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PUT ON THE NEW MAN: EMBODIED SANCTIFICATION  
IN EPHESIANS 4:22–24

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by  
Gregory Chester Palys Jr.  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

PUT ON THE NEW MAN: EMBODIED SANCTIFICATION  
IN EPHESIANS 4:22–24

Gregory Chester Palys Jr.

Read and Approved by:

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Gregg R. Allison (Faculty Advisor)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To my bride,  
Who embodies hard pursuit after growth in Christ.  
I love you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
EEC	Evangelical Exegetical Commentary
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SWJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

## PREFACE

This degree has been a joy, and many have helped to make it so. Sarah, you once again directed me, supported me, and encouraged me as I slowly chipped away at this. You started this degree with two toddlers and an infant, birthed another, and were still feeling sick from being pregnant with our fifth when I turned this thesis in. You are a model of laying down one's life for others so that they may bear fruit (John 12:24–25). This again was as much your doing as mine. Ruth, Ezekiel, James, Eden, and new baby, thank you for sometimes letting Daddy work quietly in the corner of Mommy and Daddy's bedroom and other times for bursting in to give me a hug or tell me something. I love you. Thank you to the elders of College Park Church. You invested much time and finances in this project and my development. Thank you for your generosity and your mission focus. Thank you Dr. Allison. I came in wanting to study anthropology, but you were the sole inspiration not only for my topic but for my continued desire to put our bodies to work as we grow in Christ. Thank you for graciously and regularly making yourself available. Thank you Andy for a place to stay and for modelling hospitality. Finally, thank you to SBTS. Each class has been exemplary and has positively affected my personal walk, family, and ministry. In particular, I want to thank Dr. Pennington for creating the Modular ThM. I would not have had this opportunity to learn and publish without your vision. I'm honored to have just snuck into this final class.

Greg Palys

Indianapolis, Indiana

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

How do we grow in Christ? Knowing the answer to this question should be near the top of each Christian's priorities. Christians have already obtained promises stored up for them in heaven such as freedom from sin, communion with God, and joy in Christ. Yet Christians must put in effort to practically realize these promises on this side of heaven, not perfectly but more and more. However, often Christians feel stuck in their spiritual life. Some may wonder how, if they typically keep themselves free from sinful entanglements and regularly memorize Scripture, they feel joyless in their walk and stunted in their growth.

I posit that our collective neglect of the body is a major source of this stagnation. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have tended to understand humanity primarily in terms of the immaterial. At best, some see our bodies as something we have. They can be enjoyable and helpful at times but are ultimately extraneous from the real me, the "me" inside. At worst, we have tended to denigrate the body, treating our bodies as things to be fought, ignored, and discarded as quickly as possible. In contrast, Scripture teaches that the body is integral to who we are, not optional. If this were true, we should expect that ignoring our bodies would result in consequences, not the least of these being weakened spiritual growth. Conversely, we should expect that growth in Christ would necessarily involve our whole selves.

That is the thesis of this project. I argue that progressive sanctification requires embodied action. To do so, I take three steps. First, I recount the history of how Christians have understood human constitution. I argue that the most common model, hard dualism, necessarily leads to the diminishment of the body. On the other hand,

holistic dualism captures more biblically that we are psychosomatic unities: fully integrated bodies and souls. Second, I will trace the “new man” theme through the book of Ephesians. This theme, though rarely emphasized, acts as a backbone for Ephesians’s emphasis on the body. To be a Christian is to be embodied, connected to others in one body, all connected to the body of our Lord. Finally, I will zoom in on Ephesians 4:22–24. These passages summarize Christian growth, the process we call progressive sanctification. In view of the Bible’s presentation of holistic dualism and the whole of Ephesians, Ephesians 4:22–24 presents a picture of Christian growth that requires bodily action.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CASE FOR EMBODIMENT

This chapter will survey recent Christian scholarship on human anthropology to arrive at a working framework regarding human constitution. Different models of human constitution all seek to identify and explain the fundamental makeup of humans, yet differ in their understanding of the number and character of substances comprising humans. The testimony of church history points to the answer being, at a minimum, some form of body-soul dualism.

#### **Dualism: The Traditional Christian View**

Body-soul dualism posits that humans consist of two different aspects: one material, one immaterial. Defining the material aspect is straightforward. The “body” is the physical part of a human that most obviously interacts with the world. It also has an expiration date. Our bodies all die and decompose, eventually returning to the dust (Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:20), unless they live until the resurrection. At the resurrection, God will raise dead bodies to life and transform the bodies of all Christians. These bodies will have evident consistency with our earthly bodies, yet in some way will become perfect and everlasting (1 Cor 15:12–49).

The immaterial, however, is the more challenging aspect to define. Many have posited different understandings of the origin, composition, and even location of what is traditionally called the “soul.” Perhaps most challenging is how these two aspects (if there are two and only two) interact. John W. Cooper offers his solution to this puzzle in *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*. His defense of body-soul dualism offers a thorough and

recent treatment of a classical doctrine with notable upgrades.<sup>1</sup>

Cooper begins his defense by surveying the two major streams of dualistic thought throughout church history: Augustinian and Thomistic. Augustine self-consciously adopted Platonic notions of the soul in his version of dualism, associating human identity with the soul exclusively.<sup>2</sup> The soul is a substance in its own right, connected to the body yet separate from it. His view maintains that humans are indeed body and soul but lends itself toward magnifying their separation and preferring the soul. Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, attempted to correct Augustine's dualism by positing a more integrated relationship between body and soul. For Aquinas, the soul/body relationship is one of form and matter. The soul determines what a person "is," and the body fills the person out in time and space. However, Cooper points out that a Thomistic view cannot account for the temporary separation of body/soul in the intermediate state. When a body dies, the soul no longer "exists" in any tangible way.<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing the weaknesses in both proposals, Cooper advocates instead for "holistic dualism."<sup>4</sup> Cooper recognizes that the testimony of Scripture points to a unified, holistic vision of humanity (with Aquinas), yet with the recognition that each human consists of two distinct aspects (with Augustine) that could conceivably, though not naturally, be separated. To make this case, Cooper surveys the writings of both testaments and the intertestamental period to prove two points. First, the Bible deals with humans as whole people. Different words referring to immaterial aspects of the human (e.g., soul, spirit, heart) often serve as stand-in terms referring to the whole person. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> See also Cooper's more recent survey of the debate filtered through his perspective: John W. Cooper, "The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism," *SBJT* 13, no. 2 (2009): 32–50.

<sup>2</sup> John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Or "dualistic holism," an alternate term he offers in the introduction to this second printing. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 231.

Cooper admits that, without additional evidence, we have no reason to believe that the Bible teaches dualism.<sup>5</sup>

However, Cooper's second point provides this reason. Jews, and eventually Christians, expected that the person would continue to exist after death and before the resurrection. Cooper calls this possibility of body/person separation the "central issue" in the debate regarding the plausibility of dualism.<sup>6</sup> If a person can exist while the body decays, then a person must consist of more than simply a body. This concept existed in seed form even in the famously monistic Old Testament with the concept of Sheol.<sup>7</sup> The New Testament authors develop this concept further. One striking example is found in Jesus's encouragement to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42–43).<sup>8</sup> In what sense could the thief expect continued existence in "paradise" unless some part of him continued after his body expired on his cross?<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Jesus himself must have existed as Jesus of Nazareth and not simply the eternal Son between the cross and the empty tomb. Ceasing to exist as a human and continuing only as the Son would have required a second incarnation at the resurrection.<sup>10</sup> Finally, Paul regularly stressed his expectation that when he died he would immediately be "with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:1–10; see also 2 Cor 12:1–4; Phil 1:23–24), yet he also expected a future resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–58; 1 Thess 4:13–18).<sup>11</sup> Theologically, this evidence has led to the development of the doctrine of the intermediate state, an actual location where immaterial souls identifiable with their whole persons await the resurrection.

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<sup>5</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 104.

<sup>6</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 52–66.

<sup>8</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 127–29.

<sup>9</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

<sup>10</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 131–32.

<sup>11</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 154–56.

Cooper's case for dualism rests on the existence of an intermediate state.<sup>12</sup>

This state alone points to humans as comprised of at least two aspects: material and immaterial.<sup>13</sup> Yet the loop remains unclosed without again stressing the "holistic" aspect of holistic dualism. Though people are souls and bodies, neither is complete without the other. It is easy to see how a body cannot exist without the soul. Yet, though the soul can technically exist without the body, this existence in the immaterial state is an "anthropologically deficient mode of existence,"<sup>14</sup> as evidenced by the anticipated future bodily resurrection. God made humans to live as bodies and souls, both now and for eternity. Only a short, temporary span exists when this is not the case.

### **Monism: A Recent Competitor**

Though dualism has enjoyed the greatest consensus throughout church history, monism has become popular in recent times. On monism, humans consist of only one substance. Monism's rise in popularity has coincided with the rise in atheistic materialism, which by denying the soul is left with monism by default. However, some Christians have posited versions of monism they believe to be compatible with Christianity. Sparked by advances in fields such as neuroscience and philosophy and emboldened by the Bible's typically holistic presentation of humans, these Christian monists deny that a soul is necessary to account for the "immaterial" aspect of humanity nor the possibility of bodily resurrection.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 164.

<sup>13</sup> A minority view in the church, trichotomy, holds that humans consist of three substances, typically body, soul, and spirit. Since my thesis emphasizes the holistic unity of the human person, a holistic trichotomist could perhaps affirm my thesis while disagreeing with other particulars of human constitution. However, since trichotomists locate spiritual life and therefore spiritual growth in an immaterial, substantial "spirit," their model will inevitably lead them to emphasize inward practices in the quest for holiness.

<sup>14</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 92.

<sup>15</sup> See essays by Joel B. Green, Nancey Murphy, and Kevin Corcoran in Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005).

I do not share monistic convictions for the same reason as Cooper. I am convinced of the reality of the intermediate state, which makes any version of monism, in my view, biblically and philosophically unsatisfying. However, to explicate a detailed case against monism would go beyond the scope of this thesis. I believe that Christian monists will readily agree with and celebrate the results of my research.<sup>16</sup> Though we disagree about the reality of the soul, we agree on the integral role of the body in every aspect of life, even the so-called “spiritual” life. At least in this thesis, monists are not who I seek to convince.

### **Hard Dualism: Dualism of the Church**

Instead, I aim to persuade those more inclined to emphasize the “dualism” aspect of “holistic dualism.” Preston Sprinkle’s terminology is helpful at this point. Sprinkle distinguishes between a “hard” and “soft” dualism. Hard dualism is a dualism in which “the immaterial soul is much more central to who we are than our physical bodies. Extreme versions of this view might even denigrate the body as worthless and evil.”<sup>17</sup> Essentially, a hard dualism draws clearer lines between body and soul roughly in keeping with the Augustinian tradition. A soft dualism, with John Cooper, emphasizes the holistic, normally inseparable interrelation of body and soul while allowing that they could technically exist independently for a time. I am convinced that the average Christian embraces a kind of “hard” dualism, and I believe that this comes with negative ramifications.

As Sprinkle noted, extreme versions of hard dualism tend to denigrate the body. The church’s suspicion of the body manifests in worship songs yearning for release

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<sup>16</sup> This is true of material monists who argue that only matter exists. Immaterial monists deny the material and would necessarily disagree with my thesis. However, in denying the reality of the body, their views do not square with orthodox Christianity.

<sup>17</sup> Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2021), 145.

from this body, a preference for “spiritual” over physical disciplines, and the history of monastic life. These tendencies bear fruit: embarrassment talking about earthy matters like money and sex, neglecting or devaluing the influence of the body when discipling and counseling, and elevating “spiritual” work above work done in the “secular” realm. Each of these fruits stems from a hard dualism that trends toward the extreme.

The roots of this extreme hard dualism probably go both deep and wide, but I want to highlight two. First, from the beginning, the church has struggled with the influences of Platonism and Gnosticism. Augustine self-consciously borrowed from Platonic thought in his identification of the person with the soul. At a minimum, this view leaves the body practically optional. Gnosticism is even more pronounced in its disdain for the body. Gnosticism separates matter from spirit and labels matter evil. The early church left a biblical record of its official opposition to Gnostic thought (Col 3:16–23), though the battle seemingly wages on. In other words, Platonism cleanly splits the body from the soul. Gnosticism sets them at odds with one another.

A second root of the kind of extreme dualism that denigrates the body comes from the Bible itself. The Bible regularly uses bodily language to describe the location of sin. Typifying this notion is Paul’s vivid portrayal of his struggle with sin in Romans 7. Warring against sin is seen as a war against the “flesh” (σάρξ) (7:5, 14, 18, 25). Sin is working in his “members” (μέλος) (7:5, 23). He lives in a “body” (σῶμα) “of death” (7:24). He does not himself do the sin, rather “sin” does it (7:17, 20), which he has already associated with his body.

On the other hand, his “inner being” rejoices in God’s law (7:22). Indeed, his “mind” is fighting the battle for holiness (7:23, 25). He seeks to be freed from his “body of death” (7:24). Ultimately, he seeks to live in the “Spirit” (7:6, 14) in contrast to the flesh. At first glance, it seems that Paul’s anthropology is not only Platonic; it is also Gnostic. Paul is not his body; his body is evil.

However, a closer inspection dispels this notion. In some cases, Scripture uses



σάρξ interchangeably with σῶμα to refer to the physical body. However, in this context, σάρξ represents Paul’s natural desires, his “native human capacities.”<sup>18</sup> Without the regenerating help of the Holy Spirit, Paul’s desires are polluted by sin and overpower his ability to resist.<sup>19</sup> These sinful desires are themselves holistic; they begin inside and manifest themselves through the body. Likewise, when Paul’s holy desires win the battle they manifest in holy actions (Luke 6:45). Therefore, the “flesh” does not refer exclusively to an inward or outward reality.<sup>20</sup> Granted, the body is the only way our sinful desires can become known.<sup>21</sup> Sam Allberry observes that our bodies are “ground zero for our experience of our own sinfulness.”<sup>22</sup> Yet this is not the same thing as saying that our bodies are festering corpses encasing otherwise pure souls. Rather, as Nancy Pearcey articulates, “The body is merely the site where the battle between good and evil is incarnated.”<sup>23</sup>

I believe that most Christians would not openly advocate for this kind of extreme hard dualism. Instinctively and biblically, Christians feed, clothe, and protect their bodies (Eph 5:29). Yet I contend that unease toward the body has slipped into

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 377.

<sup>19</sup> This definition holds whether you believe that Paul here refers to his previous life under the law or the active struggle of believers. In either scenario, Paul uses “flesh” in some cases to refer to the aspect of himself that desires to sin.

<sup>20</sup> Cipriano Vagaggini offers, “In this light, it is clear that the struggle between *sarx* and *pneuma* about which Paul speaks elsewhere (Romans 6:6–8; 25) does not coincide with the struggle between body and soul as found in Greek and Hellenistic tradition. On the contrary, it points up the opposition between the tendency toward sin existing in concrete man, body and soul (which is called *sarx*, *palaios anthropos*, or *soma tes hamartias*, *soma tou thanatou*), and the principle of divine life and of the tendency toward God which, especially after baptism, pervades the whole man, body and soul, and is called *new man*, *pneuma*, *pneumatic man*.” Cipriano Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation: A Theology of the Human Body*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1969), 28.

<sup>21</sup> Colin Smothers argues that one of the key purposes of the body is to “make visible the invisible.” Colin J. Smothers, “On the Body and Its Meaning,” *Eikon* 3, no. 1 (2021): 100.

<sup>22</sup> Sam Allberry, *What God Has to Say About Our Bodies: How the Gospel Is Good News for Our Physical Selves* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 103.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 44.

Christian thought in part because of the Bible’s use of bodily language to describe the location of sin. Christians may read Romans 7 and know intellectually that “flesh” is not identical to “body,” yet our experience in the body biases us toward conflating the two terms. Christians often feel at odds with their bodies because in their bodies they vividly see the manifestations of their sinful desires.

However, I must nudge my point further. Most will agree, upon reflection, that an extreme hard dualism is not compatible with Christian teaching and causes myriad problems. Yet it also probably represents the unarticulated assumption of the laity throughout church history. Therefore, this thesis certainly aims to remedy this kind of thinking. However, I contend that *anything* classified as hard dualism will inevitably denigrate the body and lead to errors in practical theology. For the sake of my argument, I place in the category of hard dualism any conception of human constitution that identifies personhood with the immaterial part.

### **A Wider Definition of Hard Dualism**

Joshua Farris represents a view as close to the other side of the line I have drawn that I can find. Farris has written extensively about human constitution from a Christian perspective. As with Cooper, Farris takes great pains to defend the reality of the human soul while reinforcing the integral role of the body. He affirms the goodness of the body, avoiding Gnosticism. He also emphasizes the holistic nature of humans, thus attempting to avoid the weaknesses in Augustinian Platonism. However, he explicitly identifies human personal identity with the soul. For this reason, I place him in the category of hard dualism.

Farris subscribes to the “simple” view of human identity.<sup>24</sup> On this view, the soul is an immaterial substance, distinct from the body. The soul is also identical to the

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<sup>24</sup> Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). See discussion on pgs. 35–39.

human person. The body holds great value and importance. It is our mode of presentation, our means of executing any action, and a key factor in what makes me “me.” However, on the simple view, the body is not, strictly speaking, “me.” Instead, “I” am a soul that “has a body.”<sup>25</sup>

In arguing for the simple view, Farris is careful not to veer toward the extreme. The body is not exactly a coat I wear. My body perfectly matches my soul; I could not swap out bodies with someone else’s. Practically, no one could open the coat to observe my true self, because my body is tied to everything I do. However, my body is still an extension of myself without being myself.

To be sure, Farris’s argument raises important questions about the order of priority between body and soul. The mere existence of the intermediate state implies that human identity cannot ultimately depend on the body. Otherwise, humans could not exist in any form between death and resurrection. Additionally, Farris poses questions related to the consistency of personhood. If my body changes over time, what is the thread that runs through my life that keeps me “Greg?” If I go bald (which is growing increasingly likely), what substantial undergirding maintains my consistent, singular personhood amidst the contingency that is every hair on my head?<sup>26</sup>

This question has important, practical implications. We know instinctively that someone who goes through bodily changes remains the same person. Even in extreme cases of disfigurement or paralysis, we would still be able to communicate with someone identifiable with the same person pre-tragedy. Bodily change does not prove that the person is not identifiable with the body. However, what do we do when injury or illness clouds the “person” we once knew? What remains when dementia or traumatic brain injury fundamentally leaves the body alive, but the “person” seems gone? Related to this

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<sup>25</sup> Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 37.

question is the personhood of those with mental illness. A person with down syndrome is loved by God and is fully a person. Yet we must assume that Down Syndrome will not exist in the New Heavens and the New Earth.<sup>27</sup> When a Christian with Down Syndrome is given his resurrection body, what will exist of him when something so fundamental to his personality, his illness, is now healed?

All of this points to at least the enduring capabilities of the soul, though this is not the same as saying that the person is equal to the soul. I argue later that personhood exists as a combination of body and soul. Yet personhood cannot be reducible to either. The consistency of personhood comes from the consistency of interaction between a particular soul and a particular body.<sup>28</sup> The soul can carry the personhood load alone for a time in the intermediate state, but it remains incomplete without a body. For now, we resume the discussion of the dangers of equating the person with the soul, no matter how nuanced and holistic the definition.

I asserted earlier that I place Farris's stance in the category I call "hard dualism." In doing so, I recognize that I expand the boundaries of the category beyond how others typically use the term. Would Farris himself self-identify as a hard dualist? Probably not. However, I contend that any dualism that defines human identity apart from the body is at risk of falling into the same ditch as more extreme versions of hard dualism. Any anthropology that defines humanity in primarily immaterial terms poses both biblical and practical problems.

### **Neognosticism: Hard Dualism For Modern Times**

It might surprise many to learn that most of our neighbors, family, and co-

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<sup>27</sup> Perhaps not in the intermediate state either, though we must admit that Scripture does not articulate a robust picture of this state.

<sup>28</sup> On this basis, John Gilhooly argues that angelology provides another avenue for disproving what I term hard dualism. If a particular body is not essential for human personhood, then the line between persons and angels becomes blurred. John R. Gilhooly, "Angelology and Nonreductive Dualism," *Philosophia Christi* 18, no. 1 (2016): 47–64.

workers are functionally hard dualists. Perhaps no one would self-identify as such, but indeed hard dualism reflects the pop philosophy of the day. Take, for instance, the standard plot in a standard modern story. The hero longs to express her inner dreams and desires, yet faces opposition from authorities, culture, and even conventional morality. The climax comes when the hero casts off all restraints and lives authentically and uninhibited. The hero then finds true happiness and receives applause from all, even her oppressors. This is the narrative of expressive individualism, the modern notion that the self sits at the center of the universe.<sup>29</sup>

Timothy Tennent recognizes this modern notion of self as a new form of Gnosticism. After having swung toward materialism, Western culture has returned to recognizing and prioritizing the immaterial, in a sense. However, we have not truly left materialism. The immaterial is not truly immaterial. It is a kind of material immaterial, a material “soul” housing modern notions of identity: the self. We are, as Gregg Allison notes, “simultaneously and oppositely Materialists and Gnostics.”<sup>30</sup> Tennent calls this worldview “neognosticism.”<sup>31</sup>

Nancy Pearcey helps us understand the negative implications of neognosticism. Not only have we separated the body from the self, but we have also reserved the status of “person” for the self alone. “I” am not my body. The culture’s working assumption, “Personhood Theory,” bestows personhood on a body only once that body reaches a “certain level of cognitive functioning, consciousness, and self-awareness.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is possible to be a human and not a person.

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<sup>29</sup> The origins and wide sweeping effects of “expressive individualism” are masterfully unpacked in: Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021), 22–25.

<sup>31</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 217.

<sup>32</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 19.

Ethical implications abound from neognosticism. Abortion, euthanasia of the sick and old, and the treatment of animals at a level on par with humans represent some of the more extreme implications. However, I want to focus on a more subtle manifestation. Transgenderism presents a cutting-edge example of neognosticism that has caught the church off-guard.

The logic of transgenderism is the disunity between my body and my “gender identity.” This implies that there is an “I” that is distinct from my body, could potentially mismatch with my body, and ultimately takes precedence over my body. “I” am not my body. Rather, a transgender person lives in accord with the gender identity he believes himself to hold regardless of his biology. As Preston Sprinkle notes, some transgender advocates even use the word “soul.”<sup>33</sup> They may change their body to “fit” their soul, but they would never be expected to change their soul to fit their body. After all, their soul is identical to their human person.

The logic of transgenderism fits precisely with hard dualism, even one as holistic as that represented by Farris.<sup>34</sup> I do not mean to imply that hard dualism inevitably leads to embracing transgenderism. With Sprinkle, I question the assumption undergirding transgenderism that the soul itself is “sexed” independently from the body, potentially in a way that contradicts the body.<sup>35</sup> However, whenever we locate personal identity in the soul, thus untethering identity from the body, we accept the risk that the soul could contradict the body.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the soul even has the wrong body. It does not

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<sup>33</sup> Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, hard dualism (or hard trichotomy) is the only view of human constitution that philosophically opens the door for legitimate transgenderism. Every other view of human constitution ties the human person so closely to the body that a body-soul mismatch would be impossible. The only exception is if the physical brain itself could be sexed, a theory lacking scientific merit. In other words, a materialist borrows from substance dualism to argue for the legitimacy of transgenderism. See Edmund Fong, “Gender Dysphoria and the Body-Soul Relationship,” *Them* 47, no. 2 (2022): 348–65.

<sup>35</sup> See also Robert S. Smith, “Body, Soul and Gender Identity: Thinking Theologically about Human Constitution,” *Eikon* 3, no. 2 (2021): 27–37.

<sup>36</sup> Farris acknowledges this potential flaw in his model regarding gender. Yet, he dismisses its

take much space between the soul and body to posit animosity between the two. When we advocate for hard dualism (as I define it), we share anthropological views more in line with transgender advocates than with Scripture.

I am confident that Farris and others like him have arguments for why their model does not slip into these errors. Perhaps I have drawn the line on the wrong side of Farris. However, for the sake of my thesis, I will argue that personhood resides in the fully embodied person. This reality should cause us to better reckon with the effect our bodies have on every aspect of ourselves. I hope that, at minimum, those like Farris and even monists can join in agreeing that too strong a dualism (wherever that line may be) has produced many ills in society in general and Christianity in particular.

### **Embodiment: Key to Personhood**

If errors result from locating personhood in the soul alone, then recovering the true nature of personhood means recovering the body. John Cooper's audience in *Body, Soul* was the kind who might deny dualism. Therefore, his book focuses primarily on arguing for the existence of the soul. However, many theologians have recently seen a need to reinforce the integral relationship between ourselves and our bodies.

Gregg Allison is one who embraces holistic dualism and has written extensively on the goodness and fundamental importance of embodiment. He argues that embodiment is key to detangling many of the pressing issues of the day, both in the church and society. These issues include "human personhood, gender dysphoria, the phenomena of transgenderism/transageism/transracialism/trans-speciesism,

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relevance on the grounds of epistemology (how would one know that their soul did not match their body?) and probability (does it seem likely?). However, these arguments fail to prove that a mismatch is impossible. Further, my argument is not that hard dualism inevitably leads to the problem of body/soul mismatch if hard dualism is in fact true. My argument is that holistic dualism is true on biblical grounds, and that veering toward hard dualism opens up the opportunity for error, including the untrue belief that my soul could not match my body. Additionally, the impossibility of ontological transgenderism seems to be another strike against hard dualism. See Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 221–28. Cf. Fong's potential solution for hard dualists, "Gender Dysphoria and the Body-Soul Relationship," 362.

heterosexuality and homosexuality, dehumanization and objectification, body image, the obesity epidemic, anorexia and bulimia, compulsive exercise, orthorexia, body modification, selfie dysmorphia, and more.”<sup>37</sup>

In all these issues, the solution comes from recognizing that the body is both good *and* essential to our personhood. The goodness of the body should be evident for Christians from the creation narrative. Though beset with sin, God included our bodies in the parts of creation he called “good” (Gen 1:31). However, as we have seen above, a Christian can see their body as good and yet reject the body’s fundamental contribution to personhood. In contrast, Allison presents a compelling model for human constitution. He argues that a person is one who is made in the image of God and has two aspects: body and soul. Personhood is a reality that “stands behind” body and soul. This becomes most clear in the person of Jesus. The Son, who is a person, took on a holistic human nature to join with his divine nature while remaining one person.<sup>38</sup> Christological errors abound from any other explanation.<sup>39</sup>

Allison’s argument for embodiment focuses on the fittedness of our embodiment in contrast with our immaterial existence in the intermediate state.<sup>40</sup>

Allison’s thesis is worth quoting in full: “Embodiment is the proper state of human

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<sup>37</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (2019): 159–60.

<sup>38</sup> Personal conversation with Gregg Allison, July 21, 2022. He agreed that he had “evolved” beyond his prior published conviction on personhood: “My presupposition is some form of dualism (my preference is holistic dualism à la John Cooper with a nod toward emergent dualism/personalism shorn of William Hasker’s evolutionary framework) and a strong rejection of monism in any form (e.g., Nancey Murphey’s nonreductive physicalism, Berkeleyian/Hegelian idealism/immaterialism).” Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 158.

<sup>39</sup> Kyle Claunch argues that Farris’s dualism (what I call “hard dualism”) must commit one of two Christological errors. If the soul is the person, then Christ, who is a person, either only assumed a body (Apollinarianism) or assumed a soul, becoming two persons (Nestorianism). In other words, a proper Christology recognizes the body as a necessary aspect of personhood. Further, though body and soul are necessary for personhood, Claunch stresses that body plus soul does not equal person; it equals human nature, hence the need for Allison’s nuanced definition. Kyle D. Claunch, “Review of An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine,” *Eikon* 2, no. 2 (2020): 175–77.

<sup>40</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “A Theology of Human Embodiment,” *SWJT* 63, no. 2 (2021): 65–80; “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” *SBJT* 13, no. 2 (2009): 4–17.



existence. Whereas God's existence as embodied is strange, and whereas angels' existence as embodied is strange, human existence as embodied is natural and normal. Indeed, God has designed and created human beings to be embodied. This is the embodiment thesis."<sup>41</sup> Core to Allison's thesis is the continuity of human embodiment. Apart from the intermediate state, people never exist as souls alone. God created Adam as a whole person, building this person from the dirt and breathing life into him (Gen 2:7). There is no evidence that God took a pre-existing soul and paired it with this now-formed body. Similarly, we should not expect any other person to exist prior to the creation of their body.

Embodiment is also fundamental to human lived experience. We cannot conceive of an action performed by our soul apart from our body. Human existence is embodied existence, both now and in the eternal state. Contrary to the assumptions of many Christians, we do not look forward to an eternal, immaterial existence. Life eternal is embodied.

Yet one major hurdle remains: the intermediate state. Apart from the generation alive when Jesus returns every other human will experience life disembodied. Allison recognizes the rub. Does not the mere existence of an intermediate state imply that the immaterial is at least more central to personhood? Allison argues that the exception proves the rule. While the soul can technically exist apart from the body, heaven itself is "strange."<sup>42</sup>

Apart from the otherwise consistent expectation of life embodied and the promise of a future resurrection, Allison finds two other reasons for resisting letting the intermediate state dictate our understanding of human constitution. First, humans would never have experienced life without the body apart from the Fall (Gen 3). Sin is

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<sup>41</sup> Allison, "A Theology of Human Embodiment," 66.

<sup>42</sup> Allison, "A Theology of Human Embodiment," 71.

responsible for the rending of body from soul at death. Therefore, the intermediate state cannot define human existence since it should never have been part of human existence. Heaven itself is “foreign to human experience as divinely designed.”<sup>43</sup>

Second, Allison finds evidence in Paul’s anticipation of the intermediate state in 2 Corinthians 5:1–5. At first glance, it seems that Paul looks forward to putting off his “earthly tent.” However, what Paul looks forward to is not the intermediate state but rather the resurrection, the heavenly dwelling he will “put on.” In between putting off this body and putting on the new lies a time when he will remain “unclothed.” Sensing Paul’s trepidation, Allison claims that this state of being unclothed is a “horror to dread.”<sup>44</sup> Even if living apart from the body is essential, Paul does not seem to view it as desirable.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, I conclude, with Allison, that the soul is not a separate substance identifiable with the immaterial part of ourselves. Rather, it is the immaterial aspect of our holistic selves that can temporarily sustain our identity during the intermediate state. Since in the intermediate state we will exist immaterially, we rightly say that we will exist as “souls.” Therefore, it is acceptable to use the term “soul” as shorthand to refer to my embodied immaterial aspect, my “inner man.”<sup>46</sup> However, this is not the same as saying that the soul contains the locus of our identity. Human personhood exists most fittingly as a composite of body and soul.

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<sup>43</sup> Allison, “A Theology of Human Embodiment,” 71.

<sup>44</sup> Allison, “A Theology of Human Embodiment,” 71.

<sup>45</sup> To clarify, heaven is an upgrade. Christians should find great hope in the fact that they and their loved ones will immediately be with the Lord upon death (Luke 23:43; Phil 1:21). Heaven is a downgrade only anthropologically.

<sup>46</sup> Throughout this paper, I will use the gendered word “man” rather than the gender neutral “self” to refer to realities that are inclusive of both genders (e.g., outer/inner man, new/old man). I do this because Scripture uses the words typically translated “man” or “self” (*ἄνθρωπος* and *ἄνθρωπος*) to refer to the corporate human race. These words are appropriately gendered and male because one man stands as the federal head of the human race in creation and a second in redemption (Rom 5:12–21). I unpack why this is central to my thesis in chapter 3. See S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 374n867.

Allison's theology of embodiment prompts him to conclude: "I am my body."<sup>47</sup> Consider the difference between this view of human constitution and one that puts the soul at the center of selfhood. If I am a soul that *has* a body, then my body is secondary, even unnecessary. I might care for my body, value my body, and work to act righteously with my body, but I will ultimately prioritize trusting, nourishing, and working toward the betterment of my soul. However, if my body is inseparable from myself, then my body deserves attention in all aspects of life, even aspects typically attributed to the soul.

### **Implications of Embodiment**

Human embodiment brings implications for all of life since all of life is embodied. I have already highlighted how many of our present culture's problems result from failing to appreciate human embodiment. However, I do not believe these failures are unique to the culture. The church has historically leaned toward valuing the soul over the body. Energized by the recovery of embodiment theology, the church would do well to work out the myriad implications of living as holistic persons.

I will focus on the overlap between embodiment and progressive sanctification. By progressive sanctification, I mean the process by which those who have been placed in Christ come to resemble him more and more (Rom 12:2; 13:11–14; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:5–17). I focus here because of my observation that many Christians do not view progressive sanctification in terms of the body. As John Cooper acknowledges, dualism can slip into a kind of "functional dualism," which "compartmentalizes" body and soul and attempts to treat them individually.<sup>48</sup> This compartmentalization often manifests in a kind of sacred/secular divide in which people value so-called "spiritual" activities above more "earthy" spheres like vocation, family life, civics, and recreation. Further, this

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<sup>47</sup> Allison, "A Theology of Human Embodiment," 71.

<sup>48</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 187.

mindset leads to the mentality that “spiritual” activities happen inwardly. John Kleinig observes this “disembodied spirituality,” evidenced when “many Christians who feel uneasy about their bodies reduce the Christian faith to the pursuit of theological knowledge or the cultivation of their own subjective spirituality. a disembodied kind of spirituality.”<sup>49</sup> In this kind of functional dualism, progressive sanctification falls into the realm of the purely immaterial.

To combat this, Gregg Allison devotes a chapter in his popular-level treatment of embodiment to the “Sanctified Body.”<sup>50</sup> In this chapter, he notices that the church often fails to acknowledge the gravity of certain sins associated with the body: lust, gluttony, and sloth. Consider: how many churches would begin church discipline with a perpetual pornography user? What about someone unwilling to get a job, content to receive government aid, devoting their time to hobbies? How many pastors are overweight due to overeating and poor exercise? These also are spiritual issues, and sanctification surely looks like addressing sins of the body.

Yet I believe that the implications of embodiment on progressive sanctification go further than even a positive regard for the body and an awareness of its effects on our sanctification. I believe that embodied action is *necessary* for progressive sanctification. If Allison promotes sanctification *of* the body, my thesis concerns sanctification *with* the body. To make this case, I will focus on a key biblical text describing progressive sanctification: Ephesians 4:22–24. In this passage, Paul illustrates the necessary steps in continually becoming more like Jesus. He does so in vivid, body-oriented language, a point perhaps easy to miss if one does not first recognize the integral role of our bodies in our constitution. To begin, we will survey the entire letter to the Ephesians to establish

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<sup>49</sup> John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 6–7.

<sup>50</sup> Allison, *Embodied*, 125–46.

the overarching “new man” metaphor into which Paul inserts his commands in 4:22–24.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE “NEW MAN” THEME IN EPHESIANS

Within Ephesians scholarship, three introductory issues routinely receive substantial consideration. Therefore, I must state my view on these issues at the outset. However, though I may later appeal to conclusions stemming from these views, I do not believe my thesis hangs on any of these issues.

The first issue involves the circumstances surrounding the writing of the epistle. Most commentators highlight the “generic” quality of the letter. In contrast to other biblical epistles, Ephesians lacks an evident occasion and any appeal to specific circumstances or individuals. Additionally, a textual variant removes “ἐν Ἐφέσῳ” from Ephesians 1:1, creating the possibility that the writer originally penned the letter without a specific recipient in mind. Some conclude from this variant that the letter came to be associated with Ephesus simply because of the city’s outsized importance in the region. However, S. M. Baugh points to the “nearly unanimous” testimony of the early church as evidence for assuming this letter truly went to the church at Ephesus.<sup>1</sup>

Setting aside the Ephesus question, I follow the lead of most commentators who conclude that the letter was most likely written to function as a circular letter, benefitting multiple churches in a region.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation brings with it the added benefit of making any conclusions I draw from the letter less bound by circumstances and therefore more broadly applicable. Additionally, even if the letter originally went to

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<sup>1</sup> S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 97–106. See also Baugh, *Ephesians*, 31.

Ephesus, its generic contents hedge any desire I may have to mirror-read into the circumstances at Ephesus. Thus, in my exegesis, I may be accused of seeing less than what the text presents, yet I should not see more.

The second issue involves authorship. Traditionally, most agreed that Ephesians was Pauline. However, recent scholarship has questioned this long-standing consensus.<sup>3</sup> These commentators attempt to highlight apparent disjunctions between Ephesians and other epistles typically deemed Pauline. They argue that supposed differences in style, word choice, imagery, and theological emphasis suggest an author other than Paul, though one comfortable using Paul's name (1:1). In response, Harold Hoehner, a supporter of Pauline authorship, begins and ends his lengthy summary of the debate with an appeal to church history.<sup>4</sup> He concludes: "The Pauline authorship of Ephesians not only has the earliest attestation of any book of the NT but this attestation continued until the last two centuries. The early attestation is highly significant... This overwhelming support for the Pauline authorship of Ephesians should not be easily dismissed."<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Baugh reminds scholars of their need to remember the role of "secretaries and cosenders" in ancient letter-writing, factors which may account for some differences in style between Pauline epistles.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, I see no reason to doubt Pauline authorship.

The third issue flows from the issue of authorship. Along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, Ephesians belongs to a grouping of epistles known as "Prison Epistles." These epistles gained their moniker because they each suggest that their author wrote the letter while imprisoned. Regarding Ephesians, Baugh explains: "Paul mentions

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<sup>3</sup> For a critical view of Pauline authorship, see Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 6–43.

<sup>4</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 2–61.

<sup>5</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 8.

that he is a ‘prisoner of Christ’ (3:1), a ‘prisoner in the Lord’ (4:1), and ‘an emissary in chains’ (6:20), which is not merely a metaphor (cf. 2 Cor 11:23; Phil 1:7, 13, 17; Col 4:3, 10, 18). This suggests that Paul was actually being detained when he wrote this epistle.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the Prison Epistles overlap significantly in their content. For instance, Ephesians and Colossians share similar “body” imagery (Col 1:18, 22, 24; 2:11, 19; 3:16), identical language of putting off/on the old/new man (Col 3:5, 8–10, 12, 14), and a distinct turn toward ethical commands in the second half of the letter (Col 3:1–4:6). Those who accept Pauline authorship often conclude that these letters were all written by Paul during the same imprisonment, traditionally located at Rome between AD 60–62.<sup>8</sup> I am convinced by these arguments and will therefore appeal to Colossians to reinforce my conclusions in Ephesians. However, for the purposes of my conclusions, canonicity seems more important than authorship. Anyone who shares my belief that Ephesians fits into the unified, inspired canon should not experience much tension when I reference similar themes, terms, and imagery in other parts of Scripture.<sup>9</sup> I do this, of course, while respecting the peculiar context in which each individual biblical book dwells.

### **The Theme of Ephesians**

The content of the letter to the Ephesians functions as a compact summary of the gospel. Due to the letter’s overlap with and development of themes in other Pauline epistles, many view Ephesians as a kind of “crown or quintessence of Paulinism.”<sup>10</sup> Paul spends the first three chapters: (1) articulating God’s plan from before time to unite all things in his Son; (2) praising God for doing so; and (3) encouraging those who have

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<sup>7</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 92–97.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of an argument against Pauline authorship but for Ephesian canonicity, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), lx–lxxiii.

<sup>10</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 106.



been united to God and one another to enjoy the blessings received. In the final three chapters, he teases out the implications of this message for the individual recipients of God's plan. Through their actions, believers in Jesus should promote and reflect the unity they already have with other believers, with Christ, and with God. In doing so, this new, unified entity, the church, will bear witness to this gospel.

Though Ephesians scholars tend to observe many of the same themes present in Ephesians and generally agree on its overall message, they have not reached a consensus in tracing a main, overarching theme. For some, the answer is "easy": "unity in the inaugurated new creation."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, many who offer a main theme promote some variation on the twin themes of *cosmic reconciliation* and its proclamation through the *unity* of believers.<sup>12</sup> However, others abstain from offering a main theme, preferring to view the letter's numerous, various themes as "interlocking and overlapping."<sup>13</sup> Due to the letter's generic quality and multiplicity of themes, I likewise err against elevating any one theme above the others. If Ephesians originally functioned as a circular letter meant for multiple churches in different contexts, it follows that Paul would not emphasize a singular theme more relevant to some circumstances than to others. Therefore, I view the main "theme" of Ephesians as equivalent to its message: a compact summary of the gospel.

Paul does, however, emphasize particular sub-themes as he summarizes the gospel in Ephesians. One such sub-theme is that of the "new man." While perhaps not the "main" theme, the new man theme permeates Paul's explanation of the gospel in Ephesians and forms its illustrative backbone. According to Ephesians, to be a Christian is to be a wholly new person, a "new man," united to Christ and to other persons into

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<sup>11</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 394.

<sup>13</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 486.

“one new man,” the body of Christ.

Sang-Won Son first drew my attention to the unique way Ephesians emphasizes and employs anthropological imagery to illustrate the gospel. His essay traces three major images through Ephesians: the church as the body of Christ, the church as “one flesh” with Christ, and the church as “one new man.”<sup>14</sup> He concludes that these three images are “conceptually interwoven” at various points. Anthropology and ecclesiology intertwine and undergird Paul’s description of the gospel in Ephesians. In other words, according to Ephesians, anthropology consists of elements both “individual and corporate.”<sup>15</sup>

However, Son notes that “anthropology has rarely been brought up in the discussion of the ecclesiology or Christology of Ephesians.”<sup>16</sup> My research has seemingly verified this observation. Most major commentators recognize the unique emphasis Paul places on the themes Son highlights. However, to my knowledge, none prominently ties these themes together, traces them throughout the book, and considers whether this emphasis might impact our understanding of anthropology.

Most give the greatest prominence to the imagery of the church as the “body of Christ.” Like others, William Klein identifies the body as the “dominant” image of the church in Ephesians.<sup>17</sup> Hoehner notes the consistency of this imagery throughout the entire letter.<sup>18</sup> Clinton Arnold stresses the unique way Paul employs this metaphor in Ephesians with his similar usage in Romans and 1 Corinthians. He notes that Paul expands his metaphor to emphasize: (1) the unity of Jew and Gentile; (2) Christ as head

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<sup>14</sup> Sang-Won Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man’: Ecclesiology and Anthropology in Ephesians,” *SWJT* 52, no. 1 (2009): 19.

<sup>15</sup> Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 29.

<sup>16</sup> Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 19.

<sup>17</sup> William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in *EBC*, vol. 12, *Ephesians-Philemon*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 41.

<sup>18</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 63.

of the body as well as the body itself; (3) Christ's relation to his body finding tangible representation in marriage; and (4) that each member, in using their gifts, builds up and matures the whole body.<sup>19</sup> Max Turner likewise stresses that the body of Christ in Ephesians grows: "The church is also portrayed as a single developing body, one growing harmoniously from childhood toward Christlike (eschatological?) maturity, the 'complete man.'"<sup>20</sup> Finally, Ernest Best devotes an entire excursus to the development of this theme. However, he primarily wrestles with the possible background to this metaphor and how its origin informs other versions of the same metaphor in the Pauline corpus.<sup>21</sup>

Each of these commentators rightly stresses the importance of the "body of Christ" imagery in Ephesians. However, in choosing to make this image their dominant lens, their view of anthropology in Ephesians takes on a decidedly corporate hue. Instead, if we replace our lens with that of the "new man," we gain a fuller picture. This picture contains the church as the "body of Christ," but ably captures its anthropological implications on the individual. To draw out these implications, I now undertake a biblical theology of Ephesians through the lens of its "new man" imagery.

### **Biblical Theology of the "New Man" Theme in Ephesians**

The phrase "new man" appears first in 2:15. However, Paul begins laying the groundwork for this metaphor earlier. Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians by praising God for the revealing and unfolding of his wonderful plan, a plan God predetermined before he created the world (1:3–14). This plan consists of uniting (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*) all things, from the individual person up to creation itself, in the person of his incarnate

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<sup>19</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 502–3.

<sup>20</sup> Max Turner, "Ephesians," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 130–31.

<sup>21</sup> Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 189–96.

and now risen Son, Jesus the Christ (1:10).<sup>22</sup> Jesus is the vehicle through which God brings about blessings to the recipients of his plan (1:5). Yet these recipients (i.e., Christians) do not experience these blessings vicariously. Instead, *through* Christ Christians are placed *in* Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) (1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13–14).<sup>23</sup> Christians are people in a person.

Paul extends his explanation of these blessings into a prayer that Christians would experience these blessings presently (1:15–23). At the culmination of his prayer, he deepens his controlling metaphor. Not only are Christians in Christ, but they are, in a sense, part of his constitution. The totality of Christians (i.e., the church) is the very *body* (σῶμα) of Christ (1:22–23). In making this statement, Paul does not imply that the church is somehow integral to Christ’s existence. Though the church is the “fullness” of Christ’s body, Christ himself fills the church (1:23).<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Christ acts as the church’s “head,” which signals his authority over the body (1:20–23).<sup>25</sup> Instead, Paul seeks to

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<sup>22</sup> Commentators debate whether ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι should be translated differently. Hoehner believes that “unite” best captures the thrust of the passage and combines the emphasis of each other translation option. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 219–22. Baugh and Thielman opt for “sum up.” Baugh, *Ephesians*, 92–93; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 66–67. Arnold believes the term evokes headship. He opts for the translation, “to bring everything under the headship of Christ.” However, on Arnold’s view, the phrase ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ refers to Jesus’s authoritative role in God’s plan rather than his location as the plan’s focal point. Yet as Arnold recognizes, the concept of uniting is still present in 1:10 due to the phrase “ἐν αὐτῷ.” Arnold, *Ephesians*, 88–89. Therefore, for the purposes of the “new man” theme, the translation does not seem to matter.

<sup>23</sup> Paul continues to drive this point home throughout Ephesians. Hoehner identifies 39 occurrences of the phrase “ἐν Χριστῷ” or phrases that convey the same idea. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 173–74. Benjamin Merkle counters that while most of these instances refer to union, some do not. Therefore, “ἐν Χριστῷ” and its related phrases are not a technical idea always referring to union. Benjamin L. Merkle, *United to Christ, Walking in the Spirit: A Theology of Ephesians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 60. However, because of Ephesians’s overall emphasis on union with Christ, it would seem that my thesis would stand even if in some instances I saw union where there was none.

<sup>24</sup> Hoehner believes that 1:23 should instead read: “the fullness of him who is being filled entirely.” Paul means to explain that the church is filled by Christ, who is himself filled by God. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 294–301. In that case, the church is the body of Christ but not his fullness. This would be a theologically cleaner translation. However, according to Bruce Corley, this requires a more “awkward” translation of the phrase “τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.” Bruce Corley, “The Theology of Ephesians,” *SWJT* 22, no. 1 (1979): 35. Additionally, Arnold believes that OT temple imagery is present. Just as the fullness of God’s presence resided in the temple, now the fullness of God’s presence resides in the body of Christ. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 116–20. Therefore, it seems that the church itself is the fullness of Christ, though completely empowered and sustained by Christ.

<sup>25</sup> Many argue that κεφαλή can mean “source” rather than “authority.” However, the context of this passage is Christ’s rule and authority over all things. Therefore, in this passage, Christ as “head” of the

illustrate the intimate, mystical, inextricable union between Christ and his church while maintaining Christ's distinction. Therefore, the sense in which the church is united with Christ is spiritual: the church is not the body of the risen Christ corporeally. However, Paul notably describes this spiritual union as that of one body to another.

Having articulated the present and future realities of those in Christ, Paul backtracks chronologically to describe the process by which Christians are brought into Christ. In his description, Paul vividly fleshes out his body metaphor. Christians, though physically alive, were *dead* in their sins without Christ (2:1, 4). Each individual actively pursued sin, signified by the verbs *walk*, *follow* (x2), *live*, and *carry* (2:2–3). The sin each strove for corresponded with the passions of their *flesh* (σάρξ) and the desires of their *body* (σάρξ) and *mind* (διάνοια) (2:3). In other words, their whole selves were committed to working out the sin which dominated their whole selves.

However, God intervened. Each dead person received life when God decisively acted (2:4–5). A Christian is a Christian because their entire self has been made *alive*. Each has been *raised* from the dead and placed “in Christ” in heaven (2:5–7). Again, this has a primarily spiritual sense: Christians are not currently, bodily present in heaven. Yet Paul does not assign these spiritual realities to a spiritual “part” of Christians. Paul gives every indication that God, in his saving action, makes the whole person alive. Hoehner explains: “Although we are in the heavenlies positionally, we remain on the earth to live a resurrected life in connection with the resurrected Christ.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, Christians wholly experience these spiritual realities now in part and fully eventually.

This current resurrection life should manifest bodily. Paul explicitly states that God created Christians “in Christ” for the purpose of *good works* (2:10). Further, God

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body evokes Christ's authority over the body. It is likely that Paul's usage of κεφαλή here carries over into his usage in 5:23. For a brief background of the debate regarding κεφαλή, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 284–94.

<sup>26</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 335.

laid out these good works like a road “beforehand.” Yet a Christian will necessarily exert effort to “walk” in the good works laid out for him. Though grace forms the grounds of the new life in Christ (2:8–9), the actions Christians perform with their bodies both signify and manifest this new life.

At 2:11, Paul shifts his focus away from the “vertical reconciliation of individual believers” to the “horizontal reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles” until 3:13.<sup>27</sup> If the whole church and each Christian have been united to Christ in one body, then group relations within the body should reflect this structural integrity. Paul reminds the Ephesian, Gentile believers that their very bodies used to reflect their estrangement from God’s promises (2:11). Unlike circumcised Jews, their uncircumcised *flesh* (σάρξ) made them “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (2:12). The Gentiles’ bodies bore witness to their need for a holy body. Instead of being “in” Christ, they were “separated from” Christ. Yet now God has revealed that even circumcision was always merely an outward display (2:11). For both Jew and Gentile, Christ shed his perfect *blood* and made peace in his *flesh* (σάρξ), thereby reconciling them together in one *body* (σῶμα) (2:13–14, 16–22). Through faith in Christ, all by the Spirit are placed in Christ to form a greater unit: a *new man* (ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) (2:15).

This new man is the body of Christ, the church (2:16; see also 3:6).<sup>28</sup> It is wholly “new” because: (1) It is comprised of wholly new *people*. (2) It is a wholly new *entity*, unprecedented in its internal unity and purity, especially across ethnic groups. (3) It is united to *the* new man, Jesus. The gospel itself is simply a revelation of this same three-fold mystery: God is reconciling all things into the new man through a new man

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<sup>27</sup> Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 25.

<sup>28</sup> For why the “one body” in 2:16 does not instead refer to Christ, see Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 20–21.

comprised of new men (3:1–13).

Finally, before concluding the so-called “indicative” half of his letter (1:1–3:21), Paul draws greater attention to one aspect of the new man: the inner man (ἐσω ἄνθρωπον) (3:16). He prays for inner strength, Christ in their hearts (καρδίαις), comprehension of Christ’s love, and the fullness of God filling them (3:14–21). Though the “inner man” and “heart” seem to refer to the same, distinct location, we should not presume that Paul means to assign spiritual blessing to a particular “part” of humans.<sup>29</sup> Though here the inner man is the focus, up to this point Paul has consistently involved the whole, new person (καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) in each Christian’s union with Christ. Instead, Paul seems to recognize that different aspects of a human can be considered separately, at least conceptually. Though Paul continues to view each human holistically, he acknowledges that humans experience the benefits bestowed by the Spirit primarily inwardly.

After this point in the letter, most note a shift in style and content. Throughout 4:1–6:24, Paul peppers his letter with imperatives. Until now, even implied commands had been rare compared to the ever-present indicative mood.<sup>30</sup> Having established the “new man” framework in the first half of the letter, Paul spends much of the rest of the letter admonishing each new man to act in specific ways. We might summarize his thesis for the final three chapters as follows: Each individual new man should pursue actions fitting to his or her newness in order to maintain the unity of the new man. This will result in being progressively renewed, individually and corporately, into the likeness of *the* new man, Christ, in whom they are united.

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<sup>29</sup> Arnold believes the inner man operates as the “functional equivalent of the heart” in this context. He does so because he views 3:16 and 3:17a as parallel. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 210. Thielman, on the other hand, believes that the infinitive beginning 3:17a (κατοικῆσαι) expresses result. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 229. Even if Thielman is correct, the roughly parallel content of 3:16 and 3:17a seems to equate the inner man with the heart as the experiential locus of God’s blessings in salvation.

<sup>30</sup> Hoehner counts forty-one imperatives in Ephesians 4–6. Ephesians 1–3 contained only one imperative and three “implied exhortations.” Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 499.

Overall, the body-oriented imagery remains intact from the first half of the letter. In keeping with his imperatival thrust, Paul begins to prefer “walking” (περιπατέω) as his dominant image (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15).<sup>31</sup> In a sense, Paul built the body in Ephesians 1–3. Now, Paul emphasizes what the body does. Above all, each individual body must *walk* “in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1). In other words, each Christian’s actions should evidently display that they are new people. Christians should undertake these actions with the correct attitudes (4:2). Yet to Paul, these attitudes are merely the manner of walking and not the walking itself. Good intentions are not enough; evidently, Christians must seek to vivify their attitudes.

Importantly, the unity of the *body* (σῶμα), the church, should motivate and stem from these actions (4:3–6). Christ has blessed each body part, or member (1 Cor 12:14), with a unique gift suited for building up their particular body (Eph 4:7–10). Some members bless their church in a unique leadership role, using their gifts to equip other members (4:11–12).<sup>32</sup> When each member utilizes their gift, the church inches toward its goal: a built-up, mature, corporate body (σῶμα x3). This “mature manhood,” the *stature* to which the body aspires, is that of the true, new, mature man, Christ.<sup>33</sup> As each member *grows* and helps each other grow the whole body grows into the *head*, Christ, who himself provides the growth (4:12–16).

Paul then starts adding flesh to his skeleton sketch. He characterizes the old

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<sup>31</sup> Hoehner notes that each appearance of “walk” in Ephesians 4–6 signals the start of a new major section. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 500.

<sup>32</sup> Most modern translations believe 4:12–13 conveys one function of church leaders with two purposes or results. Church leaders equip the saints in order that the saints would do the work of ministry and build up the church. However, some believe these three functions are parallel. In other words, church leaders equip the saints, do the work of ministry, and build up the body. On this view, church leaders do not simply equip the saints; they also uniquely build up the body through the ministry of the word (described in 4:13–14). However, advocates of this view still hold that each member contributes to the building up of the body (described in 4:15–16). Therefore, either view could still hold to my thesis. For an example of this second view, see Baugh, *Ephesians*, 336–47.

<sup>33</sup> Merkle observes that this term (ἄνδρα) is both “gender and age specific.” Merkle, *United to Christ, Walking in the Spirit*, 108.



man as *walking* with a futile *mind* and a hard *heart*, a conscience rubbed so numb it is *calloused*, eager to *practice* evil works (4:17–19). Believers have already put this old life behind them; they are no longer “alienated from the life of God” (4:18). In Christ, each has now been taught a new way (4:20–21). Each believer must continually *put off* the same old man (ἄνθρωπος) who has already been put off, *renew* the same mind which is already renewed, and *put on* the new, perfect, image-bearing man (ἄνθρωπος) who has already been created (4:22–24).<sup>34</sup>

The rest of the letter pictures how new men will walk in their interpersonal relationships (4:25–5:21), various roles (5:22–6:9), and when facing inevitable spiritual warfare (6:10–20). In daily life among other “members” (4:25), Christians will have ample opportunity to put off (or “*put away*”) the old man, renew their minds, and put on the new man. The new man will put off lying and put on truth-telling; put off sinful anger and put on swift conflict resolution; put off stealing and put on honest, profitable, generous work; put off words that tear down and put on words that build up (4:25–30). In other words, they will put off ungodly actions and attitudes that divide and pollute the body. Instead, they will favor uniting actions: kind, loving gestures and active forgiveness modeled after Christ’s (4:31–32).

In summary, to put on the new man is to *imitate* God, since the true new man Christians imitate is himself God embodied (5:1).<sup>35</sup> Christians are united to Christ, but to be united to Christ means Christians will *walk* in his example (5:2). Therefore, a so-called new man who indulges evil appetites proves himself to still be old. Instead, his newness

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<sup>34</sup> Not all agree with this interpretation of 4:22–24. However, I will wait to address this passage more fully in chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup> Thielman believes that 5:1–2 summarizes 4:25–32. Therefore, 5:1–2 belongs at the end of the preceding thought rather than the beginning of a new thought. He does so because he observes a link between 4:24, which states without technical vocabulary that new men are created in God’s likeness (τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα), and 5:1, which calls new men to be imitators of God (μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ). If so, Paul means to unpack and reinforce through 4:25–5:2 what was only implicit in 4:24, that Christians are, in a sense, re-created in the image of God. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 320.

should be evident and active. A new man does not simply put off filthy speech. He must also use his lips to thank God (5:3–6). He cannot content himself with simply abstaining from dark deeds. Instead, he must *walk* in the light and work to expose dark deeds (5:7–14). Even the time management of a new man will be different. The new man will walk wisely on this earth, recognizing that time is short, the days are evil, and life has a purpose bigger than pleasing oneself. Therefore, the new man will not spend his time getting drunk. Instead, he will use his time to bless God and others. As he obeys, he will find that God will continually fill him with the Holy Spirit (5:15–21).<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, those who find themselves in specific roles should put off and on certain actions as if a new man truly occupied those roles. Whether in marriage, home, or industry, new men should serve others in their role for the sake of love and unity (5:22–6:9).<sup>37</sup> Paul finds marriage a particularly fitting home for his controlling metaphor.<sup>38</sup> Like Christ, the husband both unites with his bride and becomes her *head* (5:23–24). Based on this and previous verses, Hoehner contends, “The head in this context has the idea of ‘ruler’ or ‘authority over.’”<sup>39</sup> In practice, this looks like the husband loving, sacrificing

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, “What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit? A Biblical Investigation,” *JETS* 40, no. 2 (1997): 229–40.

<sup>37</sup> Many debate whether 5:21 belongs primarily with 5:15–20 or with 5:22–6:9. In other words, does Paul aim for “mutual submission” among believers as they obey his commands? Or does he desire that all human relationships, even ones traditionally associated with hierarchy, now reflect “mutual submission?” Alternatively, in either case, does he simply mean to call believers to willingly submit to one another when they find themselves in roles requiring appropriate submission? At a minimum, Baugh believes that 5:21 acts as a transitional phrase linking the two sections. In this case, the participle “submitting” (ὑποτασσόμενοι) represents one component of Paul’s command to “be filled with the Spirit” (πληροῦσθε); 5:22–6:1 then describes how this concept works within specific roles. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 442. Hoehner views this verse through an even wider lens, seeing 5:15–6:9 as a unit devoted to walking wisely. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 720. It seems then that the placement of 5:21 is relatively insignificant for theological purposes. No matter which direction 5:21 leans, the verse bridges the gap between two thoughts and impacts both. The more pressing question seems to be whether Paul intends to communicate that Christians should operate in their roles among one another without authority relations. For a summary of the debate, see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 355–57.

<sup>38</sup> Some believe that our bodies themselves point to the gospel. Human bodies cry out for a complementary other, something fulfilled in marriage and ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Pope John Paul II refers to this as the “spousal” meaning of the body. See a distillation of Pope John Paul II’s teachings in Christopher West, *Our Bodies Tell God’s Story: Discovering the Divine Plan for Love, Sex, and Gender* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 14.

<sup>39</sup> Support for this interpretation includes: 1) wives should submit to their husbands, but Paul

for, nourishing, cherishing, and sanctifying his wife both because he represents Christ and because he is one flesh with her (5:23, 25–31, 33). Likewise, the wife submits to and respects her husband because he, like Christ, is her head, though they are one (5:22–24, 33). Marriage illustrates and perhaps points toward this “mystery”: Christ and the church, different bodies united in the head (3:6; 5:32).<sup>40</sup>

Finally, Paul recognizes that each new man will face opposition from spiritual powers. God has granted the new man tools to fight victoriously, though final victory awaits Christ’s return (6:10–20). Since the enemy is not “flesh and blood” (6:12), God must likewise grant spiritual tools. Yet these tools are spiritual not primarily in that they are immaterial but more so in that they are from the Spirit (6:17, 18). Paul likens these tools to battle gear, each piece at the disposal of the new man; yet he or she must intentionally “put on” each piece (6:11, 14, 15). Action words abound in this passage: in this battle believers *put on* (x3), *stand* (x3), *wrestle*, *take up*, *withstand*, *fasten*, *take* (x2), *extinguish*, and *keep alert*. Even in spiritual battles, Paul cannot imagine doing battle without the use of bodily imagery. Life, even spiritual life, is lived in and through the body.

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does not command the reverse (5:22, 24); 2) wives submit to their “head” (κεφαλή), their husband, in the same way that the church submits to Christ (5:23); 3) previously, Paul referred to Christ as the “head” in a context explicitly linked to authority (see note above on 1:20–23); 4) Christ is the “Savior,” which means he does something the church cannot; 5) Christians are members of Christ’s body, yet this is not equally the case the other way around (5:23, 30). This truth grounds why husbands should love their wives “as their own bodies” (5:28); and 6) the husband “shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh,” not the other way around (5:31). The husband, like Christ, is considered the initiator of the one-flesh relationship. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 744. Alternatively, some understand husband-wife relationships to contain no hierarchy. This view, however, would hurt Paul’s overall body metaphor. Within marriage, Paul stresses the hierarchy of roles within an equal, one-flesh union to point to the same reality in the Christ-church relationship. There must be hierarchy in the Christ-church relationship if the church is to grow “up” into him.

<sup>40</sup> For more on why the “mystery” refers here to Christ and the church rather than to marriage, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, ‘One Flesh,’” *TJ* 12, no. 1 (1991): 79–94.

## **Five Theological Conclusions Regarding the “New Man” Theme in Ephesians**

Viewed through the lens of the “new man,” we may summarize the letter to the Ephesians as follows: God’s Plan for Whole People Being and Becoming a Whole People and a Whole Person. Ephesians advances this imagery in several steps. First, *God planned to create a new man*. Before time began, God eternally planned to unite all things in Christ (Eph 1:3–14; 3:1–13). God’s means of advancing his plan is the church, the “one new man” (2:15). Through the church, God enacts his plan of cosmic reconciliation in the world (1:10; 3:10–11). Additionally, God showers his blessings on this new man and those individuals whom he chooses to reconcile into this one new man (1:3–19; 3:14–21).

Second, *God considers this new man holistically, both corporately and individually*. This new man is “one . . . in place of the two” (2:15). Corporately, God sees no distinction between Jew and Gentile (2:11–22; 3:6). All are part of the one new man (4:4). Yet the new man consists of parts, none of which lose their individuality when they become incorporated into the body (4:7–16). Each individual is also a “new man” (4:24), a holistic entity holistically renewed. Without Christ, every person is wholly dead even while living (2:1–3). Likewise, Christians are made wholly alive; their whole old selves having been cast off and renewed (2:4–7).

Third, *the new man is new by virtue of being in Christ, the true new man*. In a sense, talking about the “new man” is simply another way of talking about Christ. Son observes: “The new man denotes primarily Christ and the mode of existence in Christ.”<sup>41</sup> Christ’s resurrected body is the “firstfruits” of all others who will be made new at the resurrection (Eph 2:6–7; see also 1 Cor 15:20–23). In the meantime, individuals become truly, though not fully new when they are placed “in” him (Eph 2:4–5; see also Rom 6:4–5). Collectively, this corporate new man is the very body of Christ (Eph 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,

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<sup>41</sup> Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 29.

12; 5:23, 30). Yet in what sense is the church the “body” of Christ? On one hand, Christ maintains ontological distinction from both the corporate and individual new man. Christ is himself an embodied man. Additionally, though the church is his body, he is still the head of the body and the one who fills the body (1:22–23; 4:15–16). Therefore, Christ remains a unique new man even while connected to and providing the blueprint for every other new man. Yet on the other hand, as pictured in marriage, Christ and the church become one (5:22–33): “The corporate solidarity that the believer forms together with Christ involves the whole individual person, not just his soul or spirit, and is as real as the one flesh solidarity created between two individuals in the sexual union.”<sup>42</sup>

Fourth, *the new man evidences his newness through his actions*. Ephesians expects that the new man will not only be new but also act new (4:1–3; 4:23–24; 5:1–2, 8–10). Conversely, those who act old should wonder if they are indeed old (4:17–22; 5:3–8). While true, this expectation comes with two caveats: (1) God makes someone positionally new when he definitively places that person into Christ, an act which he or she appropriates by faith (2:8–9). Actions are the fruit rather than the basis of each man becoming new; and (2) the locus of change in each person is the inner man (3:16–19). The outer man does not share the inner man’s hope for continued revitalization in this life. Additionally, any outward action originates inside (Luke 6:45). In other words, though each new man is wholly new, newness radiates from the inward out. Yet without the outer man, the inner man would remain hidden. The outer man acts as a thermometer, exposing the inner man as he walks. Simply stated, new men put on good deeds; old men keep walking in the flesh (4:25–5:21).

Yet the new man cannot remain passive, expecting that his newness will simply seep outward. The numerous, specific commands found throughout the final three chapters of Ephesians verify this conclusion. He must actively pursue good deeds and

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<sup>42</sup> Son, “The Church as ‘One New Man,’” 30.

reject bad deeds. In doing so, he not only confirms that he is new but also continually becomes more so. This is what has typically been described as “progressive sanctification”: the process by which each new man transforms more and more into the image of the true new man, Christ. Ephesians illustrates this process as each individual striving for “mature manhood,” aiming for “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” and growing up into the head, all of which help the church do the same (4:12–16). Therefore, the commands in Ephesians 4–6 are the means by which Christians can and should accomplish 4:12–16.

It is at this point that we must consider the anthropological implications of the “new man” theme in Ephesians. Ephesians pictures believers and the church primarily in terms of bodies. These bodies walk, live, speak, work, build, joke, sing, and get drunk. Paul chooses this metaphor quite naturally because the Christian life is lived bodily. Each Christian and Christ himself presents as a body and obeys as a body without being reducible to a body. Thus, it does not seem odd that the church, as a holistic conglomeration of bodies, is also called a “body.”

Therefore, when Paul uses bodily imagery to describe how Christians are to act, we should not assume he does so only metaphorically. When Paul calls on believers to “walk,” he does so fittingly since bodies walk. This is not to say that a Christian needs to literally “walk” to obey Paul’s command. Instead, a Christian “walks” when he or she does the good “works” that God prepared beforehand (2:10). When Paul references these various “works” throughout Ephesians 4–6, we should note how closely he ties them to bodily action. Indeed, it seems virtually impossible to imagine obeying any of these commands without some kind of bodily participation. Though the inner man is the locus of change, he cannot change apart from the active participation of the outer man.

Therefore, if the new man must actively participate in walking as a new man, if walking as a new man progressively sanctifies the new man, and if walking requires bodily participation, then *the new man progressively transforms into the image of Christ*

*through bodily action*. At first glance, this conclusion may raise eyebrows. After all, is not progressive sanctification primarily a spiritual activity affecting the inner man? Would not this conclusion imply that rote liturgy alone could progressively sanctify a person?

Yet each of these questions misses the point of the conclusion. The persistent body imagery in Ephesians fits well with the holistic dualism for which I have thus far advocated. Since humans are holistic creatures, the material and immaterial being inseparably intertwined, then the whole person must necessarily be involved in the process of becoming more like Jesus. Additionally, this conclusion does not imply that bodily action *alone* progressively transforms Christians, but rather that the inner man does not transform without the active participation of the outer man. To further prove this conclusion and to consider its implications I will devote the next chapter to a more thorough treatment of Ephesians 4:22–24. These verses serve as a key text for understanding embodied sanctification, essentially summarizing and vividly illustrating how exactly the new man must walk.

## CHAPTER 4

### WALKING AS A NEW MAN IN EPHESIANS 4:22–24

Thus far, I have presented Ephesians 4:22–24 as a summary of progressive sanctification. On this view, each of the three verses contains an imperative describing the necessary steps in becoming more like Christ.<sup>1</sup> In other words, since Christians are new men, they should walk as new men (Eph 4:1), not as old men (4:17). Therefore, each must continue to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of his or her mind, and put on the new man.

This interpretation, however, is not a settled matter. Each of these three verses begins not with an imperative but with an infinitival phrase. This requires a translation decision. Most English translations represent these infinitives as imperatives either directly (NLT, NASB 95, KJV) or implicitly (ESV, CSB, NIV, NET, LSB). This is also the position of many commentators. However, notable voices believe that these imperatives would be better translated as indicatives. In this case, Ephesians 4:22–24 is a call not to pursue progressive sanctification but rather to remember the justification each new man has already received.

Daniel Wallace shows how both sides build their case on exegetical grounds.<sup>2</sup> He identifies these infinitives as denoting indirect discourse.<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:21 introduces

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<sup>1</sup> Best reminds us that this sequence is logical, not necessarily temporal. I add that Paul means us to understand these steps as sequential, yet we need not assert that they must follow in this order in every instance. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 434.

<sup>2</sup> The following two paragraphs summarize and reference Daniel Wallace's analysis in: Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 605.

<sup>3</sup> Also Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, EGGNT (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 142. Others label the infinitives as "epexegetical." See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 286; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 283;



the controlling verb “you were taught” (ἐδιδάχθητε). Ephesians 4:22–24 then describes the content (i.e., direct discourse) of what the Ephesians had been previously taught, introducing each with an infinitive (ἀποθέσθαι, ἀνανεοῦσθαι, ἐνδύσασθαι). The Ephesians had been taught either that they were to keep putting off the old man, renewing their minds, and putting on the new man (imperative) or that they had already done each of these when they became believers (indicative).<sup>4</sup> In the former case, Paul calls the Ephesians to pursue actions in line with their new identity. In the latter, Paul reminds them of their new identity to motivate them not to turn back.

We may follow three interconnected avenues to seek a solution.

Grammatically, Wallace admits that a solution is not easily forthcoming. He recognizes that, while the aorist infinitive occurs in indirect discourse in the New Testament over 150 times, in none of these instances does it represent an indicative in direct discourse.<sup>5</sup> However, he cautions that in each of these instances, the controlling verb carries imperatival force, which cannot be said of ἐδιδάχθητε. Therefore, Wallace leaves the matter open grammatically.<sup>6</sup>

Theologically, both sides admit that Paul describes justification and sanctification in Ephesians 4–6. They simply disagree as to which category Ephesians

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Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 430–31. However, Baugh believes this term is misleading: “An exegetic infinitive either stands in apposition to or explains the purpose, destination, or meaning of a pronoun (i.e., τοῦτο, touto; as in 3:8), noun, adjective or adverb . . . . The infinitives in Eph 4:22–24 are content (or obj.) clauses in indirect discourse, which are to be expected when one specifies through paraphrase what is said, thought, supposed, or, in this case, taught.” S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 379.

<sup>4</sup> Hoehner seems to argue that the fact that Paul references what the Ephesians were previously taught requires that the content of that teaching be in the indicative. However, I am unclear why the Ephesians could not have been taught a command. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 601.

<sup>5</sup> Further, the aorist tense need not denote past action. Arnold believes it would be “wrong to overinterpret the aorist tense of these two infinitives,” using this as the primary datapoint to argue that Paul refers to conversion. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 287. Rather, it may “portray the action as a whole” or even simply reflect the limited lexical range of the verb. Merkle, *Ephesians*, 142.

<sup>6</sup> He does, however, seem to lean toward translating these infinitives as indicatives. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 605.

4:22–24 describes. The justification group agrees that a Christian puts on Christ (Gal 3:27; 1 Thess 5:8) yet must work to become more like him. They simply believe that Paul begins his exhortations to do the latter in 4:25. Hoehner, for instance, does not believe that a believer can be characterized by corruption, which could be implied if we admit the continued presence of the old man (4:22).<sup>7</sup> Baugh believes the imperatives in 4:22 and 24 are “impossible,” though the Christian can put off/on old/new traits and actions.<sup>8</sup> However, Scripture elsewhere has a place for continually putting on Christ (Rom 13:14). Additionally, the parallel passage in Colossians (3:5–17) regularly shifts between the indicative and imperative, though Thielman notes that “the overall purpose is imperatival.”<sup>9</sup>

Contextually, both sides claim support from the surrounding text. However, the sanctification group better tracks the flow of Ephesians. The justification group primarily emphasizes the evident shift to specific commands beginning in 4:25. Since the commands logically proceed from 4:22–24, they argue that 4:22–24 must be factual: “Exhortations flow as conclusions from facts, not from other exhortations.”<sup>10</sup> Conversely, they argue that 4:22–24 becomes “redundant” if it too consists of exhortations.<sup>11</sup>

Yet it seems equally redundant that Paul would reassert the same truths he spent the first three chapters extolling. Instead, the structure of the letter signals that Paul has shifted primarily to exhortation. All recognize that Ephesians 4–6 marks a decided shift toward exhortation, though admittedly not exclusively so.<sup>12</sup> As noted in my biblical

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<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 601–2.

<sup>8</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 371.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 303.

<sup>10</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 269.

<sup>11</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 601.

<sup>12</sup> Notably, Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum argue that the structure of 4:1–6:20 mirrors that of Exodus 19:1–23:33. Each includes an introductory address to the community (Exod 19; Eph 4:1–16), a giving of the community’s core tenants (Exod 20; Eph 4:17–5:14), and case law applying those tenants to

theology, 4:1 reintroduces “walking” as the dominant metaphor in the back half of the letter. Having already described who the Ephesians are, he now relays what they must do, including the manner (4:2), purpose (4:3–6), instruments (4:7–11), and goal (4:12–16). While he seemingly backtracks in 4:17–19, he speaks of their former lives not in terms of who they are but rather of what they must no longer do (“walk”). In contrast, they must walk according to how they were taught (4:20–24).

The commands in 4:22–24 then have a unique purpose if we take them as general, summarizing exhortations out of which flow specifics. At four points, Paul mirrors the language of 4:22–24 to detail the continual, sanctifying actions a believer must undertake. The first, 4:25, explicitly follows from the preceding admonitions through Paul’s use of “therefore” (διό). The Ephesians obey 4:22–24 by putting off (ἀποθέμενοι, cf. 4:22) falsehood and speaking truth with neighbors. Some English translations do represent ἀποθέμενοι as denoting God’s past, justifying action (e.g., ESV).<sup>13</sup> Yet even if this is a good translation, the second half of the verse presents the opposite as a continual action that must be, in a sense, put on. This pattern of putting off and putting on continues through 4:32, strongly suggesting that 4:25 instead has an imperatival thrust.<sup>14</sup>

The second and third points of mirrored language capture the sense, if not the same words previously used. Evil actions toward others must be “put away from you” (ἀρθήτω) and replaced with kindness (4:31–32). Additionally, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to “be imitators of God” (5:1), which reminds readers of his description of the new man

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specific circumstances (Exod 21–23; Eph 5:15–6:20). In Ephesians, the middle of this middle unit (4:25–5:5) gives specific instructions while 4:17–24 and 5:6–14 frame this middle with a more general, essentially synonymous message. If this is true, then the entirety of 4:17–24, like 5:6–14, speaks primarily to the ongoing expectations of community members rather than to any one-time occurrence in the past. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 567–69.

<sup>13</sup> See also Baugh, *Ephesians*, 389–90; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 615.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 299; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 311.

“created after the likeness of God” (4:24). His use of another logical connector (οὖν) implies that one imitates God and thus puts on the new man by performing the commands in 4:25–32.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to “put on” (ἐνδύσασθε) God’s armor (6:11), echoing the same word and tense as 4:24. He continues to unpack what this entails, using a combination of imperatives and imperatival participles to describe the various pieces a Christian must continually put on (Eph 6:14–18).<sup>16</sup> Merkle notes that each piece of the armor of God echoes Old Testament language describing Yahweh’s armor.<sup>17</sup> Because Christians are now in Christ, they too can appropriate Yahweh’s armor when they put on Christ. Therefore, we see a “significant correspondence between 4:24 and 6:10–17.”<sup>18</sup>

In summary, though grammar and theology allow that the infinitives in Ephesians 4:22–24 could function as either imperatives or infinitives, the contextual evidence strongly suggests that they function as imperatives. Therefore, these verses summarize the core tenets of the Christian responsibility to continually put on Christ (e.g., progressive sanctification). Out of these tenets flow numerous, specific, action-oriented commands fitting to the metaphor of putting off and putting on. I now address Ephesians 4:22–24 in detail.

### **Ephesians 4:22—Putting Off: Fighting Sin as a New Man**

Paul opens his summary of what the Ephesians had been previously taught with the first of three imperatival infinitives. Since they “no longer walk as the Gentiles

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<sup>15</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 321.

<sup>16</sup> “In Eph 6:14–18 there are six participles, which I mentioned in comments on vv. 14 and 18 are functioning in parallel with the imperatives in the passage.” Baugh, *Ephesians*, 563.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, *United to Christ, Walking in the Spirit: A Theology of Ephesians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444. See also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 418.

do” (4:17), they must continually put off (*ἀποθέσθαι*) the old man (*τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον*).<sup>19</sup> Yet who is this old man?

Two phrases modify and define this old man. He first “belongs to your former way of life” (*κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν*). This phrase helps clarify what Paul means by the “old” (*παλαιὸν*) man. “Old” is a reference to time signifying that this man belongs in the past.<sup>20</sup> Paul then reasserts that this person is temporally prior to each Ephesian Christian since this man belongs to their “former” (*προτέραν*) manner of life. Paul previously mentioned this way of life when describing the Gentiles (4:17–19). In many ways, the first man Adam typifies this old man. When a Christian acts in a way more reminiscent of the Gentiles, he acts as though he or she is still united with Adam even though he no longer is (Rom 5:12).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the “old man” is the person who is not yet united with Christ.

The second phrase modifying the old man describes what he is like. The old man is “corrupt through deceitful desires” (*τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης*). The fact that he is corrupt implies that he is meant to embody an ideal but does not.<sup>22</sup> This again points backward to Adam, whom God created in his image yet who became corrupted (Gen 1:26–27; 3:14–19). This also points forward to Christ, who restored that image and in whom each Christian also becomes restored (1 Cor 15:42–49; Eph 4:24).

This old man becomes corrupt “through deceitful desires.” Merkle identifies these deceitful desires as either the “standard” or the “ground/basis” (*κατὰ*) of the old

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<sup>19</sup> Though *ἀποθέσθαι* is in the middle/passive voice, it should be taken as a middle since it has a direct object, *τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον*.

<sup>20</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 610.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 287.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold believes we should view the present participle as “either customary or gnomic,” conveying the present, ongoing status of the corruption. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 288.

man's corruption.<sup>23</sup> In either case, they describe what constitutes each old man's corruption. Scripture locates these desires (*ἐπιθυμίας*) in the "heart" (*καρδία*) (Matt 5:28). Jeremy Pierre defines the heart as the "dynamic," multi-faceted nature of the inner man which includes cognition, volition, and affection (i.e., desires).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the heart is synonymous with the soul in the sense that both describe aspects, though not separable parts, of the inner man. However, the heart differs from the soul in that Scripture specifically uses the term "heart" as a stand-in for the inner core of human personality. This is why Gentry argues that the difference between humans and any other creature is not the presence of a soul, but rather of a heart.<sup>25</sup>

The whole old man, then, has become corrupt because his heart has become corrupt. The heart has become corrupt not because it desires but because it desires wrongly. Though Scripture can use *ἐπιθυμίας* with positive connotations, often Scripture uses this term to identify negative desires (Eph 2:3).<sup>26</sup> Important for clarifying the kind of desire intended in 4:22 is the adjective "deceitful." Paul here places deceitful desires at the core of human corruption, and the level to which each person embraces their deceitful desires is the level to which the image in each person becomes skewed.

When a person desires something disproportionately or inappropriately, they do so because they have believed lies. Eve did this when she allowed herself to doubt God by giving in to deceit. In doing so her desires were turned away from God's intent (Gen 3:6). Each human now, apart from God's intervention, continues to "suppress the truth" of what God has made "plain" (Rom 1:18–20). Each now has a foolish mind and a

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<sup>23</sup> Merkle, *Ephesians*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> See Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), esp. 11–28.

<sup>25</sup> Peter J. Gentry, "Sexuality: On Being Human and Promoting Social Justice," *Eikon* 2, no. 2 (2020): 110–27.

<sup>26</sup> BDAG, 372.

darkened heart, on account of which God has given them over to evil “passions” leading to actions fitting for the old man (Rom 1:21–32).<sup>27</sup> Paul uses two different words here for “passions” (πάθη, ὀρέξει), both of which are closely related to the ἐπιθυμίας of Ephesians 4:22. Additionally, Paul describes the truth-suppressing men and women of Romans 1 nearly identically to the Gentile in Ephesians 4:17–19. Therefore, when a person gives in to their deceitful desires and engages in immoral actions, he or she acts like the person he or she was before Christ.

In Ephesians 4:22, Paul challenges this dissonance. Since the Christian is no longer an old man, he not only should have a different manner of life but also changed desires. When Paul tells the Ephesians to “put off” (ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς) the old man, he means for them to holistically shirk their old lives.<sup>28</sup> Yet two questions arise from Paul’s command. First, what is this image meant to evoke? Second, how do we obey?

The most convincing background for the put off/on metaphor is that of putting off and on clothing.<sup>29</sup> Just as a person sheds dirty clothing and puts on new, clean clothes, so the Christian has shed the clothes of their old self and has put on Christ “like a large overcoat or royal robes, so that we now share his identity and status and inheritance as

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<sup>27</sup> Since deceit is in the genitive (τῆς ἀπάτης), a small debate exists regarding the relation of deceit to the desires. Arnold believes that this is a “genitive of source,” meaning that the evil desires stem from deceit. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 288. Hoehner agrees, believing that this mirrors the “righteousness and holiness” stemming from truth in Ephesians 4:24. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 606. Alternatively, Merkle wonders if the desires themselves may be deceiving. Merkle, *Ephesians*, 143. I do not believe we need to decide between the two. Genesis 3 and Romans 1 both teach that we desire wrongly because we are deceived, but also that we become deceived because we desire wrongly.

<sup>28</sup> Regarding the ὑμᾶς, Hoehner observes that it is “given for the sake of clarity. If it were not there the reader might think the infinitive depends on the immediately preceding comparative clause, which might be read ‘just as there is truth in Jesus, put off the old person.’” Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 604.

<sup>29</sup> Alternatively, some see baptism as the background for this metaphor. Baptism candidates in the early church would remove all their garments to descend into the water and would dress themselves again after re-emerging. However, Arnold believes “there is no evidence of this practice in the first century.” Arnold, *Ephesians*, 287. Additionally, Thielman points out that the connection fails in two ways. First, the baptism candidates put back on their same clothes. Second, they probably disrobed not to draw attention to the clothing but to allow the waters of baptism unimpeded contact with the whole body. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 303.

God's Son."<sup>30</sup> We continue to do so when we shun the desires and actions that make us resemble the old man and instead clothe ourselves with the desires and actions that resemble the new. The Old Testament regularly pictures performing righteous deeds as akin to putting on clothing (Job 29:14; Ps 132:9; 2 Chron 6:41).<sup>31</sup> The New Testament does the same, notably in its depiction of spiritual warfare as putting on "the whole armor of God" (Eph 6:10–20).<sup>32</sup>

Of course, Paul does not intend us to over-exegete this metaphor. That we must continue putting off/on these clothes does not imply that our "royal robes" become stained and must truly be put on again. Rather, the metaphor reflects that our actions and desires do not always look as if they stem from someone wearing royal robes. In that way, we must continue to put off the same clothes that have been permanently removed and put on those that God has draped on us and will never remove.

Yet the question remains: what means do we employ to continually put off the old man? In other words, how do we obey Ephesians 4:22? Beginning in 4:25, Paul provides explicit examples of the kinds of desires and actions that new men must throw aside. The new man must cease lying (4:25), restrain anger and seek forgiveness when he does not (4:26–27), quit stealing (4:28), end corrupting speech (4:29), avoid grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30), and quell bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice (4:31). He must not create any opportunity for sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, or

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<sup>30</sup> John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 111.

<sup>31</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 284.

<sup>32</sup> A recent, innovative suggestion places the put on/off metaphor in the realm of the theater. David Starling argues that Scripture cannot be the only background for this metaphor because Scripture speaks of being clothed in virtues, not in people. Therefore, he contends that Paul intends his metaphor to evoke Greco-Roman characters putting on/off masks as they embody different characters. David Starling, "Putting on the New Self: Costume and Character in Eph 4:22–24," *NovT* 61 (2019): 289–307. On the one hand, Ephesians equates living according to the Spirit or the flesh with embodying Christ or Adam. However, I am reluctant to embrace Starling's argument due to the lack of obvious theater imagery elsewhere in Ephesians, the subtle origin of the metaphor which Paul would have expected his readers not only to identify but also to draw implications from, and the vast Scriptural resources Paul could draw from in creating this image.



unclean speech (5:3–5). Additionally, he must avoid other old men, not allowing them to enflame deceitful desires (5:6–7) and compel dark deeds (5:8–12). Instead, the new man must avoid walking unwisely and foolishly, which includes abstaining from drunkenness (5:18). Finally, Paul targets fathers with the admonition that they do not provoke their children (6:4).

Evidently, Paul intends to communicate that the means by which believers put off the old man and thus grow in Christ is through actions such as those beginning in 4:25. These are truly actions because even negation of action requires the participation of the whole self. If I choose to put away falsehood, I must use my brain to make that decision and expend the energy to keep my mouth shut rather than open. When I am angry and my body is enflamed, I must again choose with my brain to not act on my anger and send signals to the rest of my body to do the same. The inner man is certainly responsible for the intangible elements of these actions such as conviction and self-control, supposing it is possible that we might conceive of an inner man wholly separate from an outer man. Yet, at a minimum, this inner man can only *express* conviction and *practice* self-control and thus obey the command to put off through the means of the body. Changing my intention so that I no longer desire to lie is certainly necessary. However, I must also not lie. Admittedly, mere negation of action seemingly involves less of the body than positive action. Yet putting off comes as a part of a process that culminates in positive action: putting on. However, before turning to that third step, we must address the second. Here we find a command aimed perhaps primarily at the inner man, yet which equally involves the whole self.

### **Ephesians 4:23—Renewing Your Mind: Strengthening the Inner Man Through the Outer Man**

The second of Paul's three commands seems, at least initially, the least corporeal. On the surface, one might read this as a command exclusively tailored to the inner man, the explicitly immaterial step of progressive sanctification. However, while

Ephesians 4:23 does indeed give credence to the concept of an “inner man,” again we find this inner man situated within a holistic, embodied person.

In Ephesians 4:23, Paul issues a second command: “Be renewed” (*ἀνανεοῦσθαι*) “in the spirit of your minds” (*τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν*). The grammar of this command differs from the other two in two ways. Yet neither divergence seems to set this command apart from the others in any substantial way. First, like the commands in 4:22 and 4:24, *ἀνανεοῦσθαι* is also in the middle/passive voice. Yet unlike the commands in 4:22 and 4:24, this command must be passive. This does not, however, imply that the new man passively receives the renewal. Rather, the imperatival force of the infinitive signifies that the new man actively participates in allowing the renewal.<sup>33</sup>

Second, unlike the others, *ἀνανεοῦσθαι* is in the present tense. Some believe this, perhaps more clearly than the other commands, suggests the continual renewal of the mind through the process of progressive sanctification.<sup>34</sup> However, others caution over-interpretation. Merkle, for instance, believes the verb simply tends to take the present tense.<sup>35</sup> To Merkle’s point, one side-effect of affording the present tense too much latitude is the tendency to contrast 4:23 with the other two commands as if the nature of 4:23 is somehow more enduring than the others.<sup>36</sup> Yet if 4:22 and 4:24 are indeed functioning imperatively and refer to progressive sanctification, then the new man must expect that he

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<sup>33</sup> Since *ἀνανεοῦσθαι* lacks a direct object, the implied direct object is oneself. Since *ἀνανεοῦσθαι* is not in the active voice (“renew your mind”), it must be passive or perhaps the reflexive middle. See also Merkle, *Ephesians*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 287; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 607; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 305. Even Baugh, who ultimately believes this refers to the one-time regeneration of the human mind, believes that the present tense gives a nod to the continued work of sanctification in the area of the mind (2 Cor 4:16). Baugh, *Ephesians*, 372.

<sup>35</sup> Merkle, *Ephesians*, 143.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, Lance Beauchamp makes tense the key signifier for how each infinitive functions. Because 4:23 is in the present tense, it alone refers to the process of becoming more like Christ, while 4:22 and 4:24 refer to past action. This leads him to locate all sanctification in the continual renewing of one’s mind. Lance T. Beauchamp, “The Old and New Man in Ephesians 4:17-24,” *Faith & Mission* 24, no. 3 (2007): 30–45. This is an unfortunate reduction, since it ignores the many action commands beginning in 4:25 and thus reduces sanctification to mere mental renewal.

or she must also continually “put off” and “put on.” Therefore, though the grammar of ἀνανεοῦσθαι differs in multiple ways from that of ἀποθέσθαι and ἐνδύσασθαι, the thrust of each is the same.

The term ἀνανεοῦσθαι carries the sense of renewal.<sup>37</sup> In this passage, it illustrates what happens when the new man continually puts off the old man and puts on the new. Though he is new, he must continually become re-newed, thus better reflecting the new man than the old. Paul locates this intended renewal “in the spirit of your minds.”

Like the heart, the “mind” (νοῦς) refers to another aspect, though not a separable part, of the inner man.<sup>38</sup> In one sense, this term refers to human mental capacities. Yet it more fully references “the sum total of the whole mental and moral state of being.”<sup>39</sup> When the Ephesians were unbelievers, they walked “in the futility of their minds” (νοῦς) (4:17). This does not mean that they simply lacked the ability to intellectually grasp God’s ways. Rather, their “darkened understanding” and “ignorance” resulted from “hardness of heart” (4:18).<sup>40</sup> Since they desired wrongly down to their inner cores, this affected their ability to comprehend and assent to God’s ways. Yet when God made each a new man, he illuminated their minds so that they would understand what they formerly rejected. Ephesians 4:23, then, refers to that continual renewal of one’s mind that each believer must undertake. Implied in the command is the recognition that a renewed mind might yet still set his mind on things above or below, resulting in either decay or renewal (Col 3:2; see also Rom 12:2).

Thus, we understand this command rather straightforwardly to be a call to seek

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<sup>37</sup> BDAG, 68.

<sup>38</sup> As noted above in the biblical theology above, the contrast between the body (σάρξ) and another word for mind (διάνοια) does not imply a body/soul dualism (Eph 2:3). Rather, it recognizes that we ascribe certain aspects of our holistic personhood to either our outer or inner man.

<sup>39</sup> BDAG, 680.

<sup>40</sup> Though Scripture uses the various terms for “heart” and “mind” to refer to different aspects of the inner self, their meanings overlap. Arnold notes that the LXX uses “mind” to translate the Hebrew “heart” (לֵב) six times. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 289.

holiness in that part of us that thinks, considers, and decides. However, the addition of the phrase “in the spirit of” (τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ) somewhat complicates the picture. At issue is the identity of the “spirit.” If this refers to the human spirit, then the typical translation “be renewed in the spirit of your minds” holds. However, if, as some contend, this refers to the Holy Spirit, then we should instead understand this command to read “be transformed by the Spirit in your minds.”

Those who break from the traditional translation do so for several reasons. For instance, Arnold gives three reasons why we should understand Ephesians 4:23 to reference the Holy Spirit: (1) the Holy Spirit is a major topic in Ephesians; (2) earlier passages in Ephesians reference the Holy Spirit’s work in illuminating (1:17) and strengthening (3:16) the inner man; and (3) the only other example of τῷ πνεύματι in Ephesians refers to the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, 4:23 undoubtedly refers to progressive sanctification in the arena of the mind, a process worked out by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:2). Therefore, Arnold takes the genitive τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν as a “subjective genitive” modifying the verb ἀνανεοῦσθαι rather than the dative τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ.<sup>42</sup> The mind remains the subject of change; the Holy Spirit becomes the agent.

However, while others acknowledge the theological presence of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4:23, they believe the grammar of 4:23 specifically points to the human spirit.<sup>43</sup> The genitive τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν more naturally modifies the dative τῷ πνεύματι. In this case, the genitive clarifies the kind of spirit referenced. It is the spirit “of your mind,” referring perhaps to the location of the spirit (“the spirit which is in the mind”) or the possessor of the spirit (“the mind’s spirit”). Probably, the phrase expresses more generally that the spirit is the one related to the mind (“the spirit with reference to the mind”).

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<sup>41</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 288–89.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 289.

<sup>43</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 372; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 286.

Merkle believes the tight connection between the mind and spirit requires that this be the human spirit.<sup>44</sup>

This same connection leads Lincoln to conclude that the terms “mind” and “spirit” also are synonymous. The spirit is yet another reference to the inner man, characteristic of the letter’s penchant for “pleonastic accumulation of synonyms.”<sup>45</sup> Yet Baugh is probably correct here. He recognizes that Scripture regularly portrays the human spirit as “the link with the Holy Spirit that guides the inner life (Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 2:10–16; cf. 1 Cor 14:14) and connects with the new creation.”<sup>46</sup> Thus the spirit is another aspect of the inner man that, while indivisible from the heart, soul, mind, or strength (Mark 12:30), refers to that which relates to God.<sup>47</sup> In this case, it is our “spiritual” awareness especially as it relates to our cognition. Therefore, to be renewed in the spirit of one’s mind means to set one’s thoughts on that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil 4:8).

New men renew their minds, in part, when they “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5:10), “look carefully how (they) walk” (5:15), and “understand what the will of the Lord is” (5:17). These are all primarily internal actions, especially if we take “look carefully” to mean something like “scrutinize.” Yet even here, we must not assume we can wholly partition off the inner man from the outer. Each time we discern, look carefully, or understand we engage brains to think, utilize eyes and ears to take in the word or the world, gauge emotions that may signify we need to repent, rejoice, or

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<sup>44</sup> Merkle, *Ephesians*, 143; see also Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 436.

<sup>45</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 287; see also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 305–6.

<sup>46</sup> Baugh, *Ephesians*, 373.

<sup>47</sup> A trichotomist would separate soul/mind from spirit. In this case, the spirit becomes its own substance which communes with God and then renews body and soul/mind. This seems to be what Hoehner advocates for when he says: “The spirit is latent in a person until the Holy Spirit quickens it to convert the soul.” Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 608. I do not believe Scripture supports this distinction. Soul/mind and spirit are only separate conceptually, not actually.

distrust, and submit ourselves to others who can provide insight.

Therefore, even those actions typically attributed to the inner man require a body. In one sense, this is the best argument for the necessity of embodied action in progressive sanctification. Yet we gain a fuller picture when we consider the myriad outward, visible actions the new man is expected to “put on” in order to grow in Christ.

### **Ephesians 4:24—Putting On: Living Righteously as a New Man**

Up to this point, the steps in progressive sanctification have been focused on restraint and inward renewal. Though these necessarily include the outer man as well as the inner, the connection between the two is not always obvious. Yet Paul adds a third step which brings the body’s role in progressive sanctification clearly into focus. The new man must not think that he will grow if he simply ceases bad behavior and cultivates good intentions. He must also “put on” positive, tangible actions.

In Ephesians 4:24, the command to “put on the new self” (*ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον*) mirrors the command in 4:22 (*ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς . . . τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον*).<sup>48</sup> Since Christians have discarded the old man like dirty clothes, they must put something back on: the new man.<sup>49</sup> We might alternatively name this old man the “prior man,” since he is associated with their former way of life. Likewise, the new man is new not only in that he is fresh and unspoiled, but also in that he is the “current man” the Ephesians have become. Therefore, in Ephesians 4:24, Paul commands believers to act in such a way that reflects their present nature and not their previous one.

An additional phrase further defines the new man each believer must put on. He has been “created after the likeness of God” (*τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα*). This phrase

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<sup>48</sup> Since Ephesians 4:24 mirrors 4:22, we should likewise expect that *ἐνδύσασθαι* is also an imperatival infinitive taking the middle voice. See the prior section: “Ephesians 4:22: Putting Off: Fighting Sin as a New Man.”

<sup>49</sup> Hoehner observes that variations of the verb *ἐνδύω* almost uniformly refer to putting on clothing throughout the OT, NT, and LXX. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 609–10.

describes the pattern after which the new man was modeled. The term *κτισθέντα* is passive, implying that new men do not become new men by their own doing. Instead, they are “created,” presumably by God, according to the likeness of God. Notably, the Greek text does not include a reference to God’s likeness, leading some translations to leave this as “after God” (KJV) or “according to God” (NKJV). However, most modern English translations supply some variation of the term “likeness” (ESV, LSB, CSB, NIV, NLT), while others opt for “image” (NET).

Our English Bibles do so because they see echoes of creation language in Ephesians 4:24. When God created the first humans, he created them after his own image and likeness (“*κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν*” Gen 1:26 LXX). Debates continue over what exactly constitutes the image and likeness of God in man. Yet at a minimum, that humans are created in God’s image implies a closer connection between God and man than between God and any other part of his creation.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, when someone is created “according to God” (*κατὰ θεόν*) he is created in God’s image and likeness.

Yet even the old man is created in God’s image and likeness. All people maintain the image of God, yet the presence of sin mars the image. To restore the image of God in man, God must re-create. Therefore, English translations also recognize that the context of Ephesians 4:24 requires that it refer not to the creation of man but to his re-creation in the image and likeness of God.

God does this when he places someone “in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17). Marc Cortez identifies that nearly every reference to the image of God in the New Testament is “explicitly christological.”<sup>51</sup> Scripture identifies Jesus as the true image of God, representing God more perfectly than any other human has or ever will (2 Cor 4:4; Col

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<sup>50</sup> Gentry believes “likeness” expresses similarity between God and man and “image” conveys man’s role as representative to the world. Peter J. Gentry, “Humanity as the Divine Image in Genesis 1:26–28,” *Eikon* 2, no. 1 (2020): 66.

<sup>51</sup> Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 99–100.

1:15; Heb 1:3).<sup>52</sup> When God places someone in Christ, that person also participates in Christ's perfect image (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10).<sup>53</sup> Therefore, a believer becomes a "new creation" or a "new man" in the sense that God in Christ restores the image of God in that person. Even then, the new man must continue to put on this new man that he might better reflect God's likeness. Only at the resurrection will the new man's spiritual reality match his lived experience. Each time a believer puts off the old man, he puts off Adam, the image-bearer who failed to bear the image. Each time a believer puts on the new man, he puts on Christ (Rom 13:14). In doing so, he sees his own image restored more and more until glory (1 Cor 15:42–49).

So, this phrase modifying the "new self" (τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα) clarifies that Christ is the pattern after which God re-creates humans in his image and likeness. An additional phrase further clarifies that re-creation. When God creates a new man, he does so "in true righteousness and holiness" (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας). This phrase perhaps refers either to the purpose for which God creates the new man or to the "standard."<sup>54</sup> In either case, the phrase describes notable attributes of the new man.

Likely, the terms "righteousness" and "holiness" should be taken together holistically rather than distinguished too sharply. Arnold has surveyed biblical and extrabiblical sources and concludes: "These two terms appear together commonly to summarize a virtuous life that is obedient to the commands of God (see, e.g., Deut 9:5; Luke 1:75; see also Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.304; 2.12; *Virtues* 1.47)."<sup>55</sup> However, Hoehner speculates that Paul may have intended a distinction, though he admits that the difference

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<sup>52</sup> Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 114.

<sup>53</sup> Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 114.

<sup>54</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 611.

<sup>55</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 290.



between the two “is not great.”<sup>56</sup> Lincoln details the main argument for a distinction. He conveys that some see righteousness as oriented horizontally and holiness vertically. However, since both have “moral and religious connotations,” he also concludes that these are simply a summary.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, some of the defining characteristics of the new man are righteousness and holiness. In other words, God creates the new man to reflect his righteousness and holiness, captured in the concept of the “likeness of God.” All that remains is to identify why Paul clarifies that the new man’s righteousness and holiness are “true” (τῆς ἀληθείας). Best thinks it “easier” to view τῆς ἀληθείας as an attributive genitive describing the kind of righteousness and holiness.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the righteousness and holiness is of the kind that is “true.” But Thielman argues that this usage seems redundant if both terms are also synonymous.<sup>59</sup> Paul would not need to clarify that the righteousness and holiness reflected in the image of God are also true. It seems better to understand “τῆς ἀληθείας” as contrasting “τῆς ἀπάτης” in Ephesians 4:22.<sup>60</sup> When a new man puts on the new man, he chooses to live in light of the truth rather than a lie.

In summary, the new man must continue to put on the new man. He does so by imitating Christ, following God’s righteous and holy ways, and thus becoming more like Christ. Again, Paul provides numerous examples that the new man may follow in order to do so. He must act in this world (i.e., “walk”) with humility, gentleness, patience, and intentional forbearance (Eph 4:1–2). He must actively seek to maintain peace with other

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<sup>56</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 612.

<sup>57</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 288; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 307.

<sup>58</sup> Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 438; see also Merkle, *Ephesians*, 144.

<sup>59</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 307.

<sup>60</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 290; see also Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 613.

believers (4:3), “speaking the truth in love” for the sake of their shared growth (4:15). He must tell the truth (4:25), work hard (4:28), use words that build up (4:29), and actionably display kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness (4:32). Further, he should fill his mouth with thanksgiving (5:4, 20), expose evil deeds (5:11), act wisely in all things (5:15), and sing to others and to the Lord (5:19). Also, the new man should submit to those in authority over him tangibly and obviously. Likewise, those in authority should steward their authority for the sake of the other’s good.

Finally, the new man should “put on the full armor of God” to wrestle against non-physical sources (Eph 6:10–12). In this case, the language is that of “putting on” yet the content perhaps better reflects the middle step of renewing one’s mind. Yet this particular act of putting on is no less physical and certainly positive. To appropriate the “belt of truth,” “breastplate of righteousness,” or the “shield of faith” again requires using a brain to intentionally call to mind spiritual indicatives and a community to help remind you (6:14–16). Additionally, wielding “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” requires using eyes to read or ears to hear to have taken in the word (Eph 6:17). Finally, prayer also should be a whole-body affair that, even if silent, involves one’s brain, emotions, and perhaps posture (6:18).

Paul’s examples of “putting on” vivify the new man. To obey these commands requires hands, feet, mouths, ears, eyes, muscles, and brains. In other words, they require the whole person. When we do these things, we are putting on Christ, who did these same things in and through a body. Notably, Paul directly connects “putting on” with the continued restoration of the image of God. This is progressive sanctification: each believer being conformed more and more into Christ’s image. Thus, putting on is the action most explicitly connected to progressive sanctification in Ephesians 4:22–24, though not at the expense of the other two commands. Therefore, embodied action, and in particular embodied positive action, is God’s primary appointed means by which he transforms us to better reflect his image.

## Clarifications

John Kleinig identifies: “Faith in Christ always issues in bodily acts . . . . The works of faith that we do together with him are his works that he does together with us in our bodies.”<sup>61</sup> Ephesians 4:22–24, read through the lens of holistic dualism and the persistent body metaphor in Ephesians, says this and more. Faith in Christ will necessarily lead to good works done in and through the body. Yet Ephesians 4:22–24 profoundly adds that these acts are the very means by which God brings about growth in Christ.

At this point, I can imagine two concerns my thesis might provoke. Yet I believe each concern results from either misunderstanding or misapplying my thesis and neither necessarily results from embracing my thesis. First, someone might hear me say that bodily action alone produces sanctification. Their concern arises due to recent literature that seeks to retrieve liturgy in the life of the church and Christian education, yet perhaps undervalues the content of that liturgy. For instance, James K. A. Smith has written extensively on the role of liturgy in shaping humans. His thesis is summarized in the phrase, “You are what you love.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, humans are not primarily intellectual; we are not simply “brains-on-a-stick.”<sup>63</sup> Rather, our desires are more core to identity. These desires we cultivate primarily through our habits. He gives the example of a mall, in which the sights, smells, and sounds shape us into the kind of person who wants the kinds of products offered.<sup>64</sup> He calls these “liturgies.”<sup>65</sup> He advocates that Christians view spiritual formation holistically, forming liturgical practices that shape

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<sup>61</sup> Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 86.

<sup>62</sup> James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

<sup>63</sup> Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol. 1 of *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 19–27.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

their desires toward Christlikeness.

In one sense, Smith captures what I believe Ephesians 4:22–24 teaches. We are indeed formed by what we do. However, in his pushback against over-intellectualism, he could be taken to diminish the role of propositional truth in spiritual formation. For instance, Matthew Bingham worries that Smith’s over-focus on liturgy in the life of the church will undervalue the centrality of the word of God as typified in the sermon.<sup>66</sup> This critique is not unfounded. For instance, Smith repeatedly pits doing against knowing (e.g., “Our ultimate love/desire is shaped by practices, not ideas that are merely communicated to us”).<sup>67</sup> Additionally, Smith seems to allow and advocate for habits prior to and divorced from propositional truth:

Before we articulate a worldview, we worship. Before we put into words the lineaments of an ontology or an epistemology, we pray for God’s healing and illumination. Before we theorize the nature of God, we sing his praises. Before we express moral principles, we receive forgiveness. Before we codify the doctrine of Christ’s two natures, we receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist. Before we think, we pray.<sup>68</sup>

If we take Smith at face value, we must conclude that Christianity with limited truth content may still be Christianity. Indeed, liturgies form our affections in various ways. Yet we form *into Christians* not by habit alone but by habit empowered and directed by the word of God. Smith does not propose how we will know whether we are orienting our habits toward ends that are truly Christian apart from knowing, objectively and propositionally, where we should go. Therefore, I appreciate Smith’s concurring recognition of the body’s role in spiritual formation. However, perhaps contra Smith, I affirm that intellectual content must undergird and stimulate each act of putting off, renewing one’s mind, and putting on.

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<sup>66</sup> Matthew C. Bingham, “Brains, Bodies, and the Task of Discipleship: Re-Aligning Anthropology and Ministry,” *Them* 46, no. 1 (2021): 37–54.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 33–34.

If the first concern stems from fear of undervaluing the inner man, the second concern stems from fear of overvaluing the outer man. The second concern might be stated this way: Even if we admit that our outer man shapes our inner man, must we also require that the outer man be engaged at every point of growth? In this case, the questioner might have multiple scenarios in mind. They might rightly note that Ephesians 4:22–24 presents “putting on” as the step most directly associated with bodily action. While they may readily admit that we cannot totally divorce putting off and renewing one’s mind from the body, they might still emphasize that these steps stress inward rather than outward action. To them, my thesis may imply that typical means of grace such as sitting under the preached word, Scripture memory, or silent prayer are insufficient for forming Christians.

In one sense, this is what I am saying. The word is central to our progressive sanctification, yet if knowledge of the word does not lead to positive action, limited growth can occur. However, I offer caveats at two points. First, putting on need not be present at every point of growth. A sermon can be edifying even if it does not result in the hearer taking an outward step to apply it that week. Ephesians 4:22–24 does not present a three-step program each Christian must follow in order. Rather it presents the pattern of growth a Christian will repeatedly follow often, but not always, sequentially. Second, I believe these “inward actions” require active bodily involvement, a point I detail in their respective sections.

Additionally, someone might attempt to push my logic to the limit. What does my thesis imply about those with physical impairments? Are those without the ability to freely act limited in their potential growth? To this, again, I will stress both that inward actions still involve the body and that outward actions need not occur at every point of progressive sanctification. Additionally, it seems consistent with God’s character to accommodate his expectations to the level of each person’s capabilities. The effort required by a person with major disabilities to produce a loving or contrite look may be

equal to or greater than that of great acts of mercy done by the able-bodied (Mark 12:41–44).

### **Applications**

Far from diminishing the role of the inner man or prioritizing the role of the outer man, my thesis instead aims to accurately represent the body’s role in progressive sanctification. This need not be controversial. The rest of Scripture confirms that “faith apart from works is dead” (Jas 2:26). God gives us bodies not to present the members “as instruments for unrighteousness” but rather as “instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:12–14). Indeed, “our physical bodies serve a redemptive purpose.”<sup>69</sup> What Tennent means is that God works grace to ourselves and others through our bodies, and in doing so pictures the gospel. If this is true, then appreciating the role our bodies play in progressive sanctification could produce numerous applications.

### **Worship**

Having previously voiced my disagreement with James K. A. Smith, I do want to commend his central point. We are formed, in part, by what we do. Therefore, in the context of worship, we have an opportunity to direct our bodies, minds engaged, toward practices that will help us embody what we know to be true. This might mean changing our posture to direct our inner man: lifting hands, lowering heads, or kneeling. Additionally, we might consider the liturgies of our churches and how we can more intentionally direct them to form our congregations. Kevin Vanhoozer argues that the key place Christians put on Christ is in the context of corporate worship, culminating in the communal taking of the Lord’s Supper. In corporate worship we act out, in a sense, the eschatological reality of our union with Christ: “Scripture may be the soul of theology,

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<sup>69</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 30.

but doxology is the soul's embodiment."<sup>70</sup>

## Habits

Undoubtedly flowing from the same stream that has fed liturgy's resurgence, other recent authors have begun to tout the necessity of habits in spiritual formation. At one level, habits help us put off and put on by ensuring we do so.<sup>71</sup> However, at a deeper level, others have realized that habits play a key role in shaping desire.<sup>72</sup> If indeed "we do what we do because we want what we want," then we need habits to direct our actions in order that we may obey Ephesians 4:22–24.<sup>73</sup> In turn, these habits shape our wants, leading to more action. This should not be controversial. That Christians throughout the years have embraced certain "spiritual disciplines" proves that Christians have historically recognized the need to shape our desires through repetitive, intentional, outward action. Notably, the disciplines of fasting, simplicity, and living in community give express consent to the reality that my outer man affects my inner.<sup>74</sup>

## Counseling

Counseling, especially biblical counseling, can be susceptible to a kind of

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<sup>70</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Putting on Christ: Spiritual Formation and the Drama of Discipleship," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 8, no. 2 (2015): 170.

<sup>71</sup> Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021); Justin Whitmel Earley, *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Greg E. Gifford, *Heart and Habits: How We Change for Good* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2021).

<sup>73</sup> I attribute this quote to my former professor, Brent Aucoin, at Faith Bible Seminary.

<sup>74</sup> Tennent writes, "While there is considerable variation in the ways Christian movements talk about how we grow and mature in our faith and produce spiritual fruit, the common theme that ties all the means of grace together is that *they all happen in and through the body*. We read Scripture with our eyes, we speak it with our mouths, and we hear it with our ears. We take the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist, into our bodies. We pray in and through our minds and bodies. We obey God's Word and serve others (works of piety) through our bodies. The physical body is the *means* through which God conveys his grace into our lives, the channel through which God works his purposes in us." Tennent, *For the Body*, 30. For recent treatments of spiritual disciplines, see Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014); David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

neognosticism. If we believe Scripture is sufficient for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3), then we should rightly prioritize Scripture as the means by which people become whole. Yet since biblical counseling ultimately targets the inner man, it can unintentionally focus on putting off and renewing one's mind at the expense of putting on. If a man struggling with anxiety needs counsel, he might be taught that anxiety comes as an overflow of his heart, given tactics to control and redirect his anxiety, and assigned Scripture to absorb. While these are necessary, this man may find that while he can diagnose his anxiety and diffuse it, he has not replaced it. Instead, biblical counseling with an appreciation for embodiment can require that this man put on trust to replace his fear in tangible ways. For instance, he can begin doing the work in front of him rather than spending his time immobilized thinking about himself (Matt 6:25–34). In taking this risk, he will surely find that his act of trusting God will lead to a greater desire to trust God.

## **Parenting**

Though many children may not be believers, Christian parents are still responsible to disciple their children. God expects children to obey “in the Lord” regardless of whether they are regenerate (Eph 6:1). Parents are to hold out the truth of the gospel and to form their children's characters in accordance with God's ways, all the while trusting that these are often the very means by which God brings people to faith in Christ (1 Cor 7:14). Therefore, parents should seek to shape children's outward obedience as well as their inward, not because parents are satisfied with merely outward obedience but because this obedience can soften children's hearts to receive the gospel. Further, parents should not be content with simply stopping their child's sinful practices and renewing their minds with Scripture, as important as these steps are. They should also teach their children how to put on replacement actions, possibly the hardest step of all. For instance, a child who steals a toy should be reminded why stealing displeases God and made to give the toy back. Yet she should also be made to model her repentance in



words and deeds, both asking forgiveness and seeking a way to share what she has with her siblings (Eph 4:28).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Progressive sanctification requires embodied action. This is the inevitable conclusion we must draw from Ephesians 4:22–24. Yet this conclusion builds on three premises. First, we should correctly understand human constitution as a “holistic dualism.” Humans are a psycho-somatic unity, the material and immaterial inextricably entwined. Everything done by a person is done by the whole person. Yet due to the presence of death, the inner man can exist actually, though not naturally, disembodied for a time prior to its body’s inevitable resurrection. Therefore, it is proper to speak of a soul if we are referring to the inner aspect of a person or to that which continues after death. However, we do not locate identity in the soul but rather in the whole person.

Second, the book of Ephesians presents the Christian life as embodied through its fitting use of metaphor and its focus on bodily action. By tracing its prominent “new man” theme, we see that Paul means to describe the gospel through the lens of the body. Ephesians presents the church itself as embodied, a living, growing, holistic entity created and held together by Christ. It is not only a body; it is Christ’s very body. This body of Christ consists of individual members, each itself a holistic entity, each also united to Christ. The corporate body and the individual body are “new” in the sense that they are united to the true new man, Christ, who is also embodied. Since the inner man is one with the embodied Christ, Ephesians details the many ways that both inner and outer man will necessarily be actively engaged in actions fitting to Christ.

Third, Ephesians 4:22–24 teaches not simply that the new man will perform actions fitting to Christ, but that he must. The new man is actually new, though his experience will only match this reality in glory. Until then, the new man must put off the

old man who has already been put off, renew his mind which constantly threatens to become darkened, and put on the new man who has already become new. In doing so, he will look more and more like the new man. Ephesians 4:22–24 not only summarizes this process, called progressive sanctification; it requires it. By following these three commands, the new man becomes more like Christ. In following these three commands, he finds the body ever-present. Paul frames the commands themselves in language reminiscent of bodily action (“put off,” “put on”). Additionally, he repeats the same language as he details how he intends the new man to obey. Each of these various examples undeniably requires the body and many place the body at the forefront. In particular, those positive actions associated with “putting on” hold prominence as those helping restore the image of God lost in Adam but found in Christ.

Therefore, the conclusion follows: Progressive sanctification requires embodied action. This conclusion does not imply that bodily action alone produces sanctification, nor that sanctification always accompanies explicit positive action. Yet it does produce three implications. First, we should correct any tendency we may have to diminish our bodies. Instead, we should celebrate God’s gift of bodies and the blessings he bestows through them. Second, we should gain awareness of the ways our bodies are involved even in inward-oriented activities. With this awareness, we can cultivate bodily practices that enrich the experience of the inner man. Third, “new men” should seek opportunities to act positively and bodily. We should continue to prioritize putting off wrong practices and renewing our minds, especially by the word of God. Yet we should let these primarily inward actions propel us outward, putting on the new man and thus being conformed to the image of the true new man.

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## ABSTRACT

### PUT ON THE NEW MAN: EMBODIED SANCTIFICATION IN EPHESIANS 4:22–24

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Academically and popularly, many in the history of the church have tended toward views of human constitution that locate spiritual growth in the realm of the immaterial. In contrast, I argue that progressive sanctification requires embodied action. First, I propose holistic dualism as the biblical model for understanding human constitution. In this model, humans are persons consisting of two aspects, the material and the immaterial. These two aspects unnaturally separate at death, though they properly reunite at the resurrection. Therefore, human life is embodied life. Second, I trace the “new man” theme through the book of Ephesians, showing that the book of Ephesians presents the Christian life as essentially embodied. Finally, I show that Ephesians 4:22–24 requires that Christians exhibit bodily action in order that they may undergo progressive sanctification. I end by clarifying how my thesis may be misunderstood and by presenting possible applications.



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BS, Indiana University, 2010

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