardly in his earlier Corinthian letters, mixing participles and nouns together resulting in a mysterious list of both people and functions that these gifts embody in a local gathering of Christians. 1Cor.12:28 is the first listing of “apostles, prophets, and teachers”. It is clear that there is already in Paul’s mind (and in the churches he plants) some form of organization in terms of leadership and giftings according to the Spirit. While this provides insight into Paul’s blossoming understanding of *xari/sma* in the churches, we must remember that the purpose of writing this list out to was to reprimand those who were selfishly hoarding their spiritual gift of speaking in tongues for their own private religious experiences.<sup>8</sup>

For Paul, this Spirit was present in *every* believer. “For the Church as the “Israel after the Spirit” is the people of God in which the prophecy of the Spirit that is to be poured out upon *all* flesh has been fulfilled.”<sup>9</sup> Each person is given at least one gift of the Spirit that they can regularly contribute to the church (1Cor.12:7), but not all gifts are given equally (1Cor.12:29). In 12:28, Paul numbers them off, as if to show their rank in importance, “first the apostles, second prophets, third teachers...” We also can witness people in Paul’s ministry circle who have been blessed with multiple giftings and others who seem to struggle to contribute anything positive at all.

Again in Romans 12:6-8, after making his mighty transition from doctrine to ethics, Paul describes how the Christian community finds its unity in diversity. Through

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<sup>7</sup> Banks, 91.

<sup>8</sup> Meeks, 135.

<sup>9</sup> H. Sasse, “Apostles, Prophets, Teachers,” *The Reformed Theological Review*, 27 (1968): 11.

presenting their bodies as living sacrifices, they become “one body of many” (12:5). Verses 6-8 describe this unified body as being made up of various pieces and functions. Listing off some familiar, and some new giftings in the Christ, Paul makes it clear that Christians have been given different gifts *according to the grace they have received from Christ*. This phrase, along with the “body” metaphor are important linguistic developments in Paul’s ecclesiological understanding, and will be important as we look further into Ephesians.

In terms of cosmic scope no two letters are as grandiose as Colossians and Ephesians. The Ephesian letter in particular focuses on the majestic, universal Christ as the center and source of the unity in the church. The phrase “in Ephesus” in 1:1 was most likely a later addition by scribes to attribute this to a city center, and this letter was probably written to a broader selection of Christians. Written to the Christians in nearby Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colossae and elsewhere in Phrygia, “...the Epistle was in some sense an encyclical or circular letter.”<sup>10</sup> In terms of Paul’s complete, intentional writings on Christ and his relationship to his body the church, we look no further than Ephesians.

While whole libraries could be written on the Ephesian letter, our primary focus is on Paul’s discussion of leadership in the book. In Ephesians 2:20, Paul uses a metaphor to describe the complexity of the church’s unity. Instead of a body (as referred to in previous pericope,) Paul chooses the image of a temple being built together with the various stones, which are all Christians everywhere. It is clearer in this passage than in those previously mentioned, that the apostles and the prophets are intended to be more

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<sup>10</sup> T. K. Abbott, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*. v. 36. eds. S.R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C.A. Briggs. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1968), viii.

understood as people in leadership. It is the *apostles* and the *prophets* that the rest of the church is built on, the cornerstone of it all being Jesus Christ. We will look at the nature and functions of these and other terms later.

With all the heightened rhetoric and cosmic Christological imagery presented in Ephesians, it is not surprising that there are only a select few statements representing Paul's views on church functionality and leadership. This is perhaps a reminder to all churches he writes that their focus should be on the exalted Christ who reigns supreme over everything, and keeping the main focus off any tangential issues of leadership in the church.

This is certainly true as we enter into Ephesians 4. Shifting from a theological and then autobiographical section on ministry, Paul turns in chapter 4 to the "unity in the body". Notice that in this pericope he does not use the phrase "church" which might be confused with a *local* gathering. In this instance the metaphor of the body is more appropriate for the apostle, focusing instead on the relations of Christians both outside and inside a local church.<sup>11</sup> In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul is urging all Christians to maintain the unity they already possess in the Spirit with all Christians everywhere.

In verses 4-6, Paul gives a theological confession on the "oneness" of their faith. Paul reminds them, "There is *one* body and *one* Spirit," reminding them that they are the body and that they are controlled by the same Spirit, "...just as you were called to the *one* hope of your calling," (emphasis mine). This is an interesting phrase; what is the hope Paul is speaking of here? Andrew Lincoln offers a description of the hope for Paul:

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<sup>11</sup> Banks, 59.

“The one hope in Ephesians is not something individual and private but corporate and public, hope for a cosmos that is unified and reconciled, a world in which everything is brought together in harmony through that which God has done in Christ.”<sup>12</sup> Paul remains fiercely communal in his statement, which may even be a known church hymn. In his statement Paul continually presses the issue that Christians are connected to one another, and that there is a definite purpose to which they have all been “called out” as the word “church” literally suggests. This “calling” mentioned in verse 4 also relates back to verse 1, which is the opening statement in the 4:1-17 inclusio denoted by the image of “walking”. They are on a journey, and they are walking it together.

Paul has given the church their marching orders, reminding them of their common hope. He now continues the confession by offering a list of three nouns, “Lord, faith, and baptism,” one of which is masculine, one feminine and one neuter. Appropriately, the Greek number “one” which is repeated before each is parsed as (heis, mia, hen), adding to the rhetoric which cannot be truly grasped in modern translations.<sup>13</sup> This unified front culminates in the celestial “one God and Father of *all*, who is over *all* and through *all* and in *all*.” God of course is the ultimate stimulus for the church’s unity, since they are united under the Father of all. Beyond age, culture, gender and ethnicity, Paul’s hope in the Gospel’s freedom is that *all people* would once again find fellowship together in the Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

For all of the talk of unity and oneness in Paul’s message, he does not forget the importance of the Spirit’s unique giftings. Verse 7 states, “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” Moving from a “you” to an “us” reference, Paul makes it clear that it is not just he who is given the grace for his ministry (3:2, 7, 8), but

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42, (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 239.

<sup>13</sup> Marcus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, Anchor Bible Commentary 34a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 429.

<sup>14</sup> Meeks, 167.

that each person under the leadership of the Spirit has been given a gift in grace. Paul is not writing to an inner circle of ministry leaders, he writes to the church at large, and makes it clear that all of them have gifts, just like he does, since they are all operating under Christ, who gives the gifts to his followers as he gives grace: without exception.

From this text, a sharp distinction between the clergy and the laity is inappropriate.<sup>15</sup> Since our God is a sending God, the people that he calls out to be his church are also sent. None are left behind; they are all on mission together. Paul in this passage refutes any motion of error on this issue. The more the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets”, the more bent a church will be toward living as the Mission of God in the world.<sup>16</sup> In living for the world’s sake, the common unity in the Father of all takes precedence, rather than the peripheral and meaningless quarrels that Paul knows a church can chase after while forgetting the Mission of God. For Paul, they are all called, they are all gifted and sent; they are all apostolic as God’s people in a fallen world.

The midrash that follows in verses 8-10 is placed there simply to show that it is Christ who is the giver of the gifts to the church, while at the same time keeping his readers focused on the Christ who has ascended above *all* things created. For every gift created, there is a creator who reigns over it. The Messiah is not just a dispenser of gifts to mankind; rather the very act of his gifting his followers shows his ultimate authority over them. Here the Apostle Paul makes an indirect reference to Christ functioning as the “head” of the “body” mentioned earlier in the pericope.

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<sup>15</sup> Barth, 431.

<sup>16</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 133.

Ephesians 4:11, one of the major verses for our focus in this paper, notes five major ministries in the church. “And he gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers...” It is necessary to note that it is Christ who appoints those in these functions, rather than being voted in (as in a democracy) or handed by others who have gone before them (aristocracy). Paul is describing a Christ-led leadership. In relation to verses 7, 8 Paul concludes in verse 11 that Christ does not just give grace to his people, but he gives *people* to his people.<sup>17</sup>

Were these five ministries officially ordained offices, or functions that were filled by the common believer? Readers may notice that in the original Greek there is no use of the term *xari/smata* in this verse, but rather *e/) doken* (“gave”) which probably stems from the LXX Psalm quoted in the midrash in v.8-10.<sup>18</sup> Keeping verse 7 in mind, the reader must assume that the gifts given by Christ to “each one of us” are the ones systematically described in verse 11. These gifts can be correlated with the “calling” from verse 1, which ties the diverse gifts in the churches arranged in verse 11 with the theological unity proclaimed in verses 4-6.<sup>19</sup>

If this is the case, then what we have here is Paul’s description of the tendencies in *every believer* toward one of the five of these dispositions. These terms work functionally, rather than as a positional hierarchy. Paul is not advocating leaderless, amorphous communities, rather in Ephesians 4 he envisions a group of people all given the same grace expressed uniquely in each person that contributes to the rest of the church’s edification.

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<sup>17</sup> Lincoln, 249.

<sup>18</sup> Banks, 94.

<sup>19</sup> L. Michael White, “Social Authority in the House Church Setting and Ephesians 4:1-16,” *Restoration Quarterly* 29, no. 4: 226.

Paul's terms "apostle" and "prophet" might leave modern readers to question the sustainability of such a leadership model. On this, two concepts must be kept in mind. First, Paul considered the "body" of Christ as bigger than just than the church that was immediately present. This includes both the present, living apostles and prophets, and those who had gone on before. Second, the apostles and prophets mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 were not of the same vein as the Twelve Apostles, or the Old Testament prophets. Conversely, "he gave *some* to be apostles" describes those who were given to be Christ's ambassadors to preach abroad the message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and to help establish churches in new places.<sup>20</sup> Also, prophets of the New Testament never claimed to have "stood in God's council" but are given to visions and dreams, but above all

"in applying the gospel to specific contemporary circumstances. In 4:11 it is assumed that the church at all times needs the witness of "apostles" and "prophets." The author of the epistle did not anticipate that the inspired and enthusiastic ministry was to be absorbed by, and "disappear" into, offices and officers bare of the Holy Spirit and resentful of any reference to spiritual things. Eph 4 does not contain the faintest hint that the charismatic character of all church ministries was restricted to a certain period of church history and was later to die out."<sup>21</sup>

Since Paul's writing mistakenly referred to as "the Letter to the Ephesians" was more broadly cast to the surrounding churches within the influence of Paul's ministry, we can assume that Paul had envisioned (at least at the point of this writing) that a charismatic leadership model was necessary, and was to continue to be led by the Spirit's anointing of the people of God through Christ for all time.

Ephesians 4:11 is the only occasion Paul specifically writes concerning the specific ministry of an "evangelist". However, in Acts 21:8, we are introduced to "Philip the Evangelist", which assumedly is a distinction between him and the apostle Philip,

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 16:7 - Andronicus and Junias for example were called apostles by Paul, but were not a part of the Twelve.

<sup>21</sup> Barth, 437.

who was one of the Twelve. Also, in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:5 Paul exhorts Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist”, meaning there was some type of specific tasks associated with those who were responsible for leaving the comforts of a house church and entering into new neighborhoods, towns, or regions. They confidently carried the gospel as a herald, proclaiming boldly Jesus the Christ, and the Good News that he saves. Although the work of an evangelist was narrower than that of the apostles, they functioned as more thorough continuation of the apostles’ work in an area.<sup>22</sup>

A question over whether Paul is speaking of “pastors *and* teachers”, “teaching pastors”, or some equivalent arises when looking at the last phrase in 4:11. It is true that the Greek word *kai*, the only word separating the two nouns can mean “and” working as a conjunctive, or “that is” functioning as a tool for clarification. The second interpretation would then define both “pastors” and “teachers” as the same identity.<sup>23</sup> So is a four or five-fold ministry being described here? Which ever translation you take, it is vital to keep in mind that these are not necessary “offices” to be filled in order to have a healthy church, but rather functions that Paul is pointing all congregations toward embodying. Whether four, or five or twenty people assume the task of these functions, it is no matter to Paul.

Not only may more than one person participate in each of these ministries, but it is also a modern idea to think that a person may only be given access to ONE gifting by the Spirit. The overlap of these gifts as seen in the life of Aquila and Pricilla, Lydia, and Paul himself show that these five ministries were not strict categories, but displayed the breadth of giftings the Spirit offers the church.

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<sup>22</sup> Barth, 438.

<sup>23</sup> Lincoln, 250.

The pastor, also translated as “shepherd” has been the most overused term of the five in the Protestant church. Of all its uses and abuses, how did the original readers understand this term? Of course, the image of the local shepherds in their own context would have been at the forefront of their minds: those who live with their flock, feeding them, caring for them, restoring their sheep to full health. Pointing away from the synagogue’s aristocracy and promised positions for affluent families; in Paul’s mind, pastors were the most reliable members of the new (and possibly still very turbulent) Christian community.<sup>24</sup> Referring to them with the term *presbeute/rov* (“elders”) in Acts (Luke’s favored word), Paul calls the elders in Ephesus to

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds (“pastors”) of the church of God, which he has bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and not spare the flock.”<sup>25</sup>

In this passage and particularly in the Pastorals we see that a portion of the pastoral function is to maintain sound *teaching* within the flock, keeping them tied to the doctrines of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>26</sup>

Time and culture have put the pastor and teacher into ordained, budgeted, and seemingly necessary *roles*, while neglecting the mission-focused *apostle, prophet, and evangelist* functions. Paul avoided the pitfalls of investing all the leadership into just one or two of these five ministries. Paul balanced the life of the church on both maintenance and mission, reminding the “sent” church that their missionary God set the apostles and the prophets at the foundation for the temple of God’s people. The church is foundationally a people on a mission. It is Paul’s intention in this passage to keep a

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<sup>24</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 295.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 20:28-30

<sup>26</sup> 1Ti. 6:3; 2 Ti.1:13. Also 1 Peter 5:2-4; Polycarp 6:1

healthy balance of those ahead of the flock (mission) and those serving within and around the flock (maintenance).

Jesus too saw the dangers of over-focusing on the “teacher” role. Denouncing the “seat of Moses” (Mt.23:2), and their liturgical garments (:5), since there is truly only one official “teacher” and “Father”, while everyone else may be referred to as brothers. The Scribes and Pharisees wanted to be referred to with titles and acclamations. Jesus warns against such ordination, promoting instead (along with Paul) that the Spirit of God would be the one gifting us with godly teachers humbly held in tension with the rest.<sup>27</sup>

Returning again to 2Ti.4:5, we see a direct parallel in the syntax with this verse and Ephesians 4:12. Paul writes to Timothy, “...do the work of an evangelist, and so fulfill your ministry.” Similarly, Paul writes to his readers concerning the five ministries discussed above that they function “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” These two verses can only be referring to a synonymous exhortation from Paul, with both describing ministry’s ultimate goal which we will look at in more detail below.

Grammatically, there is some debate over 4:12, whether this verse includes three phrases (placing a comma after “saints”), rather than keeping with just the two as displayed above. Some minuscules (1 242 1149) omit an article after *pro/v* which is used in between the first and second phrase, while *ei) v* is used between the second and third.<sup>28</sup> Reading the second clause as dependant implies an “every-member ministry” where every Christian contributes equally, while writing this verse with three clauses portrays a more hierarchical, minister-led church. Bible translations are split on this issue

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<sup>27</sup> Sasse, 16.

<sup>28</sup> J.C. O’Neill, “‘The Work of the Ministry’ in Ephesians 4:12 and the New Testament,” *The Expository Times* 112, no. 10 (July 2001): 339.

(KJV, ASV holds a “traditional view” with two clauses, while the “revisionist” RSV, NIV, & ESV pen three phrases). Has the dominance of the revisionist view for this text over the last sixty years been as a result from new textual discoveries, or reflect a more “egalitarian, democratic, postwar *Zeitgeist* that has influenced both churches and Bible translators”?<sup>29</sup>

As described above, Paul’s very notion of salvation was closely intertwined with freedom *from* sin and *for* service to God. As seen in 4:7, Paul commends each believer’s gift of Christ’s grace as a means for ministry in the whole community. Similarly in 1Cor12:7 the Holy Spirit is given to each person for the “common good”. The individual gifts given to the believers (who are equipped with these gifts by the Holy Spirit *through* the five-fold ministry) are to contribute these gifts to the body for the continual edification until the complete development into the head, which is Christ. If each part does its work, the body will build itself up in love, and grow into the full maturity Christ seeks for his church.<sup>30</sup> The apostles, prophets, et al. “have been given [to the church] for the purpose of perfecting or ‘*providing the necessary equipment* for all the saints for the work of ministering to each other’.”<sup>31</sup> The compactness of the phraseology used in this verse, a lack of definite articles, and the prepositions triad *pro/v...ei) v...ei) v* confirm this view.<sup>32</sup>

For the remainder of this paper we will be focusing on the consequences of employing a five-fold ministry within a church system. At the end of this inclusio, Paul’s main goal is to tie everything he has said about the church back to the real purpose:

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<sup>29</sup> John Jefferson Davis, “Ephesians 4:12 Once More: ‘Equipping the Saints for the Work of Ministry?’” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 24, no. 2 (Apr 2000): 170.

<sup>30</sup> Eph.4:16.

<sup>31</sup> Brooke Foss Wescott, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 62.

<sup>32</sup> J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Clarke, 1904), 182.

growing into full maturity together in Christ. Paul began this inclusio describing the beautiful, cosmic unity that the church enjoys in the *one* faith they profess. He then took his readers through the diversity of that unity, showing in systematic detail the realities of a community that proliferates in ethnicity, social class, and even spiritual giftings. Below are several consequences foreseen by Paul that the church will experience by ministering diversely in the unity they have in Christ.

First, anticipating the five ministry functions working to equip the entire church body to minister to each other, Paul prays that this will go on happening “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ,” (:13). The tasks of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are to be carried out until full maturity and unity is reached in the church. This means those serving in and reflecting these functions should not be prideful – they are but a means to seeing the church reach what it was meant to be as a body worthy of Christ himself. In Col.1:28 a similar conclusion is made with Paul’s hoping that he can “present every person mature in Christ.” In Colossians, the focus in maturity is strictly on the individual within the larger group, but in Ephesians special notice should be made to the maturing of an entire community; not the collective maturity of a crowd of individuals.<sup>33</sup>

The Apostle Paul is now fixed on what the church will ultimately become, looking past her frailties and shortcomings. He sees this unity in faith and knowledge of Christ reaching a certain tipping point of maturity, and moving on to even greater opportunities. Once the church has reached this point, they are no longer infants, confused by the raging storms of heretical teachings that push a community back and

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<sup>33</sup> Lincoln, 256.

forth across the doctrinal waves. This is the second consequence of a five-fold ministry. Paul alludes to any possible heresies that may have been present (and were always a threat) in the churches he is writing to, although there is little evidence that Paul's authority was currently being challenged.<sup>34</sup> He anticipates the day when the church is so equipped to focus on Christ (through the work of the whole church, 4:12), that they can rest assured they will not waiver in their faithfulness to Christ.

Finally, Paul describes metaphorically what it will be like to mature in the faith by saying the church "will speak the truth in love". This word *αληθευω* can mean "to cherish" "to maintain" "to say" or "to live the truth".<sup>35</sup> In "maintaining" and "cherishing" the truth, Paul predicts the mature church will hold firm in the faith, rather than washing back and forth (as in the previous nautical metaphor in :14). As the church lives deeply into this foundational faith, they will "grow up all things into the head, which is Christ"; most likely meaning every part of the church will look like Christ, as well as growing up all created things in the cosmos toward Christ (a theme in Ephesians).

Growing "from the head" was the general consensus in Paul's time as to how humans developed, citing the brain and nervous system stretching throughout the body. Growing "towards the head" as Paul mentions here is not reflected in first century "science". Perhaps this is an allusion back to the building metaphor used in Eph. 2:20, where everything points toward the cornerstone, which is Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup>

The three metaphors of building, body, and bride constitute verse 16's imagery. First, the body is "joined and held together by every supporting ligament". These separate but "held together" parts are "building themselves" (a reference to the previous

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<sup>34</sup> Barth, 442.

<sup>35</sup> Barth, 444.

<sup>36</sup> Barth, 445.

building metaphor). Finally, this flesh and blood “building” is being built up relationally “in love” as each part does its work. The mixture of these metaphors encompasses a multifaceted reality for the church, placing the church’s existence in the realm of cosmic mystery, right next to Christ, the church’s bridegroom.

Verse 16 begins by denoting that all of this ecclesial activity is “From [Christ]”. The passive voice in the verbs *sunarmologou/menon* and *sumbibazo/menon* refer back to an active Christ who is joining the various ligaments and joints together, and supplying (*e)pichoregi/a*) all the needs of the church. How does Christ supply the church with everything it needs?<sup>37</sup> It is through the gift of the Spirit which is dispersed among the people of God for the enriching of the entire body. Paul makes it clear at the end of this pericope that it is Christ alone who nourishes the body, and sends it as a gift through all the local functions serving and ministering to the rest of the body.

As the church enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we are entering a time when the notion of ecclesial leadership is again under question. For all the good that has come from the elders/staff model of church leadership, there have been plenty of pitfalls: a clergy/laity divide, high burnout in the staff positions, and elderships which function like a board of directors over a market-driven church. While Frost and Hirsch have proposed radical theories in missional leadership, these theories are biblically-based and at some level functioning in Paul’s mind as he works to listen to the Holy Spirit describe this new, alternative community.

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<sup>37</sup> Also see Eph.5:29 as Paul compares Christ’s provisions for the church with that of the husband and wife relationship.

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