

Corporate Metaphors in Ephesians 2 as Models for Pluralistic Reconciliation: Body, Human, Temple

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Abstract: The theme of unity has been highlighted extensively in Ephesians scholarship. However, this theme is often treated in an overly totalizing way. This often results in notions of plurality and diversity being downplayed or problematized, which ironically can counteract the concerns of Ephesians to promote reconciliation among hostile groups. This article offers a corrective to this tendency by examining possibilities for plurality in the corporate metaphors in Ephesians 2: body, human, and temple. Notions of plurality inherent in the Greek grammatical constructions pertaining to these metaphors are often quickly rejected by interpreters on the assumption of an overarching, totalizing unity that excludes plurality. This article brings some of these plural possibilities into sharper focus and offers alternative translations of key grammatical constructions. The study is offered in the hope that it will provide resources for more pluralistic models of reconciliation in church and society.

Key Terms: Ephesians 2, ethnic tension, humanity, pluralism, post-supersessionism, racial hostility, reconciliation, temple, ἐκκλησία

EPHESIANS OFFERS A GRAND VISION of reconciliation in Christ. While this reconciliation is ultimately cosmic in scope (Eph 1:10), a critical element is reconciliation between different groups of humanity. These concerns are especially prominent in Eph 2:11–22. The passage depicts an entrenched ethnic hostility between Israel and the nations/gentiles (vv.

11–12), then declares that this hostility has been destroyed through Christ’s sacrificial death (vv. 13–22). The reconciliation in view is expressed using potent corporate metaphors describing unity: “one body” (ἐνὶ σώματι; v. 16; cf. 4:4), “one new human” (ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον; v. 15; cf. 4:24), and “holy temple” (ναὸν ἅγιον) as a site for common worship with others (v. 21).

There is no question that unity is a crucial theme in this passage, as it is elsewhere in Ephesians. Often, however, interpreters press the concept of unity so far that they downplay or problematize notions of plurality and diversity, especially with respect to ethnic and racial concerns.¹ Such a totalizing vision of unity can easily result in oppressed or marginalized groups being required disproportionately to suppress their identity and grievances in favor of those of dominant or powerful groups. Ironically, therefore, modern interpretations of the vision of unity in Ephesians can work against the explicit concerns of the letter to describe and promote peace and reconciliation among hostile groups.² More than fifty years ago, addressing racial tensions in the United States, James Cone wrote about biblical passages such as Ephesians 2:

The biblical doctrine of reconciliation can be made a reality only when white people are prepared to address black men as *black* men and not as some grease-painted form of white humanity... Otherwise reconciliation will mean black people living according to white rules and glorifying white values, being orderly and calm while others enact laws that will destroy them.³

In view of these concerns, my aim in this article is to explore and highlight notions of corporate *plurality* and *diversity* in Eph 2:11–22, focusing on the three critical corporate metaphors of body, human, and temple. This investigation has two related motivations. The first is hermeneutical. As we will see, since the theme of unity in Ephesians is often conceived of in overly totalizing terms, interpreters can be too ready to appeal to the

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- 1 The place of ongoing racial differences has been a longstanding issue in the history of interpretation of Eph 2:11–22. For examples up to and including the mid-twentieth century, see William H. Rader, *The Church and Racial Hostility: A History of Interpretation of Ephesians 2:11–22*, BGBE 20 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1978). For further examples, see the following section of this article.
 - 2 A highly totalizing vision of unity in Ephesians is often connected to an understanding of the letter’s situation in which Paul’s concrete struggles for unity between Jews and gentiles are no longer a pressing concern, e.g., Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Church and Israel in Ephesians 2,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 605–24, here 619. While the arguments in this article do not assume historical Pauline authorship of Ephesians, some of the conclusions may be seen as consistent with it.
 - 3 James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018), 167.

concept of unity to rule out possible readings of the Greek text that might otherwise suggest notions of plurality and diversity. This tendency has also affected modern translations. I hope that by highlighting pluralistic possibilities for reading certain aspects of the Greek text of Eph 2:11–22, I may strengthen hitherto neglected interpretive options for reading the entire passage—and the letter as a whole. This may enable interpreters and readers to see how plurality and diversity may be more naturally integrated within the theme of unity in the letter.

The second motivation has modern concerns in view. I hope this study may contribute to more pluralistic models of reconciliation for addressing ethnic and racial tensions in church and society. By “pluralistic,” I mean an approach that regards plurality—including the diversity of perspectives arising from ethnic and racial differences—not merely as problematic, or even as neutral, but as positive and worthy of engagement.

I will begin by examining the first explicit instance of the body metaphor in Ephesians (1:22–23). The use of the metaphor in this passage is foundational for the development of the metaphor in the following discourse, hence it requires some scrutiny. The bulk of the article will consist of an examination of the body, human, and temple metaphors in Eph 2:11–22, focusing on elements of these metaphors that assert or imply plurality or diversity. At certain points, I will conduct a detailed examination of aspects of the Greek text that, on purely grammatical considerations, would usually suggest notions of plurality and diversity but which, based on contextual factors, are often interpreted as expressions of an overarching, totalizing unity. Finally, I will highlight how the corporate plurality described in Ephesians 2 is both consistent with and developed in the discourse of Ephesians 4, drawing out some further brief interpretive implications for the letter as a whole.

PLURALITY IN EPHESIANS SCHOLARSHIP

Discussions of corporate or ecclesiological plurality in Ephesians scholarship are themselves quite diverse. Nevertheless, there has been a broad trend for plurality to be downplayed or problematized. There are various reasons for this.

A significant factor is a common tendency in twentieth-century scholarship to interpret the “one new human” (Eph 2:15) in overtly racial terms as a “third race” that replaces the former racial identities of Israel and the gentiles. In earlier twentieth-century writings, third-race terminology gained popularity through social Darwinian views of societal progress.⁴

4 Rader, *Racial Hostility*, 203–4. See, e.g., Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (London: Williams &

Other twentieth-century interpreters, while not necessarily subscribing to social Darwinian ideas, nevertheless retained this language of the “third race” (or “dritte Geschlecht”).⁵

A very different—and entirely understandable—reason for emphasizing unity in Ephesians arose in Nazi Germany when racial distinctiveness was used to enforce segregation of Jewish Christians. Opponents of segregation stressed the unity of humanity in Ephesians 2 but sometimes went as far as declaring all ethnic or racial categories entirely obsolete.⁶ Opponents of racial segregation in the United States have also sometimes downplayed the notion of difference in Ephesians 2, again for understandable reasons but sometimes with unfortunate implications.⁷

More recently, there has been a stronger tendency for scholars to affirm the value of corporate “unity in diversity” in Ephesians. Ephesians 4:11–16 is often cited as a critical text in this regard because it explicitly describes a diversity of gifts in the body (vv. 11, 16; cf. v. 7). This diversity is often described as manifesting primarily or exclusively within the local congregation.⁸ However, while this affirmation of plurality in the local congregation is valuable, it does not cover the full range of corporate concerns found in Ephesians. The references to the “body” in the earlier parts of Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 4:4) are not depicting a local congregation but a translocal entity. Hence, any affirmation of diversity in the body concept in Ephesians seems to require a discussion of diversity beyond the local

Norgate, 1908), 240–79, esp. 243–44, 248; James Hastings, ed., *The Speaker's Bible: The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Aberdeen: The Speaker's Bible Offices, 1925), 109.

- 5 E.g., Joachim Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief*, 2nd ed., HThKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 139; Lincoln, “Church and Israel”; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 143–44, 163; Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 31; Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 269. The “third race” concept also appears in some twenty-first-century scholarship, e.g.: Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 379–80; Benjamin H. Dunning, “Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2,” *HTR* 99 (2006): 1–16, here 14; Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 82. While racial/ethnic reasoning also existed in earlier Christian theology in various forms, it did not universally involve the replacement views inherent in modern notions of a “third race”: see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- 6 Rader, *Racial Hostility*, 213–22.
- 7 Rader, *Racial Hostility*, 240–43. See, e.g., Everett Tilson, *Segregation and the Bible: A Searching Analysis of the Scriptural Evidence* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 88–91. In opposing racial segregation in the US, Tilson denigrates Jewish identity and particularism, with (probably unintended) antisemitic implications.
- 8 E.g., Mark Stirling, “Temple and Body: Biblical Community in Ephesians,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 37 (2019): 135–51, esp. 143–44; Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 182, 187–88, 264; cf. Rader, *Racial Hostility*, 220, citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

congregation. Scholars sometimes assume that the referent of the term “body” switches from a translocal entity in the earlier references to a local entity in 4:11–16, but they do not always fully explain why this should be the case.⁹

A minority of scholars make more of the concept of plurality beyond the local congregation. Notably, post-supersessionist interpreters, who are concerned with emphasizing the value of distinctive Jewish identity, often regard the vision of plurality of the “body” in Ephesians as being manifested in distinct—though not separate or segregated—congregations of Jewish and gentile Christ-believers in fellowship with one another.¹⁰ Some interpreters from a Catholic perspective also describe a form of worldwide diversity in the “body” described in Eph 4:11–16, which they understand to be a reference to the universal church.¹¹ This emphasis on *intergroup* diversity in Ephesians beyond the local congregation is promising for exploring notions of racial and ethnic plurality. This provides an impetus for further investigation of notions of plurality in the corporate metaphors of body, human, and temple.

THE BODY IN EPHESIANS 1:22–23: AN EARTHLI ENTITY WITH A HEAVENLY PURPOSE

The first explicit reference to the body metaphor in Ephesians occurs in 1:22–23. Here, the risen and exalted Christ has just been described as seated at God’s right hand “in the heavenly places” (v. 20), with authority over all powers across time (v. 21). In v. 22, the exalted heavenly Christ is said to be given to the corporate *ekklēsia*, which is further described using the body metaphor.¹² The language is rich yet complex:

9 See, e.g., Cohick, *Ephesians*, 250, 264.

10 E.g., William S. Campbell, “Unity and Diversity in the Church: Transformed Identities and the Peace of Christ in Ephesians,” *Transformation* 25 (2008): 15–31, here 22; Mark Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: “Nostra Aetate,” the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 73–79; Andrew Remington Rillera, “Tertium Genus or Dyadic Unity? Investigating Sociopolitical Salvation in Ephesians,” *BR* 66 (2021): 31–51.

11 E.g., Annemarie C. Mayer, *Sprache der Einheit im Epheserbrief und in der Ökumene*, WUNT 2/150 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 60–61, 69; Christopher Tuckett, “The Church as the Body of Christ,” in *Paul et l’unité des chrétiens*, ed. Jacques Schlosser, Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 161–91, here 188; Aby Thomas Puthukulangara, *Ecclesia in Ephesians: A Theology of an Undivided Apostolic Church in the Letter to the Ephesians*, Forum Fundamentaltheologie 11 (Berlin: Lang, 2021), 178–82.

12 I will use the transliteration *ekklēsia* throughout this article rather than the common translation “church,” since the latter risks anachronism.

And [God] subjected all things under his feet and gave him, [as] head over all things, to the *ekklēsia* [ἐκκλησία], which is his body [σῶμα], the fulfillment/fullness [πλήρωμα] of the one who fills/fulfills [for himself] all things in every way.¹³ (Eph 1:22–23)

In Greco-Roman and Jewish use, ἐκκλησία was used to designate a concrete “assembly,” i.e., a meeting occurring at a specific time and place for a particular purpose, such as civil decision-making.¹⁴ As Ralph J. Korner argues, early Christ-followers, especially Paul, transformed this term for an occasional meeting into a “permanent group identity,” with some Jewish precedent (cf. Philo, *Virt.* 108).¹⁵ In the undisputed Pauline letters, ἐκκλησία usually refers to a local congregation (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2). Nevertheless, the various ἐκκλησίαι were not isolated but “translocal” in the sense that each ἐκκλησία belonged to a connected network of communities (e.g., 1 Cor 7:17).¹⁶ Hence it was possible to use the singular noun ἐκκλησία in a broader sense to refer to the extended network of (plural) ἐκκλησίαι (e.g., Acts 9:31; also probably Acts 8:3 [cf. v. 1]; Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 12:28; 15:9; Phil 3:6). This “universal” rather than local sense appears to be the meaning of the singular, articular term ἐκκλησία in Eph 1:22.¹⁷ Hence the entity being referred to is at least implicitly pluriform since it is envisaged as a single network of multiple congregations.

The pluriform possibilities for the *ekklēsia* appear to be strengthened by its metaphorical designation as a “body” (σῶμα; v. 23). The body metaphor is naturally suited for conveying the idea of unity in diversity. Paul had previously used it for such a purpose in his undisputed letters with reference

13 Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations of the Greek text of Ephesians are my own.

14 Ralph J. Korner, *The Origin and Meaning of Ekklēsia in the Early Jesus Movement, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 22–80.

15 Korner, *Ekklēsia*, 259. Elsewhere Korner adds, “Only in Philo (*Virt.* 108) and in New Testament writings is *ekklēsia* used as a permanent, ongoing group designation even when they disperse at the conclusion of their *ekklēsia* (‘assembly’)” (Ralph J. Korner, “Post-Supersessionism: Introduction, Terminology, Theology,” *Religions* 13.12 [2022]: 1195).

16 Korner, *Ekklēsia*, 194–201. On translocal connectivity of early Christ-associations, see further Richard S. Ascough, “Translocal Relationships among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity,” *J ECS* 5 (1997): 223–41; Benedikt Eckhardt, “Associations beyond the City: Jews, Actors and Empire in the Roman Period,” in *Private Associations and Jewish Communities in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt, *JSJSup* 191 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 115–56; John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 202–3.

17 So, e.g., Cohick, *Ephesians*, 68, 132–33; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 67; cf. Douglas A. Campbell, *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 327–29. Note that describing the *ekklēsia* body as “universal” does not necessarily mean that it is to be understood as a single organization, like a multinational corporation.

to local settings (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12–27). The body metaphor was also used as a picture of unity in diversity in contemporary discussions of the city-state as the body politic (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.86; Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 2.32.7–12) and the Stoic notion of universal humanity (e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 95.51–53).¹⁸

However, understanding the *ekklēsia* body in Eph 1:22–23 in this earthly universal sense is not as straightforward as it may seem. This is because it is not merely a body, but “his body” (τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ), i.e., the body of the risen and exalted Christ who is the “head [κεφαλή] over all things” (v. 22). Christ, the head, is now located “in the heavenly places” (v. 20). This may imply that the *ekklēsia* body is located, not on earth, but in the same place as its head, i.e., in the heavenly places (cf. the location of believers in 2:6).¹⁹ If the body is regarded as a heavenly rather than an earthly entity, this may distance the concerns of the discourse from present earthly realities. In such a case, earthly contingencies—including plurality and diversity—may not be relevant to the body metaphor.

Therefore, it is essential to examine the metaphor’s development in this context closely.²⁰ The “body” is further described as Christ’s πλήρωμα, a term that can be translated as “fullness” or “fulfillment.” While the meaning of this term is subject to much debate,²¹ it is worth noting that the same word has previously appeared in a similar formulation with reference to the fulfillment of God’s temporal plans for Christ: “the fulfillment of the times” (τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν) is “to bring to a head all things in Christ” (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ; 1:10). This earlier use of πλήρωμα alongside a cognate of κεφαλή and a reference to τὰ πάντα suggests that the subsequent use of πλήρωμα in combination with κεφαλή and a further reference to τὰ πάντα (v. 23) should be understood in a similar sense. In other words, πλήρωμα in Eph 1:23 is more likely conveying not a spatial sense (“fullness”) but a temporal or teleological sense (“fulfillment”).²² In this case, it is not necessary to push the metaphor so far as

18 Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ*, SNTSMS 137 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9, 43, 57; Cohick, *Ephesians*, 135–36.

19 Peter T. O’Brien, “The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity,” in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1987), 88–119, here 109–10.

20 For further methodological considerations concerning the interpretation of the body metaphor, see Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33*, BibInt 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 25–78; Alta Vrey, “The Body Metaphor Reinforcing the Identity of the In-Group in Ephesians,” *Neot* 53 (2019): 375–93.

21 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 294–304.

22 There are two options for understanding πλήρωμα in the temporal or teleological sense of “fulfillment,” depending on whether πλήρωμα is taken in an active or passive sense. Either (1) the *ekklēsia* body fulfills (active) God’s plans for the heavenly Christ-head, or (2) God’s plans for the *ekklēsia* body are fulfilled (passive) by the heavenly

to conclude that the universal body is entirely located along with the head in the heavenly places (any more than it is necessary to conclude that believers' being seated in the heavenly places with Christ (2:6) removes their earthly particularity).²³ The primary purpose of the use of the body metaphor in Eph 1:22–23 is not to distance the body from earthly contingencies but to demonstrate that the *ekklēsia* body, while consisting of an earthly network of associations, nevertheless has a heavenly and eschatological purpose and significance in relation to Christ.²⁴

Therefore, the application of the body metaphor to the *ekklēsia* network in Eph 1:22–23 is at least open to notions of diversity and plurality within unity; indeed, it may be intentionally used to imply such concepts. Whether or not it actually does so can only be seen by investigating the subsequent discourse.

EPHESIANS 2:11–18: DUALITY OF ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS IN ONE HUMANITY AND ONE BODY

The second cluster of corporate metaphors occurs in Eph 2:14–18. Here, the reconciliation between Israel and the nations is described using the language of “one human” and “one body”:

For he himself is our peace, who made both one [ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἓν] and broke down the dividing wall, the hostility, in his flesh, having

Christ-head. Both of these senses, or a combination of the two, are somewhat analogous to the political use of the head-body metaphor to describe the interdependent relationship between emperor and state: each needs the other to fulfill its purpose (e.g., Seneca, *Clem.* 1.4.3; cf. 1.3.5; 1.5.1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.12–13). See Frederick J. Long, “Ἐκκλησία in Ephesians as Godlike in Heavens, in Temple, in Γάμος, and in Armor: Ideology and Iconography in Ephesus and Its Environs,” in *The First Urban Churches 3: Ephesus*, ed. James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, WGRWSup 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2018), 193–234, here 216. Pace P. D. Overfield, “Pleroma: A Study in Content and Context,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 384–96, who argues that the term is being used in a personal sense derived from a purported “Jewish doctrine of Inclusive Personality” (393). Nevertheless, the political use of the metaphor is at most only a partial parallel to the use in Eph 1:22–23. The political use has only two entities in view: the “head” as the political ruler and the “body” as the ruled state. In Eph 1:22–23, however, there is a third entity: “all things.” The ἐκκλησία is the body of Christ (ἦτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ; 1:23), but Christ is head *over* all things (κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα). Hence Christ is not the political ruler of the body—he is the ruler of creation. The body fulfills/completes his rule, but it is not necessarily placed among the ruled. This is confirmed in the following chapter, which describes God having “raised us and seated us with him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (2:6); i.e., the *ekklēsia* consists of believers who are with Christ in the heavenlies, above “all things” that are ruled. See further Dawes, *The Body in Question*, 141, cf. 147; Cohick, *Ephesians*, 133.

²³ Cf. O'Brien, “The Church,” 110.

²⁴ Cf. Philo's description of the human being as a creature whose body is rooted in the earth but whose head is directed towards the heavens (*Det.* 85).

abolished the law of the commandments in decrees, so that he might create the two [τοὺς δύο] in himself into one new human [εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον], making peace, and reconcile both in one body [τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι] to God through the cross, having killed the hostility by it. (Eph 2:14–16)

The term “human” (v. 15) is being used as a metaphor for “humanity,” either a new “type of humanity” (cf. 4:24) or a new “corporate person.”²⁵ The term “body” recalls the *ekklesia* body of Eph 1:22–23 and is thus a metaphor for the Pauline network of *ekklesiai*.²⁶ Both metaphors are modified by the term “one,” which clearly expresses a concept of unity. The question, however, is whether the concept of unity expressed here excludes any notions of plurality. There are several indications in the context that this is not the case.

In 2:1–10, two groups are marked out: “you” (ὁμοῖς; v. 1) and “also we all” (καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες; v. 3). Although both groups are subject to a common plight involving sin and wrath and united in a common salvation and life in Christ (vv. 4–10), nevertheless the delineation of the two groups is marked.²⁷ The language of the section alludes to the prophetic distinction between Israel and the nations that is equalized but not dissolved by God’s judging and saving activity (e.g., Ezekiel 36–37).²⁸

In 2:11–13, the nature of the distinction becomes more apparent. The section begins with a command for the gentile readers to “remember” their status as “you, the nations/gentiles” (ὁμοῖς τὰ ἔθνη; v. 11). This invokes an Israel-centered viewpoint, implying that gentile status in relation to Israel has *some* continuing relevance for their present situation (cf. 3:1, 6, 8).²⁹ The problem described in this section is not distinctiveness per se but attitudes of hostility arising from this distinctiveness.³⁰

In 2:14–18, Christ is described as bringing “peace” (vv. 14, 15, 17) in the place of such “hostility” (vv. 14, 16). The unity described in this passage is

25 Best, *Ephesians*, 261–63, quoting 261. Best prefers the former option.

26 Cohick, *Ephesians*, 188.

27 This markedness can be seen in the fact that the phrases “you” (ὁμοῖς; v. 1) and “also we all” (καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες; v. 3) both appear in prominent preverbal positions, and “we” (ἡμεῖς) is syntactically redundant since it is already implied in the verb ἀνεστράφημεν (v. 3).

28 Cf. David I. Starling, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics*, BZNW 184 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 191–92.

29 Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 101.

30 See further Lionel J. Windsor, *Reading Ephesians and Colossians after Supersessionism: Christ’s Mission through Israel to the Nations, New Testament after Supersessionism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 118–29.

opposed to hostility, not plurality.³¹ In fact, the repeated use of the term “both” (ἀμφότεροι) confirms that plurality is not simply a feature of the past; it continues to be a feature of the new situation in Christ. “Both” are made “one” (v. 14). “Both” are the object of reconciliation “in one body” (v. 16). This reconciliation is put into effect through gospel-preaching missionary activity directed to both groups: far and near (v. 17).³² Finally, “both” are the subject of the present-tense expression “we both have access” (ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι; v. 18). The unity described in this passage, therefore, involves two groups who retain their identity as “both” even in their present reconciled state.

This notion of plurality within unity is somewhat obscured by some English translations of the metaphor for humanity in v. 15. A fairly literal rendering of the phrase ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον would be “to create the two, in himself, into one new human.” Christ is described as undertaking a divine creative process (κτίζω; cf. v. 10). The duality, “the two,” is the accusative object of the creative process—i.e., the two is what Christ has created. The goal of the creative process, expressed with the prepositional phrase (εἰς), is a unified humanity.³³ Several English translations, however, use phraseology that implies that the duality is replaced with singularity, e.g., “that he might create in himself one new man *in place of the two*” (Eph 2:15 RSV, emphasis added; cf. NRSV, ESV). This is an over-translation that obscures the fact that “the two” here is the object of the creative process, not its antithesis. Indeed, the expression is in several ways parallel to the expression used later of marriage in the context of creation: “the two shall become one flesh” (ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν; 5:31). Just as the one-flesh marriage union does not destroy the individual identities of the two marriage partners, so the one new kind of humanity does not destroy the social identities of the two ethnic groupings.

31 Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 vols., AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 1:310; O’Brien, “The Church,” 112; Tet-Lim N. Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, SNTSMS 130 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143; Campbell, “Unity and Diversity,” 18; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 90; Justin K. Hardin, “Equality in the Church,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. Joel Willitts and David Rudolph (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 224–34, here 231; Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery*, 77.

32 The explicit subject of this missionary activity is “Christ” (v. 17), but presumably the apostles are implied as human agents of Christ’s preaching (cf. 1:13; 3:7, 8): see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle’s Self-Understanding*, WUNT 2/43 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 228–29.

33 The object of κτίζω is consistently expressed using the accusative, not with εἰς (BDAG, s.v. “κτίζω”).

EPHESIANS 2:19–22: PLURALITY IN TEMPLE WORSHIP

The following paragraph (2:19–22) introduces a further corporate metaphor: the notion of a “holy temple” (ναὸν ἅγιον; v. 21).³⁴ It is almost universally assumed that this paragraph describes a *single* temple. This temple, as a single structure, is usually identified with the one universal “body” in v. 16.³⁵ Most modern translations of this passage tend to solidify this idea of a single temple, using phraseology that cannot be read any other way, e.g., “members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19 RSV), “Gottes Hausgenossen” (Eph 2:19 Schlachter); “the whole structure” (Eph 2:21 RSV), “der ganze Bau” (Eph 2:21 Schlachter).

However, the Greek expressions are more ambiguous than these translations imply. In fact, several elements of the grammar in this paragraph suggest that the temple concept here is inherently plural. Centuries of translation and commentary have conditioned interpreters to eliminate readily certain exegetical options that imply plurality or diversity because such possibilities are assumed to be incongruous with the overriding vision of “unity” in the passage. However, if we put to one side the assumption that unity is necessarily opposed to plurality, the grammatical elements implying plurality can be considered afresh.

Unity of Kinship, Not Dwellers in a Single Structure

The first phrase that needs to be considered is οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 19). Unlike English translations such as “members of the household” (RSV) or German translations such as “Gottes Hausgenossen” (Schlachter), the Greek term οἰκεῖοι does not necessarily denote people living together in a single structure. The term has a wide range of meanings, from “pertaining to the house, domestic” to “pertaining to the family, relative,” “kinship,” “family member, friend, supporter,” etc.³⁶ It can, in other words, be used to refer to people related by kinship dwelling in multiple structures.

An apposite example is found in Leviticus 25 LXX. There, the word οἰκεῖος is used to denote a member of one’s own tribe in Israel (v. 49; cf. Num 27:11 LXX) in contrast with the “resident alien” (πάραικος; v. 47).

34 Temple imagery may already have been present implicitly through the description of the destruction of a dividing wall, which probably alludes to the Jerusalem temple (2:14), and through the statement that believers have “access” (τὴν προσαγωγὴν) to God (v. 18). However, it is not until v. 21 that the term for “temple” appears explicitly.

35 E.g. O’Brien, “The Church,” 103; Raymond F. Collins, “Constructing a Metaphor: 1 Corinthians 3,9b–17 and Ephesians 2,19–22,” in *Paul et l’unité des chrétiens*, ed. Jacques Schlosser, Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 193–216, here 216; Stirling, “Temple and Body.”

36 Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, ed. M. Goh, trans. R. Barritt-Costa (Leiden: Brill, 2015), s.v. “οἰκεῖος.”

The situation described in Leviticus is not one in which these “family members” (οἰκεῖοι) are all residing in the same structure. Instead, they are people related by kinship residing in various structures throughout the tribal territory (e.g., vv. 29–33).

The usage in Ephesians 2 parallels that in Leviticus 25 in several ways. Gentile Christ-followers are here told: “You are no longer foreigners and resident aliens [πάροικοι], but you are fellow citizens of the holy ones and family members [οἰκεῖοι] of God” (Eph 2:19). The contrast here is between *alien status* and *kinship status* in God’s people. While the granting of kinship status, drawing on imagery describing the holy land of Israel, is highly significant for the vision of reconciliation in Ephesians (cf. 1:18), it does not necessarily imply that all the participants reside in a single holy building.

Plurality of Construction

The second phrase that needs to be considered is πᾶσα οἰκοδομή (v. 21). Textual witnesses for the inclusion of an article (ἡ) between πᾶσα and οἰκοδομή are fewer, later, and less widely distributed than witnesses for its omission.³⁷ The article, therefore, is almost certainly a later addition.³⁸ Since the phrase with the article (πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομή) unambiguously means “the whole building,” the addition of the article can be explained as a result of ancient scribes (like modern interpreters) reading the text in terms of an overarching ecclesiological unity and so intentionally or unintentionally correcting it to conform the text to this vision of unity.

However, the phrase without the article has a distributive sense implying a plurality of constructions, i.e., “every building.” A variety of earlier commentators did indeed understand the phrase in this way, e.g., “each congregation”/“every congregation”;³⁹ “all the ministries of life in the New Order.”⁴⁰ Some translations also render the phrase distributively, e.g., “each several building” (RV, ASV); “every structure” (JB, NJB). Strict Greek grammar seems to require this distributive sense.⁴¹

More recently, however, there has been a strong tendency for commentators to view unity as such a pervasive theme in the context of this phrase

37 According to NA²⁸, the article is omitted by \aleph^* B D F G K L Ψ 33. 104. 365. 630. 1175. 1241^s. 1505. 1739^{*}. 2464 \aleph ; Cl Or. It is included by \aleph^1 A C P 6. 81. 326. 1739c. 1881; Q^{rcom} 1739mg.

38 Best, *Ephesians*, 286; J. William Johnston, *The Use of Πᾶς in the New Testament*, SBG 11 (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 165–66.

39 Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Maurice J. Evans and William P. Dickson, rev. ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 395–96; C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976), 115.

40 Brooke F. Westcott, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians: The Greek Text with Notes and Addenda* (1855; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 41.

41 A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 772.

that they are committed to seeing a single temple here.⁴² This commitment to a single temple has led to many creative grammatical arguments as to why the phrase *could* be read wholatively as “the entire structure.” These arguments begin with the observation that the adjective *πᾶς* with a noun and no article *can* be understood in a wholative sense when the noun is clearly definite or well-known for some *other* reason and therefore does not require the article to be definite.⁴³ Various examples of this kind have been suggested as parallels to *πᾶσα οἰκοδομή* in Eph 2:21.⁴⁴ However, upon closer examination, none of these parallels is valid. It is worth examining each possibility in turn:

1. *Πᾶς* without the article can be wholative when it is used with proper nouns since proper nouns are inherently definite, e.g., *πᾶς Ἰσραήλ* (all Israel; 3 Kgdms 8:65; 11:16; 1 Esd 5:45, 58; Jdt 15:14; Rom 11:26). However, these are not valid parallels to Eph 2:21 since *οἰκοδομή* is not a proper noun.

2. *Πᾶς* without the article can be understood as wholative when it is used with a noun that is rendered definite by a genitive modifier, e.g., *πάσης ἐκκλησίας κυρίου* (the entire assembly of the Lord; 1 Chr 28:8 LXX); *πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ* (the entire house of Israel; Acts 2:36); *ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς* (upon the whole face of the earth; Acts 17:26); *ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ* (in the entire will of God; Col 4:12).⁴⁵ However, these are not valid parallels to Eph 2:21 since *οἰκοδομή* has no genitive modifier here.

3. *Πᾶς* without the article can be understood as wholative when it is used with a noun that could be understood as “one of a kind,” e.g., *πᾶσα γραφή* (the entirety of Scripture; 2 Tim 3:16). However, this is not valid a parallel to Eph 2:21 since *οἰκοδομή* is not one of a kind.

4. *Πᾶς* without the article can be understood as wholative when it is used with a noun clearly identified as definite or well-known in the pri-

42 This argument was present among earlier commentators, e.g., John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Glasgow: T&T Clark, 1883), 200; Thomas K. Abbott, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 74–75. It has become almost universal among more recent commentators, e.g., Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:271–72; Gnllka, *Der Epheserbrieff*, 159; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 156; Best, *Ephesians*, 286; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 407–8; Gerhard Sellin, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 239–40; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 183. Cf. translations: KJV, RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, CSB, NASB, NKJV, Luther, Schlachter.

43 For a detailed discussion see Robertson, *Grammar*, 772; Johnston, *Use of Πᾶς*, 165–73.

44 Often cited is Charles F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 94–95.

45 See also an instance where the phrase *ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ* could be understood to mean “during the whole time” rather than “at every time” because it is modified by a relative clause that might render it definite: *ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ᾧ εἰσηλθεν καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς* (“during the whole time in which the Lord Jesus came in and out among us”; Acts 1:21). However, the phrase could equally be understood in this context to mean “at every time.”

or discourse. For example, at certain places within the Pentateuch, the wholative phrase $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ συναγωγῆ [υἰῶν] Ἰσραὴλ (“the entire congregation of [the children of] Israel”) appears (e.g., Lev 4:13; 16:17; Num 15:33 LXX). When $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ συναγωγῆ subsequently appears with no article or other modifier, the noun is to be understood as definite from its prior usage, and so the phrase without the article should be rendered “the entire congregation” (e.g., Lev 9:5; 16:33; Num 27:2, 19; 31:27 LXX).⁴⁶ However, these are not valid parallels to Eph 2:21 since οἰκοδομῆ has not yet been used in Ephesians, nor has there been an unambiguous reference to the concept of a single building or structure before this point (see above).⁴⁷

5. $\Pi\alpha\varsigma$ without the article can be understood as elative when it is used with an abstract noun, e.g., $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha\sigma$ δικαιοσύνην (“all righteousness”; Matt 3:15); $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ ἐξουσία (“all authority”; Matt 28:18); $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha\sigma$ σάρκα (“all flesh”; Acts 2:17); $\pi\alpha\sigma\eta$ συνειδήσει ἀγαθῆ (“all good conscience”; Acts 23:1); $\pi\alpha\sigma\eta$ ἀναστροφῆ (“all conduct”; 1 Pet 1:15). However, these are not valid parallels to Eph 2:21, since οἰκοδομῆ is not an abstract noun. This is confirmed by the fact that it is modified by the participle συναρμολογουμένη (“being combined together”), which implies a concrete idea.

6. Sometimes parallels to $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ οἰκοδομῆ in Eph 2:21 are cited that, on closer examination, are just as easily—and probably more easily—understood as distributive rather than wholative. Examples cited by Charles F. D. Moule include $\pi\alpha\sigma\eta\varsigma$ φυλῆς (Amos 3:1 LXX), which probably means “every tribe” rather than “the whole tribe” (cf. 2 Chr 6:5 LXX); $\pi\alpha\sigma\eta\varsigma$ ἐντολῆς (Heb 9:19), which probably means “every commandment” rather than “the whole commandment”; and $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ πατριά (Eph 3:15), which probably means “every family.”⁴⁸

On purely grammatical grounds, then, there is no good reason to reject the distributive sense “every construction” for $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ οἰκοδομῆ in Eph 2:21.

The Nature of the Construction

A second exegetical question concerns the nature of this “construction.” The word οἰκοδομῆ could refer either to a construction process (cf. the translation “edification”) or to the result of a construction process, i.e., a “structure” (cf. the translation “edifice”).⁴⁹ It is notable that all the other uses of οἰκοδομῆ in Ephesians, and by far the majority of the instances in the undisputed Pauline epistles, denote a process of construction rather than a structure (Eph 4:12, 16, 29; cf. Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3, 5, 12, 26;

46 Johnston, *Use of Πᾶς*, 173. Note that the MT includes the article: כל העדה (Lev 9:5; Num 27:2, 19; 31:27 MT); כל עם הקהל (Lev 16:33 MT).

47 Pace Johnston, *Use of Πᾶς*, 173.

48 For the citations see Moule, *Idiom Book*, 94–95.

49 Montanari, *Dictionary*, s.v. “οἰκοδομῆ.”

2 Cor 12:19; 13:10).⁵⁰ It is also notable that the cognate verbal expressions in the immediate context of the reference in Eph 2:21 explicitly refer to construction processes (ἐποικοδομηθέντες, v. 20; συνικοδομείσθε, v. 22).⁵¹ This evidence suggests that the term here is more likely to refer to a construction process than to a structure, despite the common tendency to translate the term as “structure” (e.g., Eph 2:21 RSV).

The noun οἰκοδομή is further modified by the compound participle συναρμολογουμένη. If οἰκοδομή were referring to a single structure, this participle would be describing the structure as “being joined together.” However, the existence of the συν- prefix suggests otherwise. The word ἀρμολογέω without the συν- prefix already means “to put together, construct.”⁵² Hence the use of the συν- prefix is marked, implying that it adds further meaning to the participle. The addition of the συν- prefix elsewhere in Ephesians typically implies that the subject, object, or agent shares an action or state “along with” another party or parties (2:5–6, 19; 3:6; 4:3; 5:7). The other party or parties need not be specified explicitly (e.g., Eph 3:6).⁵³ Therefore, the addition of the συν- prefix to ἀρμολογουμένη in Eph 2:21 appears to be more than stylistic; it implies being combined with others. Taken by itself, it is most likely that συναρμολογουμένη means “being joined together with [others].”

The verb used is αὔξει, a variant of αὔξάνω. While it is possible to understand this verb in an intransitive sense (“to grow”), the verb in the active voice often takes a transitive sense (“to increase, augment [something]”).⁵⁴ Indeed, in the undisputed Pauline letters, the verb in the active voice is always transitive (1 Cor 3:6–7; 2 Cor 9:10). The object may be implied rather than explicit, e.g., “God was effecting growth [of believers]” (ὁ θεὸς ἠύξανεν; 1 Cor 3:6); “God who effects growth [of believers]” (ὁ αὔξανων θεός; 1 Cor 3:7). On purely grammatical grounds, therefore, it is entirely

50 Possible exceptions in the undisputed Pauline letters are 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 5:1, but even these may be seen as processes; see J. Armitage Robinson, *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), 165.

51 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 408–9.

52 Montanari, *Dictionary*, s.v. “ἀρμολογέω.” E.g., “The mason Architeles put together [ἤρμολόγησε] a tomb for Agathanor his dead child with mourning hands” (Philippus of Thessalonica, 7.554 [my translation]); “[E]ach of the Signs [of the Zodiac] is not a continuous body [σῶμα], nor is it connected [συνήπται], as though by joints [ἄσπερ ἤρμολογημένον], with the one which precedes it and the one which follows it” (Sextus Empiricus, *Prof.*, 5.78, LCL).

53 For further consideration of the σύν- compounds in Ephesians and their relevance to Jew-gentile relationships, see Carl B. Hoch, “The Significance of the Syn-Compounds for Jew-Gentile Relationships in the Body of Christ,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 175–83; cf. Campbell, “Unity and Diversity,” 21–22; Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery*, 78–79.

54 Montanari, *Dictionary*, s.v. “αὔξάνω and αὔξω.”

possible that αὔξει in Eph 2:21 means “effects growth [of something].” The implied object would be “each congregation” or something similar.

If we were to approach this paragraph with a prior commitment to regard “unity” as an overarching theme that negates any notion of plurality, these grammatical options implying plurality would not be persuasive. However, if this common assumption does not bind us, we are open to choosing the most likely grammatical option in every case. This leaves us with the possibility—even the probability—that Eph 2:21 reads: “in whom every construction [process], being combined with [the others], effects growth [of each congregation] into a holy temple in the Lord” (2:21). In this case, the text of Ephesians is describing *plural* local acts of construction into plural temples within a single universal body.

Connections with and Developments from 1 Corinthians 3

This idea of a plurality of local temple-construction activities connected to others is not implausible. Indeed, it may be seen as a logical development from Paul’s use of the same cluster of terminology to describe his ministry in 1 Cor 3:9–17.⁵⁵ In 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing in the context of a particular local ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 1:2). He affirms that there is only one possible kind of “foundation” (θεμέλιος), i.e., Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). He then describes local ministry among the Corinthians as a particular instance of construction upon this foundation (ἐπικοδομέω, vv. 10, 12, 14). He uses the word οἰκοδομή in the context of an ongoing construction process (v. 9, cf. vv. 10, 12, 14). He uses the word αὐξάνω transitively without an explicit object to mean “effect growth [of something]” (vv. 6, 7). He also describes the local Corinthian congregation as a holy temple of God (ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε, v. 16; ὁ ... ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, v. 17). In doing so, Paul assumes the existence of other congregations elsewhere (cf. 1:2; 4:17; 14:36). Presumably, then, Paul would also have considered other congregations beyond Corinth as holy temples. In other words, the discourse of 1 Corinthians assumes a plurality in the temple concept rather than a single worldwide temple.⁵⁶

Since the same cluster of terminology is used in Eph 2:19–22, there is no reason to assume it is not used in Ephesians to convey similar concepts.

⁵⁵ Pace Collins, “Constructing a Metaphor”; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 156.

⁵⁶ Unlike the Qumran covenanters who saw themselves as replacing the Jerusalem temple, this view of the Corinthians as a temple is not supersessionist. On the contrary, it “could just as readily have been a way for Paul to merge his Christ-followers with their Jewish ethno-religious roots, rather than as a way to differentiate them from a Jewish heritage” (Korner, *Ekklesia*, 246–50, quoting 249); cf. Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52, here 248; Eyal Regev, *The Temple in Early Christianity: Experiencing the Sacred*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 57–58.

Admittedly, there are two main areas of development in the use of this terminology from 1 Corinthians to Ephesians.

First, there is a different focus. Paul's focus in 1 Corinthians 3 is on the local congregation as a construction/temple. Ephesians 2:19–22, on the other hand, focuses on the fact that various local constructions/temples are joined with the others.

Second, the formulation of the foundation (θεμέλιος) metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3 is more compact, whereas it appears in Ephesians in a more expanded form. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul identifies the “foundation” simply as “Jesus Christ” (v. 11). This is not a literal reference to the person of Jesus; instead, it is a synecdoche for the *gospel* about Jesus Christ, as preached by the apostle Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:17; 3:10). In Eph 2:20, this concept is expressed in a more expanded form: the “foundation” is described as being “of the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus” (τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). Karl Olav Sandnes provides a strong argument that τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν is a genitive of source, meaning the foundation *laid by* the apostles and prophets.⁵⁷ This explains why the person of Christ is named as the “cornerstone” here; i.e., Christ provides the standard reference point for the preached gospel about himself, which in turn is the common “foundation” that underlies every legitimate construction process.

A Suggested Translation of Ephesians 2:19–21

This understanding would lead to the following translation:

So then, you are no longer foreigners and resident aliens, but you are fellow citizens of the holy ones and family members of God, having been built on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself, in whom every construction [process], being combined with [the others], effects growth [of each congregation] into a holy temple in the Lord. (Eph 2:19–21)

In this view, the temple metaphor is not depicting a single universal or cosmic temple.⁵⁸ This is not to deny that the temple imagery evokes a spiritual, eschatological concept.⁵⁹ However, as in 1 Corinthians 3, a spiritual and eschatological concept of the temple can be used in such a way that does not necessarily imply a single cosmic temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16). The

57 Sandnes, *One of the Prophets?*, 227–29. The common alternative is a genitive of apposition (the foundation *consisting in* the apostles and prophets), see Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:271; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 152–53; Best, *Ephesians*, 280–81.

58 Pace Best, *Ephesians*, 288.

59 Thielman, *Ephesians*, 184.

thrust of the imagery in Ephesians is not the singularity of the structure, but the *common* dwelling of God among his people throughout the world.

This understanding is strengthened further by the fact that the author immediately affirms, “*You also* [καὶ ὑμεῖς] are being built together with [the others] [συννοικοδομεῖσθε] into a dwelling-place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). If the author had just been affirming in vv. 20–21 that his recipients are part of a single universal temple, this final statement would be redundant. However, if he has just been affirming that there are plural constructions and temples that are connected with one another, it is understandable that he would finish by reassuring his recipients that they, too, are included in this plurality. This also explains why he uses a further *συν*-prefix to affirm their commonality, i.e., they are “built together with” others.

In summary: Even though Ephesians 2 affirms a single universal body, a common foundation in the gospel of Christ, a united mission, and a common object of worship, it also affirms a plurality of constituent parts of the body and a plurality of construction processes that give rise to a plurality of temples within this united body.

DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS IN EPHESIANS 4

I will now briefly highlight various ways in which the corporate plurality described in Ephesians 2 is developed in Ephesians 4, drawing out some further interpretive implications. Since the existence of corporate diversity and plurality in Ephesians 4 is more often recognized than in Ephesians 2, it does not need to be covered exhaustively here. However, it is worth demonstrating how the previous investigation of Ephesians 2 is consistent with and can shed further light on the notion of diversity in Ephesians 4.

The body metaphor is a key element in Eph 4:1–16 (vv. 4, 12, 16). As in Eph 2:16, the assertion of unity in the phrase “one body” (ἐν σῶμα; v. 4) does not negate plurality or diversity. The body’s unity is characterized primarily by “peace” (v. 3), a term that recalls the threefold use in Ephesians 2 (vv. 14, 15, 17). Peace is opposed to *hostility*, not diversity or plurality. Furthermore, the most recent prior reference to the “body” was a word with a *συν*-prefix: the gentiles/nations are “members of the body with” (σύσσωμα) Israel (3:6). As we have seen, this prefix implies different people sharing in something together without necessarily surrendering their individual identities.⁶⁰ Indeed, the notion of diversity becomes explicit in the next section, which introduces the theme of the diversity of gifts given “to each one” (ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ; 4:7).

⁶⁰ Hoch, “Syn-Compounds.”

The diversity of the body asserted in vv. 12, 16 need not be seen exclusively or even primarily as a feature of the local *ekklēsia*. Instead, the united-yet-diverse “body” in vv. 11–16 can be read consistently as the same translocal network of *ekklēsiai* referred to previously in Ephesians (1:22; 3:10, 21).⁶¹ Indeed, Eph 4:11–16 recalls the combined organic and construction metaphors describing the “building” of the “body” introduced in Eph 2:19–22. Admittedly, in Eph 4:11–16, there is a more sustained and detailed focus on the activity of “each individual part” (ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους; v. 16). Nevertheless, the ultimate vision of a body that is united through the combined building efforts of differing individual members is as applicable to the translocal network of *ekklēsiai*, formed and united through the gospel mission to different groups (2:17), as it is to any one local *ekklēsia*.⁶²

It is in the following passage (4:17–32) that these ideas of corporate unity in diversity begin to be developed more explicitly at the level of personal relationships. There is a further development here from Ephesians 2. In Ephesians 2, the concept that “the two” (τοὺς δύο) were “created” (κτίση) into “one new human” (ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον; v. 16) has a strong corporate focus. In Ephesians 4, the same ideas are present, but the focus is on personal relationships: the activity of putting on “the new human” (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον), which has been “created” (κτισθέντα) according to God (v. 24) leads to various, harmonious peace-making activities among individuals who differ from one another in a variety of ways (vv. 25–32), who “are members [μέλη] of one another” (v. 25). Later in the letter, there are further explorations of the way unity in Christ may be appropriated among people in different situations in the household (5:22–6:9; see, e.g., 5:31; 6:9).

CONCLUSION

The corporate metaphors of body, human, and temple in Ephesians 2 are presented as a prototype for the reconciliation of different groups of humanity in Christ. The reconciliation of Israel and the nations described here is critical for God’s eschatological purposes. It is grounded in Christ’s sacrificial death for all, is effected through the apostolic preaching of the gospel to all, brings peace between otherwise hostile groups, and leads to common worship of God. An often-discussed feature of this reconciliation

61 Cf. Tuckett, “The Church as the Body of Christ,” 188.

62 Ephesians 4:12 introduces a variety of individuals who play their part “for construction of the body of Christ” (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ). These individuals, who are associated with “the holy ones” (cf. 2:19), may be a specific reference to key figures in the early apostolic community in Jerusalem, figures with whom the apostolic mission began. See further Windsor, *Ephesians and Colossians after Supersessionism*, 188–92.

in Ephesians is the theme of unity. Nevertheless, the purpose of this article has been to emphasize a significant, neglected feature of the corporate metaphors in Ephesians 2: *plurality*. This plurality is not only a feature of local congregations but also of the translocal *ekklēsia*. Israel and the nations are united in one body and one humanity but nevertheless retain their distinct identities. The temple metaphor affirms a common foundation in the gospel of Christ and a common object of worship, but it also suggests a plurality of construction processes that give rise to a plurality of temples within this united body.

Such pluriformity in the *ekklēsia* is consistent with the broader purposes of Ephesians. In Ephesians 3, the author affirms that God's "pluriform wisdom" (πολυποικίλος σοφία) is made known to the cosmic powers "through the *ekklēsia*" (v. 10). Pluriformity in the united *ekklēsia* is indeed a fitting display of God's pluriform wisdom. This vision of reconciliation in Ephesians is consistent with the understanding of reconciliation promoted by R. Kendall Soulen: "What the church rejects is not the difference of Jew and Gentile, male and female, but rather the idea that these differences essentially entail curse, opposition, and antithesis.... Reconciliation does not mean the imposition of sameness, but the unity of reciprocal blessing."⁶³

Affirming and valuing this plurality in the corporate metaphors in Ephesians will, I hope, be beneficial in promoting more pluralistic models of reconciliation in the face of racial and ethnic tensions in our own time.

63 R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 170.