

**A Biblical and Theological Examination
of
Permissible Division in *Koinōnia***

by

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DECLARATION

It is with utmost humility, acknowledging the souls who have pioneered before me in the vast realm of theological studies, that I should offer something additional to the enormity of understanding, I humbly submit, and do hereby affirm that the material contained in this dissertation is my own original effort and has not previously in its entirety nor in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes except where expressly noted.

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Abstract

The following dissertation is an examination regarding permissible division in *koinōnia*, in which a biblical understanding, and apposite behavior concerning a ceasing of fellowship is sought. Substantial focus will be placed on the glory and purity of God (the sacred space of God), and the corresponding model of desired unity and purity of the people of God. The position initially focuses upon ecclesial unity and holiness, moving toward church discipline, and subsequently addresses the position of a proper understanding of, and purpose for separation, or excommunication on an individual level.

As a methodical delineation of this biblical theme is woven throughout the Bible, an effort is made to systematically draw out from the entirety of Scripture, a comprehensive evangelical understanding, a Canonical blueprint of this most extreme of disciplinary measures. Examination of Old Testament examples are identified, followed by New Testament understanding, in the hopes that systematically illuminating orthodoxy in such passages will limit improper division, and thus lead to greater orthopraxy, and greater manifested unity within the Body of Christ. Finally, a proposal of, and justification of the breaking of fellowship is examined in light of the 21st century Church.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Jesus prayed in John 17 that the disciples would have unity. Specifically, in verses 20-23, he prayed, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me”.

The prayer focuses not only on the eleven remaining disciples but also proleptically identifying all those who would reach discipleship through their ministry (Bernard 1963:576). Christ is crediting his disciples with the numbers that will be produced, “for those also who believe through their word” (Morris 1995:649). The primary concern Jesus expresses at this time of his impending death is the issue of unity among the disciples as their unity will most definitely be a vital prerequisite for their subsequent mission (Köstenberger 2004:497).

As the Church would grow in numbers, disunity and division were certain to be a threat among the members of the Body. As Christ is definitely supplicating the Father with references to God and himself, it is clear the unity herein described is more transcendent than that of “simply human fellowship or the harmonious

interaction of Christians” (Brown 1970: 776).¹ The external expression of this unity is to be the evangel of the Church to the world, which attests to the sending of Christ by the Father.

Paul affirms this directive and takes a hard stand against division and factions in the Church Body, in light of both personal conflict and in light of doctrine. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 he exhorts, “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment”. His word for divisions here and in the “*soma*” passage of 1 Corinthians 12, *schismata*, is the word for tearing or chasm (schisma) hence, there is reference of failing to be “complete in the same mind and judgment”. Maurer holds that there is some uncertainty as to what these divisions are, though he is certain they are not “formulated doctrinal differences” that were causing separation (Maurer 1988:964), and would therefore fall into areas of personal contention. In any case, they are imposing a rift in the parts of the Body of Christ, which is where individuals need to be anchored (Maurer 1988:964). These differences of a personal nature threaten to jeopardize the common meal in 11:18 (Maurer 1988:964). Unfortunately, Paul himself falls victim to one of these chasms of opinion in his relationship with Barnabas. Paul’s terminology to address doctrinal differences (1 Corinthians 11:19 and Galatians 5:20) is *haireseis*, denoting a difference of sound doctrine, even to the point of being an unjustified group (Accordance 2010).

Just prior to the prayer in John 17 Jesus had established the institution of the Lord’s Supper in light of the Passover celebration, an institution given in great part to exhibit and foster unity with the Godhead, and unity as members of the Body of Christ. Paul affirms in 1 Corinthians 10:16, that the pinnacle of this desired oneness

¹ Brown holds that most authors contend that the unity expressed is a union of love, though Käsemann asserts that “Christians cannot simply default on this issue by reducing unity to what we call love,” it is certainly more than that (Brown 1970: 776; Köstenberger 2004:497; Carson 1991:568). Consequently, as he prays for the disciples, the nature of unity sought for the disciples is of a spiritual commonality as well (Bernard 1963:576). This is not to be solely the concept of the spiritual, as Christ has already explained that the “Badge of this unity is love” (Bernard 1963: 577), which was an attestation that the Gospel was to be not only heard, but seen in the transforming power of unity in the Body (Beasley-Murray 1987:303). It is this external manifestation of love, this evidence of the internal unity that will act as a beacon to the world of the coming of Christ.

of communion, or *koinōnia* is displayed materially in the act of the Lord's Supper, as it is a "sharing" in the blood and the Body of Christ. Mounce holds that the term *koinōnia* conveys the idea of fellowship, communion, participation and sharing (Mounce 2006:127, 247). Though the word *koinōnia* is foreign to the Gospel of John, in fact all of the gospels, John uses it numerous times in his epistles to denote community, a spirit of "belonging to each other and to God" (Johnson 1975,1976:528), and to connote a sense of having a "fellowship in faith" (Schattenmann 1986:644). Meyer sites the overlapping natures that are intertwined between unity and community (Meyer 1983:471), or between *heis* and *koinōnia*. Köstenberger notes that Christ had the vision of a unified community that would apply to those present and future believers (Köstenberger 2004:498). Paul subsequently uses the term only in a religious sense rather than a secular one to denote something greater than a society, to denote a fellowship of a higher level; he as well uses this term to express a "religious fellowship (participation) of the believer in Christ and Christian blessings for the mutual fellowship of believers" (Hauck 1983:804).

1 John 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 affirm that *koinōnia* is also held with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in addition to the communion of the saints, it is the Holy Spirit alone however, who brings believers into this fellowship (Prime 2008:105).

This evidence of *koinōnia* is an external, physical expression of the spiritual fellowship that is enjoyed by the Body being knit together with the Godhead (Hunsinger 2009:347). Thus, *koinōnia* is the internal religious fellowship or participation of sharing in the benefits of a relationship with Christ, yet manifesting itself at times in a physical expression through the Body of Christ.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit Acts 2 reveals the early Church as being of one mind, *homothumadon*, perhaps the closest model to that request of Jesus in John 17, which helped the Church to grow. Schmitz cites *homothumadon* as being infused with "togetherness", such as is evidenced in the visible, inner unity of a group faced by a common duty or danger; it is a unity, or unanimity, not embracing a personal agenda, "but on a cause greater than the individual" (Schmitz 1986:908-909). Hence, descriptive of the early Church, it is used in Acts all but one other time in the New Testament, in an effort to accentuate the internal unity of the group. As

Josephus pointed out in his apologia *Contra Apionem*, one of the great arguments of Christianity was the *symphonoia*, or harmony of the minds, which stood in harsh contrast to the arguing of the Greek philosophers of the day (Boyarin 2001:1). Hunsinger affirms that one of the greatest signs of the resurrection was the profound unity of the disciples in Acts 4:32 as they were of one heart and soul (Hunsinger 2009:346). Hence, as the oneness described is one of heart, soul and mind, it must be understood that the foundational understanding of *koinōnia* is primarily of a metaphysical nature, which is evidenced to the world in the natural realm.

The book of Acts also demonstrates multiple frictions and dissensions within the early Church. Of particular import is the “sharp disagreement” between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:39; they definitely failed to be in, and exhibit *koinōnia* in the Body of Christ. This kind of inner Christian controversy presented a serious apologetic problem for the leaders of the early Church (Boyarin 2001:1). The erroneous interpretation of this passage seems to give clear excuse for Christians to terminate *koinōnia* with one another under biblical precedent.

Subsequent behavior of Christians continued to reveal the early Church as factious, legalistic, defective and, at times heretical (Hayes 1999:177), even at times preaching a foreign gospel, thus damaging the witness of the Church. Allen rightly states, “Disunity for reasons of petty difference, scandal, or (worse yet) theological division reflect failures to appropriately maintain Christian communion” (Allen 2007:113-119).

Initially, there do appear be areas in Scripture in which divisions are permissible, or even mandated. According to Grudem, there are three primary reasons for separation: 1) Doctrinal, 2) Matters of conscience, and 3) Practical considerations (Grudem 1994:879-883). Mohler holds these areas to be 1) fidelity of doctrine, 2) purity of life, and 3) unity of fellowship, where as Schaffer simply defines the areas as orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community (Mohler 1998:183). On a simplified level Yoder merely holds the only valid motive for discipline, and possibly excommunication (division) are reconciliation and restoration, which appears to be much too parochial and not in sync biblically (Yoder 1985:220). Although this researcher holds Grudem in the highest of regards, the parameters for division seem to be unclear and minimally supported; they do not

appear to be accurate or exhaustively sufficient, in part, as the matter of division through discipline is vague. He does, however, accurately define these three areas to be limited to division between true believers and false “believers”. Grudem also rightly suggests that “no fellowship”, or “excommunication”, is “implied” between believers only, in serious cases of church discipline though again, substantiation is scant (Grudem 1994:881-883). According to 2 John 10-11, a person of false *koinōnia*, one who holds to a false theology but claims to be in the Body, may be rejected, not even deserving of a greeting. This points to a justifiable division between true believers and those who only “claim” to be followers of Christ. Paul admonishes the Galatians to curse those who do not embrace the Gospel, which he has delivered (Galatians 1:8). 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 informs that believers have no intrinsic “fellowship”, or *koinōnia*, with unbelievers (Johnson 1975,1976:528). Paul exhorts the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5:11 to them to expel the immoral person, or “so called brethren” from among them. This references an errant believer who claims to be in the Body, but by his moral actions reveals himself to be unrepentant to the Word, and not deserving of association with the Church. He encourages the Thessalonians to keep away from any idle brother, who does not embrace the traditions received from Paul (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Matthew 18 advises the Church to treat an unrepentant brother as a “Gentile or a tax collector”. This passage does seem to have merit as to the justifiability of the expulsion of a brother, and even obtains the hearty approval of Christ. Thus, initially, possible justifications of division are seen varying from erroneous theology to immoral behavior by unbelievers, to unrepentant believers unwilling to place themselves under the authority of those who watch over their souls (Hebrews 13:17). Unfortunately, however, the present day use of this extreme use of discipline or “excommunication” is all too casually implemented in the modern day Church against the brethren.

History has continued to cast doubt as to whether the High Priestly prayer of Christ has been affirmatively answered, or more specifically, whether the Church is in unity. Denominational and intra-church lines are drawn repeatedly. New doctrinal and personal conflicts are introduced continuously breaking down unity (Hunsinger 2009:347). Ryken says of John 17, the trueness of the fact that Christ was sent from God is assured, made visible by the unity in the Body. Therefore, Christ gave glory to the Body which had been given to him by the Father to aid in that measure (Ryken

2001). This begs the question, “Why has that glory not been utilized?” The answer seemingly lies in the divisive posture of the Church.

Many volumes have been written regarding the Lord’s Supper, fellowship, reconciliation, and communion of the saints, but few, if any, address the concern of justified schisms, sanctioned excommunication, or permissible broken *koinōnia* in the Body of Christ, if indeed they do exist. Calvin does concede a wide berth of grace in fellowship, but demands recognition of the “heads of true doctrine” among the Church’s members (Calvin 2008:679-680). Establishment of those “heads” though is debateable between denominations and individuals. Stedman also insists on doctrinal conformity but fails to define what those “heads” may be (Steadman 1995:57). Berkouwer notes the failure of unity even affecting the eschatological outlook for the Church (Berkouwer 1976:35). Küng posits whether the one great people of God can continue to be “split up into an ugly plurality of larger and smaller tribes” or will they continue to be “offshoots of the same tree” that disassociate themselves from one another? (Küng 1967:271,282). What remains is a Church in constant schism with itself, failing to provide even the faintest glimmer of unity among its members (Hunsinger 2009:347). There are indeed times when divisions appear to be in order though it is a subject often avoided; the purpose of this research is to identify those particular areas where a division in *koinōnia* may be biblically and theologically acceptable so that the Church may in harmony with the prayer of Christ, the will of God.

1.2 Problem

Within the ecclesiastical environment of the 21st century the Church is ever increasing in conflict resembling cell division rather than unity. Churches are splitting, seminars in church conflict are increasing, reconciliation consultants are thriving as conflict abounds (Larsen 1991:210), and denominations continue to grow in number due to social conflict as the causal mechanism (Sutton 2004:172). Theoretically and even doctrinally, orthodoxy would confess that unity is possible through the giving of Christ’s glory, however, it is in the praxis of the Church where failure abounds (Carson 1980:199). The Church is rightly able to profess theological

truths, but is also expected to evidence them to the world through its witness, as declared unity is not merely positional (Carson 1980:201). *Christianity Today* suggests a proactive separation may be in order as only a sentimental unity remains among major denominations (Christianity Today 2004:23). Blomberg asserts that indeed this unity is difficult to acknowledge in light of the many splintering factions (Blomberg 2008:224). As a result, the observed lack of unity in the Body of Christ is a devastating witness to the world.

Scripture clearly calls believers to be in unity; however, many Christians are quick to rationalize separation within the Body of Christ as being biblically justifiable. As a result factions are pronounced throughout Christendom to such a degree that it is difficult to comprehend that the glory of God the Father is manifested through the Church in the form of unity (Leitch 1975,1976:844). As long as believers are under the impression that divisions in the Body are a biblically justifiable option they will freely continue to exercise division as a viable solution to tension. If believers are not in accordance with Scripture, and their witness attesting to Christ is hindered, then the Church is not manifesting the glory given to Christ, and as such, the world will have a difficult time believing that Christ was sent from God, and believing in him. Schaeffer takes it further and states that in view of John 13:34-35, the world is given the right to inspect the Church and its love for one another. In light of John 17, he further maintains, they also have the right to judge whether the Father has sent the Son on the basis of the observable love among Christians (Schaeffer 1971:62). Hunsinger asserts that the Church does not have the ability to create *koinōnia*, as it is a divine gift, but does have the choice to “gladly nurture” it once it is present (Hunsinger 2009:347). That also demonstrates that the Church has the ability to damage *koinōnia*, though it has been initiated by Christ. Therefore, if a biblical construct cannot be generated supporting any particular division, then it may be necessary to examine the perceived level of obedience to the Word.

Most research has sought to address elements of reconciliation and fellowship, rather than the preliminary issue of whether any divisions have sufficient biblical merit at all. The question this research seeks to answer is: What kind of biblical and theological justification exists to support divisions of fellowship within the Body of Christ?

On a theoretical level, the question needs to be answered: “What tolerances of division are biblically justifiable, or permitted in the scope of Scripture?” More specifically, it is necessary to see if the Church is in obedience according to this standard supplicated by Christ, or if it is outside of the biblical parameters. On a practical level, what needs to be defined is whether the Church is actually in alignment with Scripture, and how that should affect the behavior of Christians today in their role of glorifying God.

1.3 Objectives

Three objectives to be answered in the resolution of this problem are as follows:

(1) The researcher seeks to clearly determine whether personal schisms such as that of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:39 are models of justifiable behavior among Christians.

(2) The researcher seeks to biblically and systematically demarcate the biblical parameters of behavior advocated regarding divisions in *koinōnia*.

(3) Finally, the researcher seeks to make constructive conclusions regarding an accurate understanding of the communion of the saints regarding divisions.

1.4 Purpose

This study contributes to the body of knowledge of Christian obedience in light of Scripture in that it seeks to identify and then justify that paradigm of acceptable schisms or, permissible divisions. It then seeks to answer the question, “To what degree are Christians in accordance with Scripture in tolerating separations in the Body of Christ?”

It is essential to establish biblical and theological justification for schism in the Body if members in the Church desire to be in accordance with God’s Word if and when they elect to sever *koinōnia*. The researcher aims to identify the implications

of clearer understanding so that believers who are participating in any acts of division may understand the error or validity of their actions. If divisions in *koinōnia* are truly permitted within Scripture, such parameters must be clearly defined. As such this research has components that benefit on many levels: personal, professional, academic and practical.

Hayes has rightly said, “A unified Church in the world is more than ideal; it is a compelling and attractive necessity” (Hayes 1999:210). The desired result of believers is to attain the level of unity for which Christ prayed in John 17, so the Bride may be in unity and reveal Jesus as the Christ sent from God. In this way the Bride of Revelation 19:7 can make herself ready for the Bridegroom. The focus of this research is to aid the Church in moving toward the unity for which Christ is praying (Stibbs 1974:68) yet, still maintaining its own God-given diversity all within the confines of Scriptural accord.

The title, “A Biblical and Theological Examination of Permissible Division in *Koinōnia*”, is very specific and intentional. I am a pastor whose heart is drawn toward unity in the Church as a glorifying characteristic. It grieves me when I see the multiple relationships that are broken within the Church. People are taking sides, and then justifying those sides, but very few are doing so according to guidelines of Scripture, as I understand it. In my own church I have individuals who have come from a large church split; they refuse to have anything with “those people”. Also, my own brother has severed relationship with me because I counselled him against his divorce, as he had no biblical right. This grieves me, and so for both personal and vocational reasons, this is a relevant topic.

The word “division” has been chosen as it is the same word that Paul uses in Corinthians (NASB), and very specific in identifying a situation that exists which is not right. Division communicates a condition that exists that was not intended to exist. Berkouwer also uses “division” in his book to stand in stark contrast to the word “unity”. On the other hand the word “separation”, at times implies passivity; that this may be a condition that normally existed and was originally intended to be that way. Division is implemented and intentional; separation “happens”. The word “diversity” definitely denotes something that was “God-given” and therefore, may not have had anything to do with man’s involvement, whereas division is something we

as humans initiate. “Disunity” merely implies a random position of many members whereas “division” is the perception or image of “sides”, battle lines, chasm, schism, side against side, “yours/mine”. Although there is some overlap, division is not the same as disunity; disunity is the state of not being unified, division is bodily dismemberment. Disunity is not being brought together as one; division is an intentional schism of a once unified entity. These are very subtle nuances, but that is why “division” is the word of choice. It is comparable to the difference between *separate* and *sever*; both imply disconnection though one is passive, the other is destructively intentional.

It has been noted that unity in the Church is the desired result of Christ, though that has seldom if ever been achieved. The word “permissible” has been selected as it is posited that in light of certain behaviors within the Body of Christ, God has allowed appropriate responses, one of which may be to divide from fellowship. Therefore “permissible” is addressing the action allowed by God and His Word rather than a mere subjective view of tolerance by the Church or any one individual.

That being stated, argumentation herein is not *in favor* of division in the Church; my desire is for unity and *koinōnia*; but God wants a pure Church overall. My intent is to clearly see where Scripture allows any sort of division to exist, if indeed it does. I have been directed to Matthew 18 regarding unrepentant sin, and discipline. It is becoming clear that we as Christians have very few permissible divisions within the Body that are sanctioned by God; but when someone is excommunicated, or under disciplinary action, there is a division that is allowable, and even more so, given the authority of Heaven. I am not arguing *for* a division in the Body, but merely seeking to understand all of the allowable circumstances, as people are so quick to sever *koinōnia* for any minor reason. In this way, I will know how to proceed with my own situation, and I will be better able to counsel others who maintain a justifiable division in *koinōnia*.

The focus of this study is not merely to exhaust the understanding of discipline or excommunication in light of the Church, but to establish the only areas where Scripture would sanction a division or excommunication. The purpose of this study is to identify if, where and when divisions are allowable so that in the practical

realm of fellowship, when someone refuses to reconcile with a brother or sister, it can be pointed out specifically that choice is not an option unless the directives of Matthew 18 have been implemented.

As Vanhoozer has rightly clarified the purpose of systematic theology is “to articulate the unity of the Scriptures” in regards to doctrine “since the nature of doctrine is theology’s best-known product and that the theology best serves the church as a theoretical science and form of knowledge, or as a practical wisdom and form of life” (DTIB 2005:774). The attempt therefore is to construct an orderly account of the Christian belief of division, and how that is revealed in the practical realm, as church doctrine and practice are inextricably linked. Lindbeck further argues that:

Doctrines are neither truth claims about objective realities nor symbolic expressions of subjective religious experience, but rather rules for intersubjective- which is to say, ecclesial- language and practice (DTIB 2005:778).

Bargerhuff adds that one of the primary goals of systematic theology is to “bring a deeper theological understanding of God into the practical life and ministry of the Church” (Bargerhuff 2010:2). Therefore, the scope of theology, specifically systematic theology, is to identify that corpus of knowledge and rules which govern Christian speech and action, the essence of logic of ecclesial practice (DTIB 2005:778), and this must be garnered from “sound, literal, grammatical, historical exegesis of the text” (Bargerhuff 2010:2).

1.5 Delimitations

This examination will not focus on an exhaustive understanding of the communion of the saints, as this is not within the scope of study, but rather constrain itself to the appropriateness of establishing divisions or schisms within the Body, as such, it will address the justifiability of schismatic behavior in the Body of Christ. I wish to examine in greater detail the “reasons for separation” that Grudem alleges, as he gives only a cursory introduction to the topic.

This study will seek to define proper biblical unity in the Body of Christ. It will also address doctrinal, denominational, intra-church and personal division that may be found in the boundary of Scripture, in short relational divisions. Though any divisions are severe, particular attention will be upon personal conflict/relational schisms and disciplinary measures among true believers, rather than relationships merely between members of the “visible” church. This is to specify that *koinōnia* is understood to refer to those who truly enjoy mutual relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; the scope of this study is not inclusive, nor relative to those who stand in antithetical relation to orthodoxy.

An overall biblical understanding of the permissibility is sought rather than examination of specific examples or causes of a relationship which has been riven. Therefore, an in-depth investigation of divorce, alcohol, abortion, homosexuality, or other causal agents will not be exhaustively undertaken.

1.6 Design and Methodology

The research undertaken in this study will be of a literary nature. The proposed investigation falls in the field of systematic theology, and as such, will be employing the alternate design for evangelical systematic theology advocated in Smith (Smith 2008:196-201). Specifically, this is a systematic examination that seeks to understand, validate or deny the justifiability of divisions in the Body, in light of the entirety of Scripture. The aim is to assess the anchor texts, endorse the interpretations or reject them, and apply those findings to the 21st century Church (Mouton 1996:167). The study will be undertaken in six major steps:

First, the study will begin with a reaffirmation of the research proposal in which the key problem (background), key questions (problem), objectives, purpose (value), hypotheses and delimitations will be reintroduced to the corpus of the dissertation itself. Additionally, in this section will be an assertion of the design methodology of the study and a proposed schedule.

Second, this study will continue with a literary review in which the current and historical viewpoints and practice are examined, and the major theological

understandings reviewed regarding unity and divisions in the Body. Materials regarding church health, and ecclesiastical behavior, as well as personal conflict among believers will be examined. Focus will include defining and examining key theological understandings of unity, *koinōnia*, and divisions. Of notable interest will be Küng, Grudem, Berkouwer, Calvin, Bonhoeffer and Berkhof. Arguments holding to allowance of separation due to doctrinal dissonance, personal conflict, and behavioral discord will be introduced, even to the extreme level of excommunication. Introduced into the study at this stage will be an understanding of sacred space and will be further examined throughout the research.

Third, an inductive study of the antecedent Old Testament passages relating to unity and divisions will be studied providing informing theology. Relevant texts concerning schisms in the Scriptures will be examined, particularly those relating to prescriptive separation, arguments, excommunications, relational conflict, and mandates for unity. The data sought will be relevant to the general health of the Church as pertains to *koinōnia* and separations, with the expectation of synthesizing a theory of the progressive revelation of divisions in Scripture.

Fourth, biblical exposition will be done on the anchor texts in the New Testament. Of particular interest are the nature of unity in John 17, and the model of church discipline found in Matthew 18:15-20, as it is hypothesized that a disciplinary form of separation may be the only permissible type of division. Benefits and consequences of this model will be appropriately defined and examined. Also, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 5, 10 and 12 will be examined.

Fifth, is the retroductional phase of the study, which will seek to examine subsequent relevant passages of Scripture and generate a valid biblical polemic on allowable divisions, dissensions and excommunications, as they serve to lay a “conceptual foundation for the key text” (Smith KG 2008:197) of Matthew 18:15-20 and the unity supplicated by Christ, specifically the areas in which the Body may be falling short of this aim of unity. This text as well as others will be subject to rhetorical criticism to generate the biblical model sought. It is surmised that a great portion of this section will be dedicated to the proper understanding of the unity sought in John 17, and the effective and proper *execution* of the Matthean text, as it initially appears the only truly justifiable division permissible is in the realm of

disciplinary measures. A broader, inclusionary polemic will be presented here as well in the event that it is discovered there are multiple areas of permissible division.

Finally, it will conclude with an analysis, identification of the contemporary significance, and practical suggestions for the Body regarding schisms. The researcher will attempt to draw out the appropriate mindset as well as the specific acts mandated by such a request as the one Christ issued in his Johannine prayer. The question needs to be answered whether the Body can sustain division yet, still be in biblical unity. As the study yields results, suggestions will be offered as to how the 21st century Church may or may not be in alignment to the will of God as pertains specifically to this mandate. Analysis of how improvement in those deficient areas can be developed toward the effective carrying out of proper biblical behavior is deemed relevant so as to be in accordance to the will of God.

Woven though the research is an examination of the sacred space of God as the ability of Christians to approach God is dependent upon holiness, both positionally and practically. The *koinōnia* sought with God is affected by *koinōnia* with one another in the Body (1 John 1:3-2:11).

1.7 Hypotheses

As the primary purpose of this research is to answer the question, “What kind of biblical and theological justification exists to support divisions of fellowship within the Body of Christ?”, the hypotheses in this study are as follows:

- 1) The witness of the Church is greatly compromised as a result of the level of license of division exercised in the Body of Christ.
- 2) The scope of biblically acceptable tolerances is more parochial than the historical practice of the Church would suggest.
- 3) Justifiable division in the Body of Christ is only allowable according to the strict mandates of Matthew 18:15-20; if an offense is not egregious enough to fall into the realm of discipline and excommunication, it is not enough to validate a permissible division in *koinōnia*.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In order to answer the question, “To what degree are Christians in accordance with Scripture in tolerating separations in the Body of Christ?” it is deemed worthy to examine previous concepts and literature regarding unity, and its dissolution. It needs to be understood Biblically what consequences are generated as a result of any breach of unity. As the undertaking of any study of this nature is quite grand in scale, it is the intent of this chapter to examine relevant and credible texts, both current and many older seminal works, to identify and accurately understand with full theological fidelity, that which is the corpus of the Church: what is unity, *koinōnia*, the defining points of the Church, historical understanding, division and personal conflict, and finally, to introduce the concept of sacred space. The movement of this investigation is to initially focus on the general understanding of ecclesial unity, and progress to the more specific or narrow, and thus the justification of the dissertation, or division within the Body of Christ, and for what possible reasons. Though it is large in scale, it is necessary to understand the blueprint for wholeness, if brokenness or division is to be truly understood and justified.

2.1 Unity

Augustus Hopkins Strong asserts in regards to unity, “It is a rope of iron filings held together by a magnetic current” (Strong 1907:904). In order for an adequate analysis of permissible division in *koinōnia*, a sufficient understanding of what unity is, in and of itself, must be sought if there is to be a proper appreciation for the severity of division of the Body. For this, the Church need only to look to the “dynamic interrelationship” (Kregel 2005:151) between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as the perfect model of relational unity or oneness which precedes any human existence (EFCA 2011:156); it is found in the eternally existent Trinitarian Godhead. D.A. Carson concedes that, “the Bible actually gives us very little about the ontological Trinity but rather in the revealed nature of the Trinity, the economic Godhead” (Carson 2012). The three persons of the Trinity eternally existed in perfect loving unity, perfect governmental order and perfect relational harmony within the being of God. There was no division between the persons of the Trinity, only distinction (Calvin 2008:78).

Tertullian likens this “unity of nature” as a ray of the sun, which cannot be divided nor diminished as it never departs from the source (Tertullian 1953:105-109). Erickson builds upon this in claiming that they are numerically distinct, so as to be counted, yet, they are “manifestations of a single indivisible power”. Hence, there are distinctions but no divisions or separations (Erickson 2003:358). This imagery was borrowed, in part, from the likes of Tatian and Justin Martyr who claimed that though the Word and Father are distinct, they were as unable to be separated as light is unable to be separated from its own source (Erickson 2003:358). Thus, the unity of essence was a doctrine embraced and affirmed centuries before the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. Knight asserted that this plurality of persons in the Godhead could be likened to drops of water, which hold quantitative distinction, yet are qualitatively of the same substance, and in total, comprise the entire being of God (Knight 1953:20). Hence, they are quantitatively diverse, though qualitatively unified.

The Council of Constantinople sought to further refine and clarify this understanding of the unity of the Godhead. The resultant understanding was defined as “one *ousia* in three *hupostaseis*”, asserting the Godhead exists simultaneously in

three modes of being (Erickson 2003:361). They are distinct in the relationship they have for each other as “the capacity for relationship is at the heart of the notion of ‘person’ when used of the members of the Trinity” (EFCA 2011:42). *Homoousion* is this understanding of oneness of *ousia*, or substance, which affirmed that any activity of any one of the persons of the Holy Triad, meant that the others were included as well to some degree in that activity. Gunton holds that this concept allows God to share his being without serving to subvert his unity (Gunton 1995:938). As such, they can be distinguished numerically in their persons, yet are indistinguishable in essence or being (Erickson 2003:362). Finally, Erickson confirms that, following Aristotelian doctrine, only what is material is quantitatively divisible, hence the essence cannot be trisected (Erickson 2003:362).

This divine relationship of unity in love was his alone for eternity past to savor long before he ever created a world to love (EFCA 2011:43). Jesus thoroughly references this eternal, intimate, internal union in his High Priestly prayer of John 17:24. The eighth-century monk John of Damascus built upon this and asserted that although the Persons of the Trinity were distinct, they were able to mutually indwell one another and “interpenetrate” (EFCA 2011:43). This teaching, later to be termed *perichoresis*, introduced the idea of “coinherence”, which stated that the Godhead exists “undivided in divided persons” (Erickson 2003:361). Twombly insists that this *perichoresis* transfers to the hypostatic union of Christ, that there is in some great mystic sense a *perichoresis* element in the incarnation, and that John of Damascus embraces this thought, but tacitly moves more toward the language of “participation” in his teaching (Twombly 2013). It is perhaps with caution that this thought is pursued, but if there were indeed a perichoretic element to the hypostatic union, then it would argue against any form of Apollinarianism, Arianistic, Nestorian or monophysitistic theology, as it would both explain and affirm the possibility of mutual indwelling of the two natures. The matter of whether mankind enjoys a perichoretic relationship with God, or whether that *koinōnia* is the kind of relationship for which Christ is praying is however unclear (Twombly 2013). In the midst of a perfect and nurturing relationship, God additionally desired a relationship with man for his glory, so much so that he created him in his image to facilitate such a relationship. Mankind was created for relational unity and mutual indwelling; mankind was created for relational community.

Though all members of the Trinity are equal in authority, eternality and divinity, they vary in function as they work together within the Godhead for the very purpose of creation and, subsequently for redemption through the Gospel, as he is love (1 John 4:8, 16). The Trinity is a relational being evidenced by the “personal relationships of love within himself” (EFCA 2011:42). The Father establishes the plan of salvation for mankind by sending his Son (the Gospel), “the Gospel is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, and is accomplished through the work of Christ and becomes effective in and for us through the application of Christ’s work by the power of the Holy Spirit” (EFCA 2011:20). The Father initiates a plan of redemption, the Son obeys to the point of death and the Spirit initiates regeneration. In all cases in the Old Testament, it can be established that God is relational and seeks relationship with his creation, mankind. Even after the fall God consistently sought to redeem a people for himself, which he had chosen from eternity (EFCA 2011:20).

This model of unity in the Godhead is announced for the benefit of the Church as unity applied to the Church and each individual member is defined by Holloman as, the “practical interpersonal outworking of the oneness in and with Jesus Christ that comes with membership in Christ’s body” (Kregel 2005:561). He further asserts that because this bond of unity is issued of God “the resulting unity transcends mere good will, theological agreement on non-essentials, common interest, or ecclesiology” (Kregel 2005:562); in fact it is this unicity, this aseity which identifies God and God alone. Grudem affirms that this ecumenical unity is described as follows: “The unity of the church is its degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians” (Grudem 1994:874). Horton identifies this Church body as being “one”, in unity, and “catholic”, of the universality of the saints in agreement with Küng, and “holy” or positionally sanctified. He argues that it is corporately engaged in the process of progressive sanctification, the “ongoing process in which the Church is being constantly provoked, challenged, renewed, and reformed by the Spirit, conformed to the image of Christ through God’s Word” (Horton 2011:861). Hence, God had once again redeemed a people to himself, through the work of Christ with whom he can share spiritual union in some sense similar to that of the relationship between himself, Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Kregel 2005:562). Kossé announces that unity in general as follows:

Unity may be defined as the condition in which something forms an organic whole. Although different elements are involved, the whole is characterized by agreement and internal coherence. The definition also applies to the unity of believers to the extent that they share a common foundation of faith and practice (Kossé 2010:1314).

This unity extends to the individual members as well, those within the Body of the Church as they become “one spirit” with Christ and with each other emanating at the *perichoretical* genesis of being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). As such, a particular transcendent unity is enjoyed among the redeemed, or “community of saints” regardless of external, or physical factors. Horton writes that the “called out” community, or the Church, “does not come together as an aggregate of individuals who have determined to form such a society, but is summoned, gathered, and called out by God’s electing, redeeming, justifying, and renewing grace” (Horton 2011:828). Again, Grudem holds the simple notion that, “the unity of the church is its degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians” (Grudem 1994:874).

The purpose of this unity is clarified as Hunsinger notes rightly, drawing from John 17 that the trueness of the fact that Christ was sent from God is assured, made visible by the unity expressed in the Body. Therefore, Christ issued some measure of glory to the Body which had been given to him by the Father to aid in that measure (Hunsinger 2009:346).

2.2 *Koinōnia*

This unity, as it is referred to in the community of the saints, is identified in the New Testament as the term *koinōnia*; it has the understanding of fellowship. Deztler points out that the root meaning of the word is “common”, “so fellowship is having an experience or possessions in common with someone else” (Detzler 1986:158). The fellowship, or *koinōnia* of the saints is intended to model the divine unity, or fellowship of the Trinity. Simply put, McRay states that the meaning conveyed of *koinōnia* is that of participation (McRay 2001:445). McRay continues that this was the theological expression Paul preferred to use to validate the inclusion of the

Gentiles into the family of God, the fact that they had been completely included into “God’s work among the Jews” (McRay 2001:445).

In relation to the Body of Christ, Schreck maintains two forms of unity exist: true unity, or *vera unitas* which exists as a gift in and through the Body of Christ, and *concordia* which is the external witness of “getting along” with one another and thus, he asserts the prayer of unity in John 17 has at least in part been granted (Schreck 2007:609). Although this definition of *concordia* unity may be true in some cases, it is doubtful this is the unity for which Christ is praying, as he is not praying for mere tolerance, or the ability to “get along” in physical proximity with each other, but his focus is toward harmony and fervent love toward one another, the same harmony evidenced in the Godhead which is evidence of a strong metaphysical unity. Christ is not praying for simple physical cooperation among the disciples, but a rich spiritual bond of unity, of the nature mentioned in the book of Acts which focuses on the harmony of the minds. The external expression of this unity is the evangel of the Church to the world, which attests to the sending of Christ by the Father.

Thus, this unity among the redeemed, or *koinōnia*, is the internal religious fellowship or participation of sharing in the benefits of a relationship with Christ, yet manifesting itself at times in a physical expression through the Body of Christ. Guthrie points out that the Church of Jesus Christ is an organism, not a society; a communion, not a guild; a fellowship, not an association (Guthrie 1981:741). The communion of the saints stresses the common life in Christ and the inherent blessings of God which accompany that (McRay 2001:445). Though this *koinōnia* was the desire of Christ in John 17, before the day is finished, division has come into play as, immediately following the meal an argument ensued as to which one of the disciples was the greatest.

Mounce holds that the term *koinōnia* conveys the idea of fellowship, communion, participation and sharing (Mounce 2006:127), yet with much stronger magnitude than the word that is simplistically understood today, as contemporary usage implies a mere sense of companionship or social intercourse (Wuest 2004: 96: vol. 2). Though the word *koinōnia* is foreign to the Gospel of John, John uses it numerous times in his epistles to denote community, a spirit of “belonging to each other and to God” (Johnson 1975,1976:528), and to connote a sense of having

“mutual interests” (Danker 2000:553). Meyer sites the overlapping natures that are intertwined between unity and community (Meyer 1983:471), or between *heis* and *koinōnia*. Köstenberger notes that Christ had the vision of a unified community such that it would apply to those present and future believers (Köstenberger 2004:498). Paul subsequently uses the term only in a religious sense rather than a secular one to denote something greater than a society, to denote a fellowship of a higher level; Paul uses this term to express a “religious fellowship (participation) of the believer in Christ and Christian blessings for the mutual fellowship of believers” (Hauck 1983:804). 1 John 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 affirm that *koinōnia* is also held with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in addition to the communion of the saints, it is the Holy Spirit alone however, who brings us into this fellowship (Prime 2008:105).

Muller more than suggests that this *koinōnia* is not merely limited to living Christians, but to all Christians including those who have proceeded in death:

Koinōnia, therefore, is no worldly or earthly fellowship, nor is it the individual congregation of Christians, but the communion of all Christians, both in their present suffering and in the hope of resurrection (Muller 1985:169).

This mysterious relational value is identified and remembered during the Lord’s Supper, and as Childs notes, “It was characteristic of the Greeks to not hesitate to carry over this idea of a sharing of life into the sphere of religion, and to postulate a *koinōnia* between the deity and men through various media such as sacramental meals and the like” (Childs 1952:355). Hauck notes that in sacral speech *koinon* references “an inward reception of mysterious power in eating and drinking” (Hauck 1983:799). Demosth further defines it as a meal where a *koinonos* or partner is there at the table of fellowship of the sacrificial meal (Hauck 1983:799). It is not a reference to a local church or a “group of individuals united by a common idea”; it is not an “earthly society grounded in human nature” (Schattenmann 1986:643). Rather, Schattenmann stresses that this “unanimity and unity is one that is brought about by the Spirit” (Schattenmann 1986:643), and as seen earlier, initiated by God (Brown 1970:776). Hence, a spiritual union with Christ and the Body of believers is enjoyed. In 1 John, *koinōnia* is a favorite term used to describe a living bond enjoyed by the Christian; it is a word implying “inward fellowship on a religious basis” (Hauck 1983:807-808).

As noted earlier, *koinōnia* is the internal religious fellowship or participation of sharing in the benefits of a relationship with Christ, yet manifesting itself at times in a physical expression through the Body of Christ (Hunsinger 2009:347). Therefore, it is necessary, when approaching an understanding of permissible division in *koinōnia*, to understand the bifurcation in the meaning of the term. Of key and crucial note is the understanding that one can never affect the intangible, eternal unity (internal religious fellowship) a believer has with the Savior, or with one another, hence, the division within the scope of the study will be that which *can* be affected, whatever that will be found to be so.

Acknowledging that perfect *koinōnia* in the Body of believers is the ideal, an understanding of the causal mechanisms producing division is fundamental to any resolution. Not surprisingly, Bonhoeffer places the problem of sin at the core of a proper understanding of broken community (Bonhoeffer 1998:107). He asserts that after the fall, love was then replaced by selfishness which gave rise both to an immediate break in community with God and likewise in human community which altered the direction of the entirety of spiritual orientation; thus, “morality and religion in their proper sense disappear from human nature” (Bonhoeffer 1998:107). The introduction of sin into the human economy had not only ruptured the relationship between God and man, but also between human beings (EFCA 2011:156), a chasm which is not constantly rectified because of salvation. In affirmation of this, Thomas notes that, “Science, philosophy, and Christianity all unite in testifying to the essential unity of the universe, with man as the crown and culmination, and there seems no reason to doubt that the fact of sin has in some way affected the entire constitution of things created” (Thomas 1946:220). Thomas asserts that this sin so affected the destruction of unity, and because all of creation was intimately linked together, mankind’s fall from grace affected all of creation (cf. Genesis 3).

The primal state (the state prior to the fall) Bonhoeffer claims, exhibited a behavior wherein humans displayed a relation of giving which was replaced in the sinful state which is purely demanding; “every person exists in complete, voluntary isolation; everyone living their own life, rather than all living the same life in God” (Bonhoeffer 1998:108). Hence, the natural “forms” of community remain in the fallen state, yet they are corrupted in their innermost core (Bonhoeffer 1998:108).

Before the fall of man God initiated a close fellowship with mankind (Kregel 2005:151), which was hindered due to errant theology (the thinking that Adam and Eve would become like God), and an improper praxis to what God had instructed them. Therefore, a division was created between a sacred God and a tainted creation. Both of these causal mechanisms will be investigated in the resolution of question of permissible division.

Though God seeks restoration with his people he evidences his “righteous repulsion against all that is contrary to his holy nature” (EFCA 2011:39). As such he distances himself from that which is unholy. He will not dwell in his Temple until sacrifice is made to allow him to dwell in the presence of his people. Wrath exists between himself and the offending parties, which is the central obstacle to be overcome in the restoration of any relationship (EFCA 2011:117). The eternal solution to the human condition would not be provided until the death of Jesus will provide the means of reconciliation, once for all, between the holy and the unholy, offering peace to the estranged parties (EFCA 2011:117).

McRay notes that, “the unity in the fellowship of the early church was not based upon uniformity of thought and practice, except where limits of immorality or rejection of the confession of Christ were involved” (McRay 2001:445). *Koinōnia* was held to be so fundamental that division in the Church was believed to be both sinful and blasphemous, and served only to eliminate a portion of the Church, but such was the case that there was not always a very distinct line between schism and heresy (Westminster 1983:523).

2.3 “True Believers”

Koinōnia is only able to be experienced among God’s redeemed. The members who are to constitute this community are what Calvin referred to as “true believers”, those individuals who are included in the community of the saints. Evangelical Convictions asserts that, “The true Church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone” (EFCA 2011:158). And furthermore, that, “the local church ought to be comprised of those who have personally embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ in faith and have been brought into

his Body by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit...” (EFCA 2011:165). This mandates that the “doctrine of God has to be understood as more than a mere assent to cognitive truth claims” as there “is no such thing as head knowledge of the truth that is divorced from faith, worship and a godly life” (Bargerhuff 2010:2). Those who are not “true believers”, or truly redeemed cannot enjoy a reconciled relationship with God through Christ, they cannot participate in a sharing of those attributes common only to the redeemed. Horton rightly holds that those who enjoy unity and catholicity of the Church are only those who are in fellowship with the triune God (Horton 2011:848). He does, however, complicate this truth by introducing the idea, in agreement with Lossky (Lossky 1967:179), that the Church is made “in the image of the Trinity” (Horton 2011:833), and embraces Wards’ affirmation of Gregory of Nyssa who said, “he who sees the Church looks directly at Christ” (Ward 2001:115). Horton is claiming that the Church, in its broken state, is able to accurately express the image of Christ, as well as the misconception that the Church is made in the image of the Trinity, rather than *man* being made in the image, which is an entirely different concept. Complicating the matter of identifying true believers is the dilemma of the wheat and the tares, those who are true believers and those who are merely mimicking true salvation in Christ. The standpoint of this researcher shall be that without a proper orthodoxy, or correct theology, a person is not in the company of the redeemed; therefore no *koinōnia* is shared on any level with one whose incorrect understanding of redemption through Christ is held. This is a broad distinction. As a result the primary focus of this study is in regards to those who truly share *koinōnia*, and thus, the ability to sever it in the first place.

Citing Titus 3:10 and 2 John 11, Irenaeus holds that:

All of those who separate from the church and give heed to old wives’ tales. Like these persons, are truly self-condemned. Paul commands us to “avoid [these men] after a first and second admonition.” Furthermore, John, the disciple of the Lord, has intensified their condemnation. For he desires us not even to address them with the salutation of “Godspeed.” He says, “He who bids them Godspeed is a partaker with their evil deeds” (Bercot 1998:211 [1.341,342]).

Also, writing concerning the predecessor of Marcion whose name was Cerdon, Irenaeus wrote that he had “been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren” (Bercot 1998:211 [1.417]).

It is essential to understand what conversion actually encompasses in the economy of the Christian equation. David F. Wells definition is as follows:

Conversion is the process whereby we turn from our sin in repentance and turn to God through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross for us...It involves forsaking sin, with its self-deifying attributes and self-serving conduct, and turning to Christ, whose death on the cross is the basis for God's offer of mercy and forgiveness (Wells 1989:28).

Samuel Kunhiyop argues that though there may be psychological, sociological and political factors involved, the main “theological components remain constant” (Kunhiyop 1993:3). He continues to argue those components as being:

1) Man's need for conversion, 2) the unique role of Christ in conversion 3) the role of individual or group decisions in conversion, 4) conversion as an event or process, 5) conversion as a mental concept and or behavior change (Kunhiyop 1993:3-4).

To this definition, this author would like to add that man's need for conversion is not the objective need for a man to be converted, but the individual man's need to understand his own need for such conversion. Conversion as an event (step number 4) would then encompass repentance from sin. Kunhiyop expands the definition to include, in the Old Testament and the New, repentance and belief (Kunhiyop 1993:31-35), a functional, yet essential pairing of the Gospel that is so often left out. He finally summarizes that conversion is a process by which the repentant moves from a position under the lordship of Satan to being under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Colossians 1:13-14) (Kunhiyop 1993:189); hence, it is the process of salvation *and* sanctification, as “God's justifying grace must not be separated from his sanctifying power and purpose” (EFCA 2011:187-190). This understanding elevates redemption in Christ to a moment of salvation *coupled with* the experience of the transformational value upon a person's life.

Though it is foundational to identify in the context of any sort of division in the Body, the above definition is much too broad to sufficiently and adequately clarify in the corpus of this work. Suffice it to say that the Body, which is referred to herein, is made up of those who have repented, and who have understood the work and Person of Jesus Christ to be the only source of salvation, and that it is he who ushers believers into a righteous and restored relationship with God. Irenaeus adds that, “No one can know the Father unless the Son reveals him; neither can anyone know the Son, except by the good pleasure of the Father” (Matthew 11:27). Also, “...the Son reveals the knowledge of the Father through his own manifestation” (Payton 2011:91). One of the many questions to be asked is, “What does this sort of revelation look like?” or, “How would one recognize that a person has truly had the Father or the Son revealed to them?” Additionally, “Is it important that *after* such a revelation occurred a response is made, such as repentance, or commitment?”

Reymond cautions:

If a Christian’s church is faithfully proclaiming the Word of God, administering the sacraments according to the institution of Christ, and faithfully exercises discipline, his church is a true church of God, and a repudiation of it is wicked and a denial of God and of Christ, even though it may have some error in it (Reymond 2001:890).

Reymond is drawing from Article 29 of the 16th century Belgic Confession which states that, “*The [true] church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head*”.

After all these questions have been answered there is the matter of *sufficient* doctrinal values embraced by the person in question. The question arises, “How much good doctrine needs to be understood?” and, “How much bad doctrine added to the good doctrine negates salvation?” At some point one must judge conscientiously and trust God, as Horton says, citing 2 Timothy 2:19, “The Lord knows those who are his” (Horton 2011:852).

When applied to the understanding of discipline and separation, the need for identifying who is “in the camp” is imperative, as a “mockers” or non-believer is not going to be receptive to the instruction of the Bible. As Proverbs says, “Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give *instruction* to a wise man and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man and he will increase *his* learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:8-10; NASB).

2.4 Schism, Division, Separation, and Excommunication

For proper understanding of such potentially effusive terms, it is necessary to conduct an in depth examination of the heart of Scripture in order to establish a secure groundwork. Therefore, the words which are commonly used in Scripture for *Schism* and *Division*, *Separation*, and even, *Excommunication* will be examined, both in context of New Testament usage and common day understanding, as well as, at times the Old Testament relevance.

2.4.1 Schism and Division

Many are the words that delineate the taking of sides or positions among people in the family of God, or the Body of Christ; some of those words are extremely revealing the appropriateness of such divisions.

One such word in New Testament is the Greek word *schisma*. *Schism*, in the simplest secular usage of the term means “to split” or “to rend” or even to “break” but also in a weaker sense, “to separate”, or “to divide” (Maurer 1988:959). Harris holds that the term is “used literally of dividing into parts or breaking into pieces and only rarely in the figurative sense of the division of opinion” (Harris 1986:543). In the religious sense, the Fellowship of Independent Churches defines a *schism* as a measure, which divides true believers, an action that would not be sanctioned in the words of Scripture, as it is condemned. They do acknowledge that some intentional separations are called for in the realm of the Epistles as often as schism is condemned (Fellowship 1965:36). Schaff affirms the usage of the word to be in a

general sense, and could be one to define a “deviation from the orthodox church, with respect to organization or discipline” (Religious 1891:645-646 v.4).

Used some 8 times in the New Testament, Lindsell communicates that *schism* stands separate from heresy in that schism is a combatant move against charity; meaning it is a hostile action taken against another believer. Heresy is, at its base, doctrinal and thus, oppositional to the Christian faith itself (Lindsell 2001:1062). He further asserts that reformers of the nature of Martin Luther and John Calvin were not indeed committing a schism from the Roman Catholic Church as the core tenet of division was doctrinal, and therefore justified because they were not dividing from the “True Church” (Lindsell 2001:1062). The Roman Catholic Church has also differentiated between *schism* and *heresy*, insisting that the Greek Orthodox Church was for the most part, orthodox, but rather erred in their *schismatic behavior*, thereby causing dissention and division in the true church of Christ due in no small part to a doctrinal divide. Hence, it has come to be known as *The Great Schism*.

Lindsell adds that a schism is definitely a rending of the Body of Christ which is sin, undeserving of sanction or excuse. He does acknowledge that an excommunication is justified in the area of heretics, as they should be cut off from contact with the Church. Finally, Lindsell concludes:

By way of summary it may be said that division based upon primary considerations of essential doctrine is not schism and is not per se wrong. Divisions that are not doctrinal, however, but which yield to other considerations, are reprehensible. They rise from a sin against charity and are contrary to the Spirit of Christ (Lindsell 2001:1063).

Lindsell holds to the guardianship of the Body through doctrinal integrity, and through unmerited exposure to “reprehensible” division in the Body. He does fall short however, of identifying a justifiable division in the Body of Christ that may be for concerns other than doctrinal. Lindsell would seem to indicate that the action of causing a *schisma* would be one of disdain as it would be a hostile maneuver, and a blight to the Body of Christ. As such, he establishes a premise that division among true believers is not allowed. Nelson’s holds that *schisma* is the separation of one church from another based generally on non-doctrinal issues (Nelson’s 2001:685).

Mounce, on the other hand, uses the term *schisma* in a broader tense, to delineate points of theology, as when “divisions” arise among the Jews as to who Jesus is. In this respect Mounce seems to hold a broader view of the term when used as a noun, a more passive application of the term, meaning a mere non-combative use of the term. In the verb form, he does acknowledge a violent nature of the word, as *schizo* identifies the tearing, such as a fabric, garment or fishing net. It is also the division that arises between disputing parties (Mounce 2006:188-189).

The consensus appears to be that a *schism* is a hostile act between two or more believers, which is seldom if ever endorsed by Scripture. Conversely, a schism cannot take place between parties in a church, one or more of whom are not believers. Duly noted in *Towards Evangelical Church Unity* is the observation that:

John refers to some who had left the church and he explains that “they went out from us” because “they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would...have continued with us” (1 John 2:19). Here is a division which is not deplored and for which the church is not condemned. The reason for this is that in this case there was no division of true Christians (Towards 1965:36-37).

Continuing on is the assertion that schisms in the early church involved divisions of relatively minor differences, yet, differences that fractured the true believers. The question posed is whether the Church can justify those things which divide true believers into denominations today (Towards 1965:37).

Contrary to the combative overtones of *schism* are the words for division, *diamerizo* and *merizo*, which are used in the New Testament to connote dissention, or merely a benign distribution of categories. For example, “the goods and possessions are ‘divided’ among those who were in need” in Acts 2:45, and the soldiers divided Jesus’ clothes among them by casting lots (John 19:24; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34). Yet, metaphorically, Mounce states that *diamerizo* can mean, “to cause dissention”. That hostile overtone can be seen as well in the response when Jesus is accused of driving out the demons by use of demonic powers. He cautions his accusers that “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand” (Luke 11:17-23). This type of division will be demonstrated in the coming of

Jesus in that he will not bring peace but “division” even within family groups (Luke 12:52) (Mounce 2006:188).

The verb form of *diamerizo*, *merizo* connotes an understanding simply “to divide, assign”. It is, says Mounce, derived from the word *meros*, which means “a part of the whole” (Mounce 2008:188). Again, the verb form can be benign, as in Luke 12:13, where a man asks Jesus to tell his brother to “divide” the inheritance with him. Or again, it can take on a more pregnant meaning of aggression as in Matthew 12:25, “a kingdom *divided* against itself cannot stand”. This word will come into the scope of this study primarily in the book of 1 Corinthians 1:13 regarding divisions in the Body of Christ.

2.4.2 Separation

The common term to denote separation in the Greek is *chorizo* and its cognates. In the secular sense Plato used this term to define the separation of the soul from the body at death, or it has as well been used as the dividing of opposing military forces (Harris 1986:534). Both Old Testament, in the Septuagint, and New Testament usage denote a *spacial* separation of persons. It can also be used in the figurative sense as well as the case of a divorce, where separation is extreme (Harris 1986:534).

Not to be relegated merely in the religious sense, separation in the context of the elect refers to being separated from those unholy areas of society and even in the Church. Hence, separation is not always to be understood in the negative sense. Erickson communicates that separation is the negative aspect of the sanctification process as it is the necessary component to being distinct from a world, which is trying to corrupt a holy follower with certain actions, attitudes, and thoughts from which believers should be separate (Erickson 2001:1091).

Again, the example is rooted in the people of Israel, who are called to be apart from the ungodly nations around them and thus, from their evil practices as well. The concept of separation applies to being set apart from the evil things, but also consecrated toward the holy purpose of a holy God (Erickson 2001:1091). The

general concept of separation will be elevated in the New Testament as the understanding of the importance of a clean Temple is urged in order to “house” a holy and righteous God. Erickson further argues this stance of separation is in accordance to biblical mandates for holiness and purity in *Christian Theology*, and contends that it is well supported in the confines of Scripture (James 1:27; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18). He asserts that such behavior should be the distinctive of lives that are in the world but not of the world (Erickson 2003:990). The bane of this reasoning is the difficulty in determining the level of involvement with any given secular body, or any given church organization or individual who is not in total submission to the perceived will and Word of God, be it moral, educational, behavioral or doctrinal (Erickson 2003:990-991). Again the argument is presented as to whether the orthodox and practicing Christian can better serve to effect change from within rather than from outside the errant body. How are Christians to be “salt of the world” if they are not in the world? In any case, he writes, this “requires a delicate balance” (Erickson 2003:992). One must note the purificatory nature of salt that inhibits infection, and retards death and decay; if it is truly effective, it must also have taste, less it should become unsavory or useless (Matthew 5:13).

Erickson expresses the need to classify “separation” into categories or degrees according to the relativity of the individual involved. He says, “What one does and thinks with respect to certain wrong and evil matters may be termed primary separation. There is also the question of whether one should separate oneself from others who are not consistently Christian. This is called “secondary separation” (Erickson 2001:1092). This researcher is not convinced that such a point of demarcation is necessary or even wise to suggest, but is satisfied to define a posture of separation from all things, spiritual, or physical, which may serve to distract from a lifestyle of holiness. Erickson further develops this idea of separation to a tertiary level contending that a separation may even be justified toward a person who is not himself separating enough from sinful influences, or other people (Erickson 2001:1092).

Erickson elaborates on this individual separation as he asks a valid question regarding separation *from* a church. He poses, “When should the Christian or a congregation separate from a congregation or a wider church fellowship?” This is

what he refers to as *ecclesiastical separation*. Reasons for separation, he maintains are that, (1) the Bible implicitly states that heresy is not to be tolerated. (2) Membership in a group involves some responsibility for *its* actions. (3) Remaining in an unfaithful fellowship seems to be tacit endorsement and even recommendation of evil. (4) It is poor stewardship to give one's money to help support Christian ministries that are not unequivocally Christian (Erickson 2001:1092).

Erickson then seemingly negates such arguments, as he reasons for remaining in the group, (1) remaining within the group allows one the opportunity to influence in a positive way the future behavior or thoughts of that group, thus "winning" it back to orthodoxy or orthopraxy. To pull away from that group abandons all hope of effecting change. (2) Separation adversely affects the witness of the Christ in a furtherance of the fragmenting of his body (Erickson 2001:1092).

Erickson does not offer any tangible instruction for determining when to exercise any of the aforementioned guidelines but simply advises that each believer will need to seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit, as there is not a clear, definite pattern to follow. He does offer the minimalistic guideline that if one is indeed *prohibited* from being allowed to promote practices and beliefs that are in accordance to the Word of God, then the Gospel is being prohibited, and therefore, separation should take place. If a person desires to remain within the Body they do so in order to engage in the healing ministry. If they choose to leave they embrace the "surgical approach" of excising themselves from the "gangrenous" body (Erickson 2001:1092). Each person, he suggests may differ in the nature and areas of separation but that all such approaches should be stemming from an individuals' motivation from belonging to the Lord (Erickson 2001:1092).

Grudem espouses the understanding that unity is the order of the Christian Church and that any calls to separate are "always commands to separate from unbelievers", not from Christians with whom one disagrees, but then he does concede that there are times when a person who is under church discipline, the kind noted in Matthew 18:17, or 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, is to be separated away from the abiding group of believers, and that there are times when the outward or visible testimony of the church cannot be maintained, or demonstrated (Grudem 1994:877-878). This separation can be demonstrated in the form of groups not associating

with another group, or individuals having nothing to do with individuals of another church (Grudem 1994:879).

As noted in section 1.1 Grudem seeks to identify *reasons* for separation but falls short of referring to them as justifications, or biblical permissions for such actions. He does identify that there are indeed *right and wrong* reasons for such behavior which are, or need to be motivated by New Testament directives (Grudem 1994:879). He clearly asserts that there are wrong reasons for such behavior and identifies them as such: Wrong reasons include “personal ambition and pride, or differences on minor doctrines” or practices which would have little bearing, or significance on the way one lives the Christian life.

Grudem does draw lines in the understanding of separation. The first area of focus is that of *separate organizations*. The second is the area of “No cooperation” in which a Christian church refuses to cooperate in joint activities with other churches (though Grudem does not cite whether those “other churches” are of the faith). And finally, he mentions the area of “no personal fellowship”. This he states, “Involves the extremely strict avoidance of all personal fellowship with members of another church, and prohibits any joint prayer or Bible study, and sometimes even ordinary social contact, with members of another church group” (Grudem 1994:879). But again, he does not define the spiritual condition of these people.

He does venture to promote some reasons for separation, which may serve to be “possibly right, depending on the specific circumstances”, but he does insist that these reasons would need to flow from the fundamental concern to protect the purity of the Church, as well as unity. The three categories he outlines are (1) doctrinal reasons, (2) reasons of conscience, (3) and practical consideration. These reasons may even provide necessary prerequisite to leave a church, in other cases he recommends a less dogmatic approach to separation.

An obvious concern that would justify separation in Grudem’s mind is that of doctrinal deviation, most likely attested to by many others, and quite certainly attributed as one of the more causal reasons for separation. In his understanding, doctrinal deviation occurs when the “doctrinal position of the church deviates from biblical standards in a serious way. This deviation may be in official statements or in

actual belief and practice, insofar as that can be determined”. But, rightfully so, Grudem asks the question, “When does doctrinal deviation become so serious that it requires withdrawing from a church or forming a separate church?” The primary call is not to categorically separate at the first sign of errant thought or behavior but to seek to work toward the encouragement for repentance and to pray for them says Grudem (Grudem 1994:880). This may involve the disciplining of certain individuals within the church but this does not give permission to leave the church if this correction does not take place immediately. Second John 10-11, notes Grudem, is very definite in regards to *bringing anybody in, or accepting anybody* who is embracing or teaching a serious heresy, but this heresy in John is relegated to erroneous teaching *about the person of Christ*, an erroneous teaching that impedes anyone from coming to salvation. He also points out that this holds to those who are false teachers, not merely individuals who hold false doctrines.

This particular caveat of exclusion would apply only to those who are not bringing the correct doctrine of Christ, or do not enjoy salvation themselves through the blood of Christ. If a church or a relationship in question is not between 2 or more true believers, then a relationship of *koinōnia* has not existed to begin with, and as such, no severance could take place. If this sort of errant doctrine defines an individual or a church of non-believers, then one would certainly be expected to no longer associate with that group (Grudem 1994:880-881). In fact, Grudem cites that Luther and Calvin both left the Roman Catholic Church because it was not a true church.

Grudem is contending that separation is only justified at this point if a person or “church” is not preaching doctrine that will lead to salvation. This addresses separating from those who are not of the faith, but that still leaves open those who are errant in other doctrines.

He does condone separating from a true church *before* it becomes a false church, if such doctrinal deviation occurs that hinders an accurate picture of God, salvation or other vital doctrines of the faith such as the Trinity, the person of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, etc. This separation could come at the revelation of a particular doctrinal error in a church creed, statement of faith, or public advocating by a church leader of heresy (Grudem 1994:881). Grudem does allow for some to

be called to separate, while giving others the freedom to stay and deal with the situation. In doing this, Grudem is not providing any absolutes for dealing with such doctrinal anomalies.

Grudem's second reason for separation is less clear, and less substantiated, it is separation in regards to *matters of conscience*. He seems to be pointing to justification to leave a church if a particular individual were stifled in his teaching or preaching of a necessary doctrine (Grudem 1994:881). This category would also include departure if in staying, a person would passively imply "approval of some unbiblical doctrine or practice within the church, and thereby encouraged others to follow that wrong doctrine or practice". Again, Grudem allows a person the right to stay in the church, in an effort to be a clear voice of disapproval of the faulty doctrine (Grudem 1994:882). Grudem points out:

In other cases, some have argued that it is required to leave a denomination when a higher governing authority in that denomination, which one has promised to obey, commands an action which is clearly sinful (that is, an action which is clearly contrary to Scripture). In such a case some would say that leaving the denomination is the only way to avoid doing either the sinful act which is commanded or the sinful act of disobedience to those in authority (Grudem 1994:882).

Overall Grudem seeks to allow separation but seems to be limited in allowing separation from the true church and a false church, rather than separation between those in the Body of Christ.

The third reason for separation in the Grudem paradigm is that of *practical considerations*. Though Grudem is well respected on so many levels, it is indeed difficult to understand his viewpoint here. He seems to advocate the departure of Christians from a particular "parent church" if they deem their presence could be detrimental to the work of the Lord; if for example, they would find "little or no fellowship with others in that church". Yet, he does not cite specific parameters, nor does he identify whether or not those in the "parent church" are even actually saved (Grudem 1994:882). He again asserts that any move needs to be firmly rooted in prayer and mature judgment.

To make matters less clear, he adds a fourth element to this category of 3 reasons for separation. In this fourth element he poses the question, “Are there times when cooperation and personal fellowship are prohibited?” Although this is the heart of the research at hand in this dissertation, Grudem does not address this question specifically toward separation among unbelievers. He states that there are times of “no cooperation”, or “no personal fellowship”, but holds that according to the passages he can find, this applies to separation *from* unbelievers but only in certain instances, and only when the unbelieving body is usurping a majority control over the situation, citing the “yoked” passage of 2 Corinthians 6:14. Again it is difficult to discern between his points of demarcation.

Finally, in this section of *reasons for separation* Grudem minimally addresses the case of “No personal fellowship” which, at this point in his writing has been reduced to “no fellowship”, a very severe point of neglect in the estimation of this researcher. The minimal response is as follows:

The third and most extreme kind of separation, the avoidance of all personal fellowship with members of another entire church group, is never commanded in the New Testament. Such an extreme measure of “no fellowship” is only implied in serious cases of church discipline of individuals, not in the cases of differences with entire churches (Grudem 1994:883).

It is unclear if all the people referred to here by Grudem are believers, if it is addressing corporate “shunning”, or individual; the contention here would be that the “extreme measure” to which he is referring is much more than *implied* in the case of church discipline. A major difficulty in understanding Grudem is his vacillation between referring to the Church, and to individuals, which is on some levels justified. It is unclear at times, the actual position he is addressing in his writing, and what level of separation he is espousing, but he *seems to be* representative of the theologically astute who are demonstrating some confusion, as to the necessity of separation or division in the 21st century Church.

2.4.3 Excommunication

In the broadest sense of the term, excommunication is defined as, “expulsion from membership in a body”. Clemons stipulates that it may be exercised by denying offenders the sacraments, congregational worship and even social contact for egregious offenses of heresy, sin, or both (Clemons 1982:219). Piggin defines it as the most extreme form of church discipline, that excludes “an irrevocably rebellious sinner from the communion of the faithful” (Piggin 2001:422). Anderson, though he affirms that excommunication is to be considered normative for the evangelical today, focuses notably on excommunication for the sake of heresy and false doctrine (Anderson 2002:281). The primary intent, Piggin contends, throughout Church history has been considered a “medicinal measure” or one designed to recall the individual into “repentance and obedience” rather than a concept of punishment, focus in the interest of the sinner’s cure rather than destruction (Piggin 2001:422), though the individual is to remain in the state of exclusion for the duration of his obdurateness (Piggin 2001:422). At that point, as there was remorse, the penitent was graciously received back into fellowship. Secondly, in alignment with Grudem, excommunication is to act as a safeguard to the purity of the Church (Piggin 2001:422). It can be separation from the kingship (1 Samuel 16:1), separation from foreigners (Nehemiah 13:1-3), or separation from the priesthood (Nehemiah 13:13:27-28). It is also described as a tool against false teachers (2 John 10-11). In a proper theological construct, excommunication is the apparatus of separation of the holy from the unholy. Bargerhuff insists that the “true church is one that practices ‘fraternal admonition’ or ‘the ban’”, as it was called, “in keeping with the teachings of Matthew 18 and the epistles. Without it, there was no church” (Bargerhuff 2010:29). The process is defined in Matthew 18:15-17 and an actual example is described in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (Guideposts 1982:227). In the simplest of Hebraic understanding excommunication is “any person, or thing, be it a man, animal, weapon, tool or piece of ground which to pious eyes seemed abominable”, and which was “set apart from common life” in such a way so as to render it destroyed or ineffective to tainting the community (Religious 1891:782-783 v.2).

A thorough comprehension of this concept of excommunication is mandated here, as this will apply to the any “permissible division in *koinōnia*”. As it has been posited that there are very few justifications for division in the Body, and behavior or doctrinal values leading to *excommunication* appear to be some of them, this particular information is crucial to a correct analysis. Though the term “*excommunication*” is not observed in the confines of the Old Testament, at least not in the NASB, the action is clear and unmistakable in the usage of such terms as “banned”, “accursed”, “*cast out*”, and “*cut off*”. The actual Hebrew concepts are portrayed primarily in the terminology, *shalak* and *karath*, *cherem* and their cognates.

Occurring in the Masoretic Text some 125 times (Thiel 2006:89), the common term *shalak* in its primary sense means to throw, fling or cast as in the sense of throwing away, or away from one’s self. Notable is the idea of casting away dead bodies (Brown (BDB) 1979:1020). The wide variety of nuances may be extended to include *throw away*, *cast out*, *discard*, *toss about*, *throw out*, *throw down*, *throw something over someone*, or *accuse someone of something*; as such are the definitions it can be observed that an object is usually included in the usage of the term (Thiel 2006:89), usually demonstrated to be something of minimal value, as in the casting out of a corpse into a hasty grave (Thiel 2006:92). The “casting” is also used to designate the removal of sin by Yahweh in Ezekiel 18:31 (Thiel 2006:95).

The term as applied to living humans, is more frequently used to describe the action of Yahweh regarding the “casting out” of Israel, Judah and Jerusalem from his presence (Thiel 2006:94). Isaiah 6:13 uses this term in the nominative, *shalleketh*, to identify God’s judgment on Judah “compared to the chopping down of a tree that leaves only a stump in the ground a remnant of the aftermath of divine judgment” (Chisholm 1997:128). “Casting out” from the presence of the Lord issues a deportation from the Promised Land, or banishment from their homeland to an unclean pagan land, absent the presence of God (Thiel 2006:94). Zechariah describes a night vision in which a wicked woman is cast into a basket with a corresponding leaden weight on it, “an action intended in its entirety to symbolize the cleansing of the early Jewish community from sin” (Zechariah 5:5-11) (Thiel 2006:85). In the Septuagint, the term *shalak* is translated into *ekballo* (Hauck 1964:527), a term which will be identified in the New Testament as well.

Used in varying forms some 295 times (Hosel 1995:343), and found in all the books of the Old Testament except Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Jonah, and Hosea, and of greater usage than *shalak*, are derivatives of *krt*, or the term *karath*, which indicates its significance and widespread usage (Carpenter 1997:729). *Karath* conveys the idea of cutting off or cutting down included in this understanding is the cutting off of timber, foreskins (circumcision), grapes, and trees, even the head of a man. Included in this definition is the understanding of a covenant being cut, or struck, as in the “cutting up and distribution of the flesh of the victim for eating in the sacrifice of the covenants”. In the extended sense of being “cut off” a person could be denied association with the community, or be cut off to the point of the death penalty. In the more narrow sense, an issuance of divorce is identified (Brown 1979:503; Hosel 1995:343). More extensive definitions in terms of Old Testament usage include destroyed, ostracized, annihilation, and even extermination (Carpenter 1997:729; Hosel 1995:342).

Karath in the scope of the investigation here is confined to the second basic meaning posed by Carpenter, that being to eradicate, set aside, exclude, cut off (metaphorically) kill, fail or cease. As applied to the people of God it is used to designate the judgment of fate of an individual who offends God, or the Israelite community, the consequence of being ostracized. The sentence of expulsion is affected by both God, and/or the community of Israel (Carpenter 1997:729).

The term and its cognates are used abundantly to describe the eschatological climax of *karath*, the Day of the Lord, when the nations and everything abhorrent to God will be stricken from being. Yahweh will come to judge the world, “cutting off” everything that lives (Zephaniah 1:3; cf. Genesis 9:11) (Hosel 1995:345). The term is used abundantly in oracles regarding the fate of the nations as they stand in judgment before the Divine (Isaiah 14:22; Jeremiah 47:4, 48:2, 51:62; Ezekiel 21:8-9, 25:7,13,16, 29:8, 30:15, 35:7) (Hosel 1995:346). This Divine destruction takes on universal scope in the Old Testament apocalypticism (Hosel 1995:546). God will reveal himself the Sovereign, supreme over all, and cast out all false gods, and idols of every nation (Nahum 1:14, 2:1,14, 3:15) (Hosel 1995:346).

Karath is used as well to describe the cleansing directed toward God’s chosen. Even the chosen people of God, Israel, will have the “head and tail” cut off (Isaiah

9:13-14), and the wrath of purification will cleanse Judah with total annihilation (Jeremiah 44:7,8,11). The term, as Mounce notes, is communicating destruction as in the idols in the Promised Land; thus, an essence of permanence is communicated with this term (Mounce 2008:153).

Used in the sense of “exterminate” the historical literature of the Old Testament utilizes the term *karath*, or to “cut off” to describe the eradication of the Elamites in Joshua 11:21 and all the nations in 23:4. During the period of the Judges the Israelites are seen destroying Jabin king of Canaan (Judges 4:24). During the monarchy God is seen to destroy the enemies of David (1 Samuel 20:15; 2 Samuel 7:9), and Saul “cuts off” mediums and wizards (1 Samuel 28:9); and that Jezebel cut off the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kings 18:4). Israel even receives the threat of being cut off if it turns aside from Yahweh (1 Kings 9:7). The term is found, used in the Dead Sea Scrolls referencing, “God’s punishment of human beings in the past” (CD 3:1,6,9) (Hosel 1995:346). Job 27:22 points to the bad end awaiting the wicked (Thiel 2006:92); “For it [the tempest] will hurl at him without sparing; He will surely try to flee from its power”.

Cherem or, as it is sometimes spelled *herem*, or *haram*, communicates permanence as well. The word is difficult to understand as it can be defined as “the exclusion of an object from the use or abuse of man and its irrevocable surrender to God” (TWOT 1980:324). The difficulty lies in the fact that the word can be used to identify an object or person which is set aside *for* the use of God as in complete consecration (TWOT 1980:324; Mounce 2008:175), or *from* the use of that which is evil, or evil itself, thus, involving total annihilation of the object (Mounce 2008:175), much in the same way the Greek identifies the term *hagios*, or saint. Either interpretation is pregnant with the concept of division, or destruction with the understanding of permanence. The items or “devoted things” under “*cherem*” under the fall of Jericho were both devoted to the use of the Lord for service in his Temple, and “banned” from the people for any benefit. Thus, when utilized in the context of separation, this term carries with it the idea of permanent punishment. Berkhof holds that this *cherem* is understood to be both ecclesiastical as well as civil punishment (Berkhof 1996:599); excommunication would be in light of an execution.

In essence, *ekballo* is the New Testament term used to refer in a rather consistent fashion to excommunication. *Ekballo* is the New Testament equivalent to *shalak* and *karath* and their cognates. It is employed some 81 times for the purpose of expressing, “to drive out, expel, eject” often in a violent fashion (Mounce 2006:100; Verbrugge 2000:388). Used some 66 times in the Synoptic Gospels, 28 times in Matthew, 18 times in Mark, and 20 times in Luke. John utilizes the term 6 times, Acts 5 times, and Paul employs it only in the Old Testament citation referencing Hagar in Galatians 4:30. James 2:25, 3 John 10, and Revelation 11:2 all employ the term as well, Revelation however, having a greater definition of “leaving out”, or “passing over” (Annen 1990:405; Bauer 1952:237). The term can be used to refer to the driving out of demons (Hauck 1964:527; Verbrugge 2000:388), but also compelling someone to go somewhere, as when Christ is compelled to go to the wilderness after his baptism (Mounce 2006:1197). Hauck agrees with Mounce in affirming the essence of power, throwing or propelling. Annen agrees, a “more or less forcible casting out” is properly understood citing a “*driving out*” from the Temple (Mark 11:15; Matthew 21:12; Luke 19:45; John 2:15), from the city (Luke 4:29; Acts 7:58), from the vineyard (Mark 12:8; Matthew 21:39; Luke 20:12,15), and from the area (Acts 13:50), though he does acknowledge a more passive understanding of the term identifying a “sending away” such as in Mark 1:43, 5:40; Matthew 9:25; Acts 9:40, 16:37; James 2:25 (Annen 1990:406).

It must be acknowledged that, in some cases, there is a more positive connotation as when the Spirit *drives* Christ into the wilderness, the workers (Matthew 9:38; and Luke 10:2) are sent into the vineyard, as well as John 10:4 (Annen 1990:406).

When referring strictly to the spiritual realm, *ekballo* is used to identify the expulsion of demonic spirits possessing persons and thus being driven out by exorcists (Annen 1990:406).

In New Testament usage the greater understanding is within the temporal, earthly realm, however, where it is used to identify the eschatological judgment as well in Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30; Luke 13:28 and John 12:31 when being “cast out into outer darkness” is identified as the place of eternal judgment and separation from the presence of God (Annen 1990:406).

Made up of the root *ballo*, meaning essentially the same as throw or expel, the addition of *ek* adds the element of “out” or “away from”. Annen asserts that “cast out” is the most comprehensive understanding of the term and is always used of a person, a group of persons, or evil spirits appearing as objects, being the recipients of such an action (Annen 1990:405). This action he notes (citing Schnackenburg 1980:252), is not supported to be a strict excommunication from the synagogue (Annen 1990:406), but most likely carries with it the double connotation of a person being cast out, and “expulsion from the Jewish religious community” (Schnackenburg 1980:252). Thus, the picture of expulsion from the community because of judgment is seen (Hauck 1964:527).

Generally referred to in regards to people, the casting out can be referring to a family member, to an invading army or an ousting of the government by a particular nation (Hauck 1964:527). The Septuagint uses this term in the context of Genesis 3:24 when God drives the man and the woman out of the Garden of Eden, and when referencing the expulsion of a wife in Genesis 21:10 (Annen 1990:406; Leupold 1984:183). The term can also be used on the divorcing of a wife or the elimination of a defective body part, in essence, anything that is contrary to the agenda of the governing authorities. Verbrugge notes that it is used in context of the sending out of Hagar (Galatians 4:30), a disciple of Jesus thrown out of the synagogue (John 9:34-35), the rejecting of the name of Jesus (John 6:37), the taking of a splinter from an eye (Matthew 7:4), and even the idea of exclusion as is the case in Diotrephes excluding Christians from the Church in 3 John 10 (Verbrugge 2000:388).

Contrary to the message of this term, Dever holds that:

Excommunication does not mean that the person should stop attending church. Except in rare cases the congregation desires the disciplined sinner to continue attending and sitting under the preaching of God’s Word. By this the sinner is confronted by Scripture and his life is observed by the faith community that has disciplined him (Dever 2010:1649 cf. Blomberg 2014).

Although Dever is held in high regard, it seems contrary to the mandates of Scripture, as the “effects” of excommunication would seem to be inconsequential to the “disciplined sinner”, in that it allows him to remain a part of the fellowship, minimizing the disciplinary aspect, and still being given the opportunity to adversely

affect the behavior of the community, as well as still negatively representing the family of God, if only by association and his presence in the service. This attitude is confirmed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* where it is held, “If anyone prays with a person who has been excommunicated, even in the house, let him be suspended” (Bercot 1998:215 [E 7.501; 7.402-7.406]). Yet, to be balanced, the *Apostolic Confessions* also hold that a person viewed as a tax collector or a pagan was allowed to be admitted to the assembly but only to the extent that is necessary to discern if true repentance has taken place, i.e., that they display the fruits of repentance. This would coincide with Dever’s way of viewing it. However, the *Constitutions* do stipulate that those penitents should only be allowed to join the service until the reading of the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel, that they would be profited as they go their way until such time as they are re-communicated.

Understandably, excommunication is meant to be undertaken only in the gravest of disciplinary situations, as a last resort, to aid in the encouragement of repentance. However, as is pointed out by Cyprian, in *W* 5.316, the action is actually initiated on the part of the offending person, and in so doing, he or she may impose this separation of their own accord, absent of the decision of any ecclesiastical body. In regards to a man named Felissimus, he writes:

Let him receive the sentence that he first of all imposed---that he may know that he is excommunicated by us...Moreover, whoever will ally himself with that man’s conspiracy and faction, let him know that he will not communicate in the church with us, since he has preferred to be separated from the church of his own accord (Bercot 1998:213 [*W* 5.316]).

Perhaps synonymous in meaning to the term *ekballo*, is the English term “anathema”, which “designates something or someone accursed, that is, separated from the community” (Bowe 1996:280). As such, more references are identified in the corpus of both Pauline (Romans 8:3; 1 Corinthians 12:3, 16:22; Galatians 1:8, 9) and Matthean texts. Again this is seeking to identify that which is forbidden, and to be left outside, or rendered outside the camp of believers, whether elements of a doctrinal nature (Galatians 1:8-9), or behavioral concerns. There was consistency with the Jewish disciplinary practices of the day, which employed excommunication

for religious or moral offences, which undoubtedly had an influence on the development of Christian disciplinary practices (Bowe 1996:280).

In removal from a Body, Strong holds that there are only three methods of exit from the local church: 1) Exclusion, 2) Dismission- (which is presumed to be a member who moves away), or 3) Death (Strong 1907:925).

2.5 Historical Theologies, Justifications of Schisms & Discipline

Grudem writes that, for the most part, the Church for the first thousand years, evidenced outward unity to the world and to itself. Montanists and Donatists had caused some disturbances along the way in the 2nd and 4th centuries and minor separation by some Monophysites in the 5th and 6th centuries. However, most believers held a strong conviction, a resolute opposition to any division in the Body of Christ (Grudem 1994:878). Irenaeus writes in *Against Heresies*, “No reformation able to be effected by them will be of great enough importance to compensate for the damage arising from their schism” (Irenaeus 4.33.7). Hence, a desire at nearly all costs was held to protect the unity of the Body of Christ. Grudem holds that the power of the Church is its God-given authority to carry on spiritual warfare, proclaim the gospel, and exercise church discipline (Grudem 1994:887). Strong holds that, “The church is in general to secure unanimity by moral suasion only; though, in case of wilful and perverse opposition to its decisions, it may be necessary to secure unity by excluding an obtrusive member, for schism” (Strong 1907:905).

2.5.1 Pre-Reformation

One need not look too deep into the first century Church to understand the marked propensity for believers to separate from those outside their doctrinal comfort zones. That pattern was further evidenced through the life of the Christian Church as differences were expressed across the spectrum of ecclesiastical affairs. Generally, the churches divided over the “government of the Church, the nature of ministry, and the administration of the sacraments” (Towards 1965:37). Though

centuries of the faith sought to uphold the integrity of the Gospel, the Church faced certain challenges as councils along the way sought to refute those who held unorthodox views, and establish proper identification of orthodox beliefs.

The justification of schisms would lie in any given party desiring to maintain integrity in the community, perhaps in part citing Deuteronomy 8:5, “Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son”, or “For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:6). The Biblical model of maintaining that integrity would at times be in the form of *church* discipline: the purging of evil, or sin from the midst which is unacceptable to God, and thus may hinder the full presence of God. Unfortunately, Davis asks, “Would it be going too far to say that the apparent absence of God in various segments of the church may be due to our unwillingness to purge evil from our midst by the costly exercise of church discipline?” (Davis 1996:63). He concedes that the contemporary church errs on the side of laxity seeming to prefer the tolerance of man rather than the praise of God (Davis 1996:63). The Christian congregation, notes Schaff, is like every other community in that it needs “self-protection, in order to suppress or eliminate any thing that might impair or destroy its life” (Religious 1891:645 v.2). One justification is the prevention of scandal or protection of the reputation of the Church, in effect, the integrity of the Church’s reputation. A church that would allow ungodly, unscriptural acts to occur without consequence would certainly be a detriment to the reputation of Christ. However, the *Apostolic Confessions* [7.400] hold that, “When he does repent and has submitted to his chastisement, receive him, remembering that our Lord has said, ‘There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents’” (Bercot 1998: 217).

In the fifth century Augustine and the Donatists wrestled with the matter of separation among those who were under censure or church discipline. The tension was created as there was a desire to maintain purity within the church, but there was also a desire to restore this person to Christ and an appropriate lifestyle (Erickson 2001:1092).

Restoration was always the primary goal of any discipline, but under Decius in the post-apostolic church, so many defections from the Church necessitated severe,

systematic regulations for those excommunicated to be restored to fellowship (Religious 1891:645-646 v.1). Oftentimes in the desire for restoration, those regulations were lax. A movement towards greater severity arose and thus, was ushered in by the Montanists, who held that those who had renounced their faith deserve to remain in a state of penance for the duration of their lives. The Novatians embraced this as well holding that the Church was in no proper position to forgive them their sins (Religious 1891:646 v.1). Schaff holds that when such persecutions ceased and the Christian Church came under the authority of the State church that church discipline was almost lost (Religious 1891:646 v.1).

The practice of the Church up to the sixth century was to focus on the intricate relationship between repentance and excommunication. When the offender had desired to repent, he could present himself to the bishop who could elect to place him under a liturgical excommunication, and impose upon him a title of “penitent” which carried with it a prescribed period of “public penitential works”. Upon completion of these works, the laying on of hands by the clergy ushered the repentant back into communion, and the “society of believers” was to consent to the action as well, which would absolve him from this “sacrament of penance” (Piggin 2001:422). By the sixth century implementation of penance fines developed and the first book of penance in the Greek Church was written by Johannes Jejunator, the Patriarch of Constantinople (Religious 1891:646 v.1). Thus, the Church had opened itself up to compromise in an effort to expedite the consequence of church discipline. Donatists arose demanding that the Church should be kept pure, and that those who actually had been excommunicated should remain thus, at least from the sacraments. This ushered in the indulgences, and thus, a degenerated nature of church discipline.

Under Gregory the Great the doctrine of Purgatory took root, and upon this foundation Peter Lombard developed the theory of indulgences which precipitated the “penance” or suffering. This was meant to be existent in the disciplinary process so as to motivate repentance and change, being reduced to a monetary fine, which in turn produced large quantities of money, promising minimal time in Purgatory, and absolution from current sins (Religious 1891:646 v.1). Purgatory, then, in theory, was surmised to expunge an individual of any impurities or improper behavior which

may still have existed after death, one of the desired effects of excommunication while on earth.

From the seventh century to the fifteenth the paradigm of excommunication evolved to be a measure of church discipline that was not always resigned to the complete and utter avoidance of the individual but rather, one that allowed those of “lesser offences” to be excluded from the sacraments in the Church (Piggin 2001:422). Luther viewed discipline as a matter of soul-care, however, this side of church life was “very feebly developed, and not always in the right direction” (Religious 1891:646 v.1). The reformers stood in opposition to this position of relaxation of church discipline. Calvin maintained that discipline according to the Word of the Lord was the “best help” to sound doctrine, order, and unity and that the best way to deal with the hopelessly blatant sinners was to banish them completely, that this was a spiritual jurisdiction of the Lord for the assembly of believers (Piggin 2001:422). According to Calvin, the implementation of church discipline was to be encouraged “not on merely the negative principle of preventing evil, but on the positive principle of producing good” and thus, he formed a consistory of church discipline, comprised of elders, magistrates and clergymen (Religious 1891:646 v.1).

The Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has been one of the more prominent movements to keep church discipline at the core as an essential element in the spiritual life of the church and the believer (Ludwig 1996:77-85). Ludwig stresses the enforcement of “The Ban” as a tool of motivation in the procedure. The “small ban” excluded the individual from partaking in the Lord’s Supper. The “large ban” was exclusion from church membership, essentially shunning, altogether (Ludwig 1996:78).

The commitment extended to the “baptismal pledge” which according to Hubmaier was:

“...a commitment made to God publicly and orally before the congregation in which the baptized person renounces Satan and all his imaginations and works. He also vows that he will henceforth set his faith, hope and trust solely in God and regulate his life according to the divine word, in the strength of Jesus Christ our Lord, and if he should fail to do so, he therefore promises the church that he would dutifully accept brotherly discipline from it and its members” (Hubmaier 1989:350-351).

The practice of “The Ban”, or “fraternal admonition” had as its center the “unity, purity and identity of Christ’s church”, the end result which was to be that of “restoration and an expression of the love of Christ” (Bargerhuff 2010:29-30). Menno Simons, from which the Mennonites derive their title and ethos, was one of the foremost contributors to this thought, having written extensively on the subject. The heart of his writing is communicated in the following quote from *A Kind Admonition on Church Discipline*:

Wherefore brethren, understand correctly, no one is excommunicated or expelled by us from the communion of the brethren but those who have already separated themselves and expelled themselves from Christ’s communion either by false doctrine or improper conduct. For we do not want to expel any, but rather to receive, not to amputate, but rather to heal, not to discard, but rather to win back, not to grieve, but rather to comfort, not to condemn, but rather to save. For this is the true nature of a Christian brother...but those whom we cannot raise up and repentingly retrieve by admonition, tears, rebuke, or any by other Christian services and godly means, these we should put forth from us, not without great sadness and anguish of soul, sincerely lamenting the fall and condemnation of such a straying brother...thus we must obey the word of God which teaches and commands us to do so; and this in order that the excommunicated brother or sister whom we cannot convert by gentle services may by such means be shamed unto repentance and made to acknowledge to what he has come and from what he has fallen. In this way the ban is a great work of love, notwithstanding it is looked upon by the foolish as an act of hatred (Bargerhuff 2010:30-31 citing Simons 1984:413).

According to Simons, this shunning was indeed an act of love which “should be done in such a manner that the erring brother or sister would be ashamed at heart and won back...” (Simons 1984:413). Bender, the Mennonite historian holds that it was this restorative strength which was a “great contribution to true community building” (Bender 1971:31).

2.5.2 The “Consistory”

Calvin had a three-fold understanding of the purpose of excommunication. One, “that God may not be insulted by the name of the Christians being given to those who lead shameful and flagitious lives”. Second, “that the good may not... be corrupted by constant communication with the wicked”. And third, “that the sinner

may be ashamed, and begin to repent of his turpitude” (Piggin 2001:422; cf. Manetsch 2013:189; cf. Grudem 894-896). Calvin concluded that the entire assembly of believers should be witnesses of any excommunication (Piggin 2001:422). The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 30, paragraph 3 echoes these ideals:

“Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders” (Grudem 1994:896).

Calvin was so invested in the health of the Church and its members that he successfully established what was then known as the Consistory which was a council of 6-8 pastors from the area of Geneva designed to oversee the pastoral care of the Church, which included in no small way discipline designed to oversee societal righteousness. In addition to this major area of concern, consistories attempted to “regulate public morality, educate the ignorant, defend the weak, and mediate interpersonal conflict (Manetsch 2013:183). As a result the Consistory was pronounced as a:

...special ornament, a moral discipline which makes weekly investigations into the conduct, and even the smallest transgressions of the citizens...All cursing and swearing, gambling, luxury, strife, hatred fraud, etc. are forbidden, while greater sins are hardly ever heard of. What a glorious ornament of the Christian religion is such a purity of morals! (Manetsch 2013:182).

Calvin was convinced of the authority of the Church to not only proclaim the Word of God, but in the process of “spiritual correction to members who rejected right teaching or refused to turn away from wicked behavior” as well. He understood the Consistory to be the extension of the “Father’s rod” to dispense “unity and purity” asserting “as the saving doctrine of the Christ is the soul of the church, so does discipline serve as its sinews, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place. Consequently, all who desire to remove discipline or hinder its restoration—whether they do this deliberately or out of ignorance—are surely

contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church” (Manetsch 2013:184). The council sought to govern its affairs through the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which established the tribunal and its 12 lay leaders which were consigned to meet every Thursday at noon “to see that there is no disorder in the church and to look for solutions where necessary” (Manetsch 2013:184). When matters of strict church discipline were at hand, the council was required to follow the biblical mandates of Matthew 18:15-17 (Manetsch 2013:184). Offenders were first addressed in private, then if they still resisted correction, were issued formal rebuke by the leaders, and finally, if repentance was not demonstrated they were suspended from the Lord’s Supper for a brief period of time. All actions were to be carried out with moderation and gentleness as the process was intended to heal, not punish and to be from the contexts of Scripture. The most extreme of cases were met with excommunication and banishment from the city.

These councils provided the benefit of close monitoring of the parishioners in order to address misbehavior and interpersonal conflict which proved to be highly effective in the purity of the Church. The council employed various “penalties” of varying severity, 1) verbal reproof and admonition by Consistory, 2) public confession and reparation before the Church, 3) minor excommunication (i.e. from the Lord’s Supper), and 4) major excommunication in the most severe, extreme and rare of circumstances (Manetsch 2013:190-191).

The pastoral care was primary in the scope of the council, and repentance and restoration was the “principal goal” of excommunication (Manetsch 2013:194). Under the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* and the Consistory such areas deserving of excommunication, either minor or major were: fornication, adultery, dereliction of duty, usury, “Catholic” behavior, spousal endangerment, battles with neighbors, “scandalous” behavior, indecent social behavior including kissing, filthy talk, pornography, cross-dressing, prostitution, solicitation, illicit dancing, and boisterous behavior and “folk religion” which would allude to folk medicine, sorcery, fortune telling, and witchcraft. These were enforced as “spiritual sanction, social shame, and the threat of civil punishment” hence allowing the process of church discipline to carry the weight of enforcement.

Yet still the overarching concern was ecclesial purity and pastoral care through repentance and spiritual restoration. As Manetsch writes:

“In their role as spiritual shepherds, the ministers of Geneva were not only committed to enforcing right behavior but were also concerned with applying corrective discipline that would help change the inward attitude of the heart...Discipline was intended to ‘touch’ the hearts of sinners so that they might turn away from their sins and ‘bear the fruit of repentance’...The ministers believed that church discipline was an important ministry that God used to turn sinners back to spiritual health and Christian righteousness” (Manetsch 2013:214-215).

Thus, the Consistory was engaged in the healing of broken relationships, both between people and their Sovereign, and between broken members. Manetsch finishes by writing, “Geneva’s ministers were not idealists seeking to establish a perfect spiritual commonwealth. Rather, they were open-eyed realists committed to interjecting biblical standards of belief and behavior into the messiness of human life to make possible Christian forgiveness and salvation” (Manetsch 2013 219-220).

Discipline was seen to be of such value for the health of the Church that by 1524, a small contingency of followers of Huldreich Zwingli, who later became known as the Anabaptists, had so embraced the Matthean pattern of discipline that, “The term ‘Rule of Christ’ with which they referred to the instructions of Matthew 18, was already a fixed phrase in their vocabulary” (Yoder 1985:221).

2.5.3 Post Reformation

The Council of Trent also sought to buffer extreme practice of excommunication in the Roman Catholic Church and held that those who were banished for minor offences were provoked to contempt (Piggin 2001:422). Current teaching on excommunication in the modern Catholic Church denies the excommunicated the sacraments, Christian burial, ecclesiastical office, and revenues from ecclesiastical sources. Catholics would hold that according to canon law, the excommunicated do not forfeit divine grace, as that can only be forfeited by mortal sin. The Catholic canon also holds that the individual does not cease to be a

Christian, since “excommunication cannot remove the indelible character imprinted on the soul by baptism” (Piggin 2001:423).

Mohler cites the allegiance to proper discipline yielded positive results for years and continued to govern the Church in a manner of purity:

Though the nineteenth century was not a golden era for American evangelicals, the century did see the consolidation of evangelical theology and church patterns. Manuals of church discipline and congregational records indicate that discipline was regularly applied. Protestant congregations exercised discipline as a necessary and natural ministry to the members of the church, and as a means of protecting the doctrinal and moral integrity of the congregation.

As ardent Congregationalists, the Baptists left a particularly instructive record of nineteenth-century discipline. Historian Gregory A. Wills aptly commented, “To an antebellum Baptist, a church without discipline would hardly have counted as a church.” Churches held regular “Days of Discipline” when the congregation would gather to heal breaches of fellowship, admonish wayward members, rebuke the obstinate, and, if necessary, excommunicate those who resisted discipline. In so doing, congregations understood themselves to be following a biblical pattern laid down by Christ and the apostles for the protection and correction of disciples.

No sphere of life was considered outside the congregation’s accountability. Members were to conduct their lives and witness in harmony with the Bible and with established moral principles (Mohler 1998:172).

And regarding the denominations fallen to liberalism, Anderson adds:

Ultimately because the control of the major denominations fell to the liberals, many conservatives felt they had no choice but to separate and form their own associations (Anderson 2002:248).

Obviously, the purpose of any separation must be defined, particularly in the case of church discipline. As was noted in Chapter Section 2.4, Grudem identifies some of the desired results of church discipline. In support of the need for such action, Cyprian writes:

How can the medicine of permissiveness profit anyone? What if a physician hides the wound and does not allow the necessary remedy of time to close the scar? To not require repentance makes the way easy for new dangers. To do that is not curing someone. If we are honest, it is slaying him (Bercot 1998: 213 [W5.309]).

Though the Body is compelled to administer proper church discipline, it is not to be undertaken absent the gravity with which it is intended for fear that such action was taken hastily. The *Apostolic Confessions* states:

A righteous man unjustly slain by anyone will be in rest with God forever. The same is true of anyone who is separated by his bishop without cause. He who has cast him out as a wicked fellow when he was innocent, is more furious than a murderer (Bercot 1998:215 [7.406]).

To be covered in chapter 4, Bowe suggests that Paul's tone appears to be much more assertive and definitive, favoring the action of expulsion from the midst of assembly. Expounding further, she holds that 2 Thessalonians and Titus 3:9 "counsel social ostracism toward those who are disobedient or heretical" (Bowe 1996: 281). She continues that 2 John 10 admonishes a refusal of hospitality toward those "espousing a different doctrine".

Mohler identifies the dismal state of correction by the introduction of the 20th century:

By the turn of the century, however, church discipline was already on the decline. In the wake of the Enlightenment, criticism of the Bible and of the doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy was widespread. Even the most conservative denominations began to show evidence of decreased attention to theological orthodoxy. At the same time, the larger culture moved toward the adoption of autonomous moral individualism (Mohler 1998:173).

Thus, the lines of biblical orthodoxy and praxis were muddled in permissiveness and ignorance; as Mohler puts it, "Individuals now claim an enormous zone of personal privacy and moral autonomy. The congregation—redefined as a mere voluntary association—has no right to intrude into this space" (Mohler 1998:1733). This coupled with the fact that, "Absolute relativism has regarded moral values as so ambiguous that there is no measuring rod against which to assess anything as sin" further complicates the situation (Mohler 1998:173-174). John Leadley Dagg, wrote in a nineteenth century church manual, "It has been remarked, that when discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it" (Dagg 1858:274). Mohler notes:

The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other. The absence of church discipline is no longer remarkable—it is generally not even noticed. Regulative and restorative church discipline is, to many church members, no longer a meaningful category, or even a memory. The present generation of both ministers and church members is virtually without experience of biblical church discipline (Mohler 1998:171).

Bargerhuff, citing Davis rather, asserts that in regards to the plan of the Church, the Church becomes “part of the means through which God has chosen to work out his redemptive plan on the earth” (Bargerhuff 2010:2), and that, “the practice of Church discipline is an extension of the Triune God’s saving work along the path of authentic discipleship” (Bargerhuff 2010:9).²

Church discipline, properly defined, refers the faithful application of biblical principles and procedures within a local congregation to preserve doctrinal purity, holiness of life, and useful efficiency among its membership (Davis 1987:345).

Though this foundation is asserted, even such notables as Carson have difficulty navigating through these waters and applying adequate relevance to the passage of Matthew 18:15-35 for the modern Church. White rightly asserts that this is biblical and essential:

Church discipline arises out of the gospel itself. The aim of the gospel was reconciliation, the reconciliation wrought by Christ and offered to sinners (White 1985:11).

² Bargerhuff further defines the goal or purpose of discipline. “Though the primary goal of church discipline is reconciliation, the action also maintains the testimony and purity of the covenant community, deters others from sin, defrays the removal of God’s blessings and judgment, and honors the name of Christ by once again proclaiming the message of living a life in keeping with repentance and faith (the gospel). Church discipline communicates once again what it means to live as a faithful disciple (Bargerhuff 2010:189).

If this gospel discipline is not embraced the prospect is dismal, writes Mohler:

The result of this is the loss of the biblical pattern for the church— and the impending collapse of authentic Christianity in this generation. As Carl Laney laments, “The church today is suffering from an infection which has been allowed to fester . . . As an infection weakens the body by destroying its defense mechanisms, so the church has been weakened by this ugly sore. The church has lost its power and effectiveness in serving as a vehicle for social, moral, and spiritual change. This illness is due, at least in part, to a neglect of church discipline” (Mohler 1998:175).

And yet, without a recovery of functional church discipline—firmly established upon the principles revealed in the Bible—the church will continue its slide into moral dissolution and relativism (Mohler 1998:171).

2.5.4 Councils, Church Splits and Denominations

Tension throughout Christendom has seldom been wanting, as the aforementioned doctrines have often been of significant debate. The nature of splits and divisions among God’s people since the time of Christ extends far beyond any conflict exhibited at any council. The councils, the Great Schism, the Reformation, and denominationalism are all a result of a *perceived* desire to retain doctrinal or behavioral integrity. Contrary to some thought, “denominations” were being forged even before the New Testament Canon was complete. Some were taking practical stands on food consumption- whether to drink wine or eat meat (Romans 14), while others were identifying themselves with particular schools of thought associated with individuals (1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4).

In the ancient Church, grave sins were indeed punished through excommunication and such councils as Ancyra (314), and Nicea (325) endorsed this action. It was only after a period of severe penitence that the excommunicated was again taken into the community (Religion 1891:783). Schaff holds that in Western Christendom, this form of expulsion followed by “re”-acceptance by the community never garnered support and all but disappeared (Religion 1891:783). In addition excommunicated individuals were subject to two forms of discipline, *excommunicatio minor* which restricted a member from the sacraments, and *excommunicatio major* which had the deeper ramifications of additionally excluding the excommunicated

from “mass, burial in consecrated ground, from ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and from all intercourse with all Christians, excepting a few cases” (Religious 1891:783: cf. Manetsch 2013:193). This last injunction of excommunication however could only be invoked with the backing of the State, to which the State usually acquiesced. Hence, the Pope was able to ask for and receive the permission to mete out this form of discipline. With the Reformation came a great transformation in the power of the State. No longer did the Church take primacy in meting out punitive mandates, yet, the greater form of discipline, *excommunicatio major*, was abolished as any sort of secular punishment, and was used “much less frequently” (Manetsch 2013:193). The minimal form of discipline was still in effect, restricting those under discipline to mere fellowship and not participation in the rites of the Lord’s Supper or baptism. Though, as Luther held, these restrictions could only be carried out with the “concurrence of the whole congregation”. Schaff holds that this last caveat was not enforced and as a result, “fell into disuse in the reformed churches”. Schaff holds that such power to enforce a valid excommunication is no longer in force as it is theoretically nullified in the Constitution of October 12, 1869. (Religious 1891:783).

Although minor divisions occurred (Montanists second century, Donatists fourth century, and Monophysite churches fifth and sixth centuries), and there were rogue doctrines causing dissention (Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychanism), the first major Church split obviously revealed itself in the form of the Great Schism of 1054 (Grudem 1994:878). As though mere observation would not be enough to ascertain division, the nomenclature would make it certain to the outside world that the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church were at odds, and would continue to be so for a millennia to come, all based, at the time upon what was deemed inappropriate exercising of authority on the part of the Pope, evidenced in the changing of a creed (Grudem 1994:878).

Obviously the Roman Catholic Church suffered greater damage in the early years of the 16th century when the reformers sought to right some errant doctrine and behavior, hence the birth of the Protestant church. Martin Luther sought reform and was opposed to division in the Church, but was then himself excommunicated in 1521 (Grudem 1994:878). Shortly following, in the year 1570, the Anglican Church was itself excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. Grudem writes that

there were other minority movements who sought to establish churches comprised only of believers in Switzerland and other parts of Europe (Grudem 1994:878). Subsequent splits among the Protestants were plentiful comprised of individuals asserting “matters of conscience or religious freedom” (Grudem 1994:878). Grudem concedes that theological differences have been at the heart of major church divisions but that perhaps many in the modern era have been products of selfishness (Grudem 1994:879).

Grudem notes that in the mid 20th century there was some ecumenical movement toward seeking a greater unity among the denominations but without much notoriety (Grudem 1994:879); he also observes that much of this unity, or lack of separation is brought about by an actual “diminished doctrinal awareness”, implying that people are getting along because they are ignorant of other denominations’ errant theology.

Consequently, many denominations have been the result of a spawning from another denomination due to doctrinal or behavioral conflict. The list of *ecclesiastical separation* (Erickson 2001:1092) is exhausting but includes, the Lutheran Church from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church cast out of the Roman Catholic Church, and subsequent casting out of the Episcopalian sect from the Anglicans, the Eastern Orthodox Church censured from the Roman Catholic Church and vice versa, the Evangelical Free Church dividing from the state Lutheran Church of Scandinavia, the Free Methodist Church separating from the Methodist Church, the entire Holiness Church movement, the Foursquare Church separating itself from the Assemblies of God, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church separating from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA), and latest being the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians forming, in an effort to pull away from the PCUSA due to the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

2.6 Doctrinal Diversity vs. “True Heads of Doctrine”

One need not look too far to observe conflicts in ecumenicity in the Body of Christ; the sheer number of “Christian” denominations serves to illustrate the diversity of doctrinal stances represented among the “elect”. Nelson holds that

spiritual maturity of a local church is evidenced in its solid grasp of sound doctrine (Nelson 2009:107). Fundamental to any resolution is the identification of those doctrines which are indeed essential or foundational to true faith in Christ. As variances are vast and extreme in the Body of Christ as to the nature of the essential doctrines, such a study is not within the scope of this dissertation, however it can neither be entirely dismissed here either.

If Christianity is to have any boundaries of perceived integrity, there needs to be some rule of faith to which it subscribes, however limited or expansive, hence the need to search for a core orthodoxy of catholicity- essentials of the Christian faith. Unfortunately the absence of theological reflection has almost sterilized our schools and churches from doctrinal understanding (Bargerhuff 2010:1). Detrimental to the integrity of Christendom is the failure to identify those who are rightly in the Body, and with whom fellowship should be extended.

MacArthur holds that the basis for fundamentalism, those doctrines held to be essential, primary and non-negotiable toward salvation, were those embraced by the reformers; the authority, inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the Cross, the resurrection, justification by faith *alone*, salvation by grace through faith, and the need for sanctification (MacArthur 1994:94). He also notes that a rational conclusion is that, “when a person joins an organization, he obligates himself to live and act in accordance with the standards of the group, just as much as a citizen is obligated to abide by the laws of his country” (MacArthur 1986:115). Thus, was the understanding that “community” comes with the costs of aligning with that community’s standards, and is no less true in the kingdom of God. The problem comes when an individual desires the “spiritual security, blessings, and promises of the gospel but have too little sense of responsibility in conforming to its standards and obeying its commands” (MacArthur 1986:116).

Such was the understanding of the need to identify the fundamentals, that since the early centuries Christians have sought to identify minimally fundamental tenets of faith, often through the employment of creeds. Unfortunately, states MacArthur, these creeds can be errant, misinterpreted, or altogether insufficient to identify the true believer. “The Apostles’ Creed”, notes MacArthur, “could be

professed by many heretics, as the infallibility and the deity of Christ are noticeably absent from that creed” (MacArthur 1994:103-106).

Offered as an inability for a creed to represent any form of doctrinal minimalism, MacArthur further clarifies that creeds were not initiated as an exhaustive identification of doctrine to bring together differing bodies of Christianity, but a refutation of errant theology. Thus, none were a complete statement of doctrines essential for genuine salvation through Christ. The creeds “served purposes that were controversial, not conciliatory” (MacArthur 1994:102). As such, no doctrinal minimalism can be ascribed to any creedal formula.

As noted above, true *koinōnia*, a sharing of all things in Christ can only exist among those who are truly regenerate. Though allowance for doctrinal diversity is tolerated in the “non-essentials”, there can be no tolerance for variance in those doctrines that are essential to “one faith”. MacArthur further stipulates that there clearly are boundaries between true and false doctrine (MacArthur 1994:107). Any action intended to “take away” from, or “add to” a corpus of essential doctrine is aberrant to the cause of Christ.

Though an accurate, sufficient and exhaustive list may not be adequately generated, nor is it entirely within the scope of this research, it is critical to understand where they may be identified. MacArthur asserts that essential doctrine must solely be found in the context of God’s Scripture, and that the integrity of the Gospel message itself is of primary concern (MacArthur 1994:108).

As Scripture is the rule of faith, minimal inclusions to this body of fundamental beliefs would certainly include, *sola scriptura*- the understanding that the Scriptures alone are the basis for understanding God’s will and message for our lives over and above any contrivances of man. Additionally, *sola fide* & *sola gracia*- the accurate conclusion that fallen man is brought into a reconciled relationship to God the Father through faith, and only by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, not through any meritorious works of righteousness. Also, one must subscribe to *solus Christo*, the assertion that salvation, or righteousness in God is only through the work of Christ, no more. And *solī Deo Gloria* meaning God is to receive the only veneration for redemption. One must as well, MacArthur asserts, believe in the

Trinity, a correct understanding of God, and the eternal deity of Christ, the nature of the Messiah himself (MacArthur 1994:116). These doctrines are considered vital to salvation and in total accordance with Scripture.

2.7 Division and Personal Conflict

So on the one hand, separation in the form of excommunication is waning among the congregations for due cause, but on the other hand division is happening all too often on the smaller scale as people exercise this “freedom” in accordance with their own desires even when it is at odds with Scriptures. Perhaps the most abundant form of division in the Church is seen in the personal conflict among its members. Thomas notes:

Turn over the pages of ecclesiastical history and show me where has been the display of this spirit. I read of acrimonious controversies of uncharitable accusations, of wretched bigotries, of malicious persecutions, of sanguinary wars, in connection with what has been called the Church; but I confess that since the apostolic age I can discover scarcely a vestige of this wonderful spirit. “The eye for an eye” and “the tooth for a tooth” spirit, I see everywhere; scarcely any sign of this *seventy times seven* spirit of forgiveness (Thomas 1979:369).

Relational division emanates from errant theology, or from disobedience to orthodox theology and behavioral deviances. Nowhere in such great abundance does division of the Body of Christ seem to be so greatly rooted than in the area of mere personal conflict. As much has been written of the subject, it is clear that some sort of separation is thought to be at times, justified, due to theological doctrine or behavioral concerns. The question at hand is, “To what degree, on what such occasion, and under what methodological constraints is that separation deemed biblically allowable?”

One of the most often abused passages of Scripture is the relational breakdown of Paul and Barnabas. Presented here is one of the most severe examples of individual Christians failing to exhibit unity in the Body; an example that undoubtedly cast a negative penumbra across the face of Christianity, and it was by two of the least suspecting believers. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians

1:12 in a matter admonishing against quarrels. In light of that exhortation the question could rightly be asked, “Was Paul errant in his relationship with Barnabas?”

As McClintock observes, Christians have been dividing over such things as music, cars, worship styles, buildings, elements, clothing and certainly “fringe” theology for millennia, still the question is no less relevant, “When *is* it permissible to separate from another believer?”

Schisms often arise in churches from causes which have little or nothing to do with diversities of Doctrinal sentiment among the members; and that such were the schisms which disturbed the church at Corinth appears to us probable (McClintock 1891:837).

When examining the concept of unity and division within the Church, Berkouwer himself even questions the paradoxical concept. He even goes so far as to suggest that all disunity and schism in the New Testament of Christ’s Church, which is his Body “appear to be ridiculous and impossible”, yet he concedes that it is a painful yet insoluble paradox (Berkouwer 1976:29-30). Arguing that the Church cannot be subject to the divisiveness and at the same time be absent of sin, he asks if the concept of ecclesiastical unity is merely a theoretical ecclesiology which is idealistic and unrealistic; a distant and unreal ideal (Berkouwer 1976:35,50); and, “how can this division be possible without affecting Christ himself?” (Berkouwer 1976:40). His answer is that this situation is indeed “impossible”, not that it is unreal, but that it is untenable due to the drastic affect upon the Church, an “intolerable evil” (Berkouwer 1976:40-41).

In light of this train of thought, Berkouwer continues on, that, “the Church is meant to remain in the clear track of the New Testament, where the holiness of the Church is mentioned continuously. Believers are called saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, and they find themselves in the midst of earthly, everyday reality...They are continually reminded of this special qualification, and the whole Church is addressed as God’s own people and as a holy nation, called out of darkness into his marvellous light” (Berkouwer 1976:315). Holiness, to Berkouwer, is a visible sign of the Church’s witness and a demonstration of her election, calling and mercy in which orthodoxy and orthopraxy are “inseparably connected” and any

such breach in either is not only an attack on the holiness of the Church, but he maintains is an attack upon the apostolicity of the Church (Berkouwer 1976:316).

As a result, “there can be no indulgent tolerance of sin in her midst”, suggesting, in light of Pauls chastisement to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 5:2), that such a tolerance endangers the existence of the whole Church (Berkouwer 1976:358); sin is not taken seriously but is instead relativized, thus the destructive evil is minimized (Berkouwer 1976:359). Again, he asserts that there is an “irrevocable correlation between holiness and discipline...for discipline is not only directed to holiness, but also presupposes it” (Berkouwer 1976:377). Of particular concern of holiness to Berkouwer is in the area of doctrine and heresy, and he stipulates that in the area where Scripture is not adhered to in a “collective finding of truth” (quoting Kuyper), “there can only be reaction and separated ways” (Berkouwer 1976:385). In support of this Reymond affirms the authority to separate itself from error and unbelief, that the Church would remain doctrinally pure or orthodox (Reymond 2001:890). Although asserting that “Differences of opinion over nonessentials should not be made the basis for division in a local congregation or denomination as such moves as light causes as these are ‘schismatic’, schism being understood here as formal and unjustified separation from the church” (Reymond 2001:890).

Reymond cites two circumstances which should compel an individual to leave or separate, they are apostasy and heresy- apostasy being the total renunciation of the Christian faith, whereas heresy the engagement of any subversive doctrinal teaching. Even if the church itself is not promoting heresy he encourages a separation from the church or denomination if the church will not discipline heretics (Reymond 2001:891). Redmond additionally cites cause for separation due to heteropraxy, as he claims it is the authority of the Church to separate between the holy and the profane; the exercise of discipline is for the glory of God and of Christ, the purity of the church, and the reclaiming of disobedient members (Reymond 2001:890).

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, in a report “commissioned by the Pew Forum from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity”, cites some 41,000 separate Christian denominations and organizations throughout the world, though

notes that some of these are due to representations of the same denominations in different countries (Gordon 2011:95-96). On a macro level the world sees the separation in the Church in the vast number of church denominations and organizations. On a micro level, on a personal individual level, divorce is by far observed to be the greatest visual demonstration of the separation in the Body of Christ.

Affirming, in part, Grudem's reasons for separation in the areas of doctrine and practice, his assertion that separation is permissible for "matters of Conscience" is tenuous as he himself holds, "if a Christian had no freedom to preach or teach as his or her conscience, informed by Scripture, would dictate, it might be thought that separation was necessary or at least wise" (Grudem 1994:881). This assertion "might be thought" is really superfluous to biblical mandate, introducing speculative and subjective merits, and should not be included in the list of reasons for separation.

2.8 Sacred Space and Positional Holiness³

Also included in the examination of permissible division in *koinōnia* is an understanding of the consecration, or holiness of the implements of worship and the sacred spaced, or approachability of God.⁴ The concept of sacred space seeks to define that area, not limited to a physical arena, wherein the profane is permitted to be in the presence of a holy God; it is the human response to God's holy presence. Carvalho defines it as such:

³ Williams denotes that, "The language of indwelling [or sacred space] must be more than a restatement of divine omnipresence-though that attribute is not irrelevant, as it allows Him [the Holy Spirit] to be present as Christ's representative in the lives of all people simultaneously...the language of indwelling, to be meaningful, must refer to more than just location; it must account for the difference in mode between God's presence in heaven and hell, in the Christian and in the sinner who is still a rebel" (Williams D 1994:188).

⁴ Some of the content of the Sacred Space understanding is taken from an audio sermon series on the nature of Sacred Space given by Kit Culver, at Sovereign Grace Community Church in Denver, Colorado.

The concept of sacred space is one that works out of a theology of the real presence of a divine being. Since we think of reality as intangible-that is, spatially located- sacred space becomes an essential metaphor for real presence. To put it another way: It's not real if it doesn't take up space. That space "taken up" by the divine presence is sacred space (Carvalho 2008:136-137).

Though it was expressed at a holy mountain, a mound of earth in the middle of a river, or in a grove of trees, God elected, at least for Israel to utilize a sanctuary, be it tabernacle or Temple to house his glory. For ancient Israel the sacred space is the availability then, or a "primary metaphor" experience of a holy and righteous God allowing a subservient and defiled being to approach him. It was the experience of that community within the sacred space of God (Carvalho 2008:138). This understanding of sacred space, or holy ground then is how that worship by the profaned is experienced in the realm of that sacred, divine presence.

Nelson cautions that, "the tendency for the seeker to conclude that, "some space is more sacred than other space", when "From a biblical perspective, God's omnipresence is one of his bedrock attributes. And all space is God's Space" (Nelson 2009:89). Though this is true (otherwise the words of God to Moses would be negated), again it must be noted that sacred space involves the human response to God's holy presence, and the approachability of God.

Carvalho continues, "For ancient Israel as well as for Christianity, Yahweh is a god who interacts in deliberate and concrete ways with the human community. The 'space' within which such interaction occurs is rendered 'sacred' by this interaction" (Carvalho 2008:138). Certainly, according to Carvalho, "the incarnation changes the dynamics of God's real presence" to the people today, as it expresses God's descent into humanity, bringing the sacred space to humanity itself (Carvalho 2008:140). As a result Christ is both the holy God, and the means by which a sinful man is granted an audience with that holy God.

From the time God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:5, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground", to those same words to Joshua in chapter 5:15, "The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you

are standing is holy””, to the reference in Revelation 21:27, “and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”, it can be seen that anything unholy or any person who is considered unrighteous, or unholy has no permission to enter into the presence of a holy and pure God.

In the most rudimentary understanding, sacred space is where the divine presence is (Carvalho 2008:130). Although God is omnipresent, and not contained in any one place, Carvalho holds that the Temple is not so much a place housing God’s presence as it is a place where prayer is directed (Carvalho 2008:130-131). Obviously, this suggests that the presence of God is somewhat dynamic in that worship may not bring a holy God more into that space, but it can “actualize his presence more fully” (Carvalho 2008:131).

While the tabernacle or the Temple was the place where “God dwelt”, it was not communicating that God could *only* be found there. The Tabernacle or Temple then was where God was seeking to allow engagement with the Israelite people. As a result the major demand was that, in light of the presence of God being a serious matter, humans needed to refrain from defiling the sacred space with sin, as sin stands in stark contrast to the holiness of God, and unworthy to be in his presence (Carvalho 2008:134). Both systematically and intentionally, the Temple then was God’s construct for being approached, as well as any subsequent salvific construct.

Of an elaborate structure established in Exodus, to be looked at later, the Tabernacle represented God’s framework of approachability. “The higher the articulation of the sanctity of part of the building (the sanctuary), the more the elements around that sanctified spot are experienced as hierarchically arranged” (Carvalho 2008:142). This implies that the closer one moves toward this metaphoric place of holiness, the more evidence there is that one is indeed moving in that direction of sacred space. In the light of one moving toward the Holy of Holies, one first would come through the eastern entrance of the outer court passing bronze lavers and an altar, moving subsequently toward objects, which were golden in nature. The journey into the sacred space would then pass from the lesser refined coverings of the Tabernacle, the porpoise skin to the rams skin, to the goats hair coverings held together with bronze clasps and finally to the refined, linen inner

curtain marked with cherubim. The continuous journey leads toward the altar, the Ark of the Covenant, only to be cautioned once again of that presence by the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Citing Ezekiel 43:10-12,⁵ Carvalho states that coming into the sacred space of God is not without “human hierarchy or privilege” (Carvalho 2008:148). In fact, she points out that the privilege to enter is an essential component to restoration (Carvalho 2008:148).

Carvalho asks the question in regards to this text:

How does the temple plan, the detailed description of the new sacred space, solve the problem of defilement that had been present before the fall of the city? Certainly it does not wipe out human hierarchy or privilege. In fact, this text sees privilege as an essential component to the restoration. For Ezekiel the answer is shame. Human privilege remains, but even in that privileged society all are shamed before the presence of God. The book of Ezekiel defines shame as the community’s recognition of its inherent unworthiness (Carvalho 2008:148).

Though this concept may appear to be abstract when paired with a permissible division in *koinōnia*, it is deemed necessary, if there are true justifications, to understand how it affects the overall Body of the Bride of Christ in regards to purity. In a survey commissioned by Pew Forum, 71% of those surveyed believe that secularization is the single greatest threat to the witness of the church (Pew Forum 2012), suggesting a cultural absorption of the Church rather than holiness. As sacred space relates to the investigation at hand, it is important in so much as there is a rational understanding that a holy God would not permit the impure to gain access to his throne room, leastwise not an unrepentant one. This idea of sacred space seems to be downplayed as “an essential dimension of

⁵ “As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan. If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write *it* in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them. This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around *shall be* most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house” (Ezekiel 43:10-12; NASB).

contemporary worship” (Carvalho 2008:143), but there is a time and place “to take up an account of shame and guilt, to understand the positive function of such states” (Carvalho 2008:148).

Sacred space does not just evoke shame; it is defined as a place where we embrace shame. It is a place where we are sucked up in to the vortex of sacred reality and tumbled head over heels before God’s presence. It is the place where we realize that our grand churches should remind us how feeble our human constructs are compared with God’s real home in heaven, and how poorly we sing, even at our best, compared with the ‘choirs of angels.’ It is the place where we realize that God God’s presence is permanent, perfect, and universal (Carvalho 2008:149).

Walton paints this perception of sacred space as secondary, or of inconsequential importance to the Christian who lives in a narcissistic realm, that we have erred on the side of focusing on self, rather than on God. “Our emphasis on soteriology has unfortunately resulted in a narcissistic twist to our theology” (Walton 2012:298). He further adds:

This kind of Christianity is a “me” religion: God loves *me*; Christ died for *me*; Jesus saved *me*; heaven is prepared for *me*. These are all true, of course, but they do not comprise the sum total of our faith. In the end, our Christianity is all about God. Herein then lies the core of the problem. We have been confused about Leviticus because we wanted to think that ritual was all about people dealing with sin, when all along it was about God and the equilibrium of sacred space. It treats people somewhat secondarily—they have to be kept pure if the sanctity of God’s presence is to be maintained and if they are going to have access to it. But God’s presence is the main thing (Walton 2012:299).

Finally, Walton defines the concept of sacred space in terms of concentric circles, which he identifies as being called the sacred compass:

Sacred space can be understood by using a model of concentric circles. In the center circle is the most holy area, the Holy of Holies, the place of God’s presence. The next concentric circle defines the area that is limited to priestly access. In Israelite sanctuaries this area was the antechamber and, at least eventually, the area between the altar and the portico. Leviticus treats these two areas as one in light of the fact that they are limited to priestly access. The third circle is the courtyard where people of determined status (that is, a particular level of purity) were allowed access for particular purposes (sacrifices at the altar). The fourth circle is represented in the Pentateuch as the “camp of Israel,” which is clearly distinguished from the area “outside the camp.” Those who had contracted impurity were driven out of the camp.

Once Israel was in the land, it is possible that the "camp of Israel" was defined as the area within a settlement of some sort, while "outside the camp" would have been defined as out in the desolate, unsettled areas, but the text does not address this specifically (another indication that Leviticus should be viewed as a product of the wilderness period). This series of concentric circles of holiness has been referred to in recent literature as the "sacred compass" ... If we adopt an emphasis on the equilibrium of sacred space and the model of the sacred compass for our analysis of Leviticus, we will discover that the design of the structure becomes more transparent (Walton 2012:299).

Understanding sacred space in this paradigm helps to identify the urgency for maintaining a holiness perimeter for the presence of God, as the holiness moves from the most central of zones outward toward the perimeter, the idea is that the impure remnant of the sacrifices are brought out, representing the impurities that have found their way moving toward the divine, and they are expunged from the camp (Walton 2012:301). Located somewhere in the capacity of these concentric circles is the Church and its corresponding holiness about which Mohler affirms, "The church is to be conspicuous in its purity and holiness and steadfast in its confession of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Rather than capitulating to the moral (or immoral) environment...as holiness is the evidence of his redemptive work" (Mohler 1998:176-177). This, he claims is the identity of the Church itself as well as an external litmus test for genuine witness of believers:

The identity of the church as the people of God is to be evident in its pure confession of Christ, its bold testimony to the Gospel, and its moral holiness before the watching world. Nothing less will mark the church as the true vessel of the Gospel (Mohler 1998:177).

Grudem establishes the case that the people of God are to be all about holiness and the means established by God to develop that holiness:

New covenant believers are also to "strive...for the *holiness* without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14) and to know that God's discipline is given to us "that we may share his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). Paul encourages Christians to be separate from the dominating influence that comes from close association with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–18) and then encourages them, "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and *make holiness perfect in the fear of God*" (2 Corinthians 7:1; cf. Romans 12:1). The church itself is intended by God to grow "into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21), and Christ's present work for the

church is “that he might sanctify her...that he might present the church to himself in splendor...that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26–27). Not only individuals but also the church itself must grow in holiness! (Grudem 1994:202).

Mohler adds to this thought:

Throughout the Bible, the people of God are characterized by a distinctive purity. This moral purity is not their own achievement, but the work of God within their midst. As the Lord said to the children of Israel, “I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44a). Given that they have been chosen by a holy God as a people carrying His own name, God’s chosen people are to reflect His holiness by their way of living, worship, and beliefs (Mohler 1998:175-176).

2.9 Synthesis of the Literature

In regard to separations within Christendom the degree to which Christians are in obedience to God rests in the benefit or damage of any such separations identified in Scripture. The research in this chapter has generated thus far, the concept that unity and *koinōnia* are extremely precious and fragile in the context of the Body of Christ yet, for various reasons it may become necessary for those qualities to be suspended for the sake of the health of the entire Body, and to protect imperfect individuals from being damaged by infringing on the sacred space of God. It is of great importance to identify those who are of sincere faith and those who are not. Yet, the research has shown that oftentimes fellow Christians have chosen to exercise division inappropriately, either too swiftly, or not swiftly enough against the brethren. History has shown that consistent patterns of divisions and behavior have been allowed, and even mandated for various reasons throughout the Church. Though history has revealed that councils, such as the Consistory, have exercised much of this authority, it has not thus far identified the strict biblical parameters by which such severe measures are to be imposed, especially when applied by the general Body of Christ- whether individuals may wield the power to impose personal excommunication.

Though history and previous examinations of thought are important, the desire is to identify proper behavior among believers in light of the will of God. Therefore, many factors outside of historical usage and literary investigation need to

be examined. As a beacon of orthodoxy, the behavior of God's people as stipulated in the Old and New Testaments will be examined directly for thorough Biblical understanding seeking to answer whether division among God's people is allowable, and when.

Chapter 3

INFORMING THEOLOGY

(Biblical Examination of Old Testament Texts Regarding Division)

3.0 Introduction

Beyond the goal of historical understanding or practice, it is the goal of this research to adequately understand the biblical sanctioning of any division, thus it will be of value to understand the position of Old Testament theology on the matter as a “blueprint” of apposite understanding and behavior. As communicated in the introduction (Section 1.6), “an inductive study of the antecedent Old Testament passages relating to unity and divisions will be studied providing informing theology” is the sought-after ideal of this chapter. “The data sought will be relevant to the general health of the Church as pertains to *koinōnia* and separations with the expectation of synthesizing a theory of the progressive revelation of divisions in Scripture”, especially as applied to the New Testament Church. As such, the intent of this chapter is to identify the model of oneness, which is exemplified in the nature

and being of Yahweh himself, and though not often mentioned specifically, the concepts of *koinōnia* and discipline need to be examined in light of Old Testament understanding. Throughout the texts numerous citations are given affirming, at times, the need to separate and divide, as not only permitted but specifically mandated by Yahweh. In regards to extreme discipline, Sanders notes:

Not all of man's sufferings are interpreted as divine discipline in the Old Testament: God might destroy His people completely or he might punish them for sins committed. It is only when the punishment is interpreted as an opportunity to repent, and is seen as evidence of God's goodness and love that it is to be called divine discipline (Sanders 1955:117).

Bargerhuff notes that, "Discipline in the Old Testament is depicted as both a medium for instruction and training as well as punitive chastisement and judgment upon sinfulness" (Bargerhuff 2010:76). Mohler writes, "Israel's judicial system was largely designed to protect the purity of the nation. In the New Testament, the Church is likewise described as the people of God who are visible to the world by their purity of life and integrity of testimony" (Mohler 1998:176). As such, there are parallels to be gleaned from the Old Testament in regards to this topic.

3.1 Unity

From Genesis to Malachi the concept of unity is affirmed in the model of marriage as being the essence of unity modelled in the Trinity. From the creation of man and woman to the statement of God's hatred toward the dissolution of any marriage through divorce, the Old Testament is filled with the importance of unity, and yet the need to protect holiness in light of that unity. It is also the desire to look at unity in light of a familial connection as the people of God revealed in the Old Testament; this section seeks to draw out those connections.

3.1.1 Deuteronomy 6:4 -The Trinitarian Model of Unity

As an affirmation of the unity expressed in Section 2.1, Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” This became the creedal statement of the Jews, known as the *Shema*, meaning *to hear*. This simple verification corroborates the character and intimacy of the Holy Trinity, identifying a God who is both a unity and who is unique (EFCA 2011:32). Utilizing the *tetragrammaton* to designate the nomenclature of God it was affirmed by Jesus in Mark 12:29 as the foundational truth of Yahweh (EFCA 2011:32).

It is possible that the Hebrew word for “one”, *echād* could be intended as a name or title of God thereby suggesting that the command is to be understood as the title of Yahweh correctly as “One” (Craigie 1976:168; Dahood 1970:198), however it is more likely that *echād* is identifying the nature of the preceding word *Elohim*, the plural form of God, and in so doing attributes the unity of the Godhead to be of a “compound unity” as opposed the use of *achid*, which would identify an absolute unity (Coffman 1975:257). Rupprecht holds this pronouncement to be the “fundamental monotheistic dogma” of the Old Testament (Craigie 1976:169 citing W. Rupprecht; cf. Weinfeld 1991:349; Coffman 1975:257), an understanding that was brought to a heightened consciousness during the Exile (Weinfeld 1991:449). The profound theological implications here reveal it to be a direct revelation from God regarding the character of God himself (Craigie 1976:169). Craigie further contests that the word connotes an heir of uniqueness to it but that it also carries the inherent suggestion of unity within the Godhead, a unity such that when the Lord spoke, there was none to contest as he was self-contained within the Trinity, and there was no other to refute (Craigie 1976:169). The unity was of such intimacy and agreement that no debate could take place within the Godhead; the Godhead is the embodiment of being perfectly relational. The position of this assertion suggests that this character of the Sovereign is fundamental to what the Lord would have the Israelites instruct their children. The Deity of the Israelites is not polytheistic, but a monotheistic Being. Hence, though the Trinity is made up of three persons, worship of Yahweh was to be limited to the One True God, restricting any division of Israel’s commitment to deity (Erickson 2003:349).

Weinfeld posits the translation could hold multiple meanings (Weinfeld 1991:337).

- YHWH is our God, YHWH is one
- YHWH is our God, YHWH alone
- YHWH our God is one YHWH
- YHWH our God, YHWH is one

Weinfeld discounts the first two suggestions, as both present YHWH as subject and *elohim* as predicate. Weinfeld contends that there is no precedent in Deuteronomy for the phrase YHWH occurring as both subject and predicate but that *elohim* always stands in opposition to YHWH. Suggesting the fourth translation looks inappropriate due to the first subject being truncated, he prefers to endorse the translation also held by Driver suggesting that the concept of unity is not only embraced but also that of aloneness as well, to the point of exclusivity of being (Weinfeld 1971:337). Bratcher and Nida hold a broader view suggesting that:

Where such a diversity of possibilities exist, it may be that the best decision is to side with the majority, although any one of the possibilities mentioned above is almost equally defensible from the point of view of the Greek and/or the Hebrew (Bratcher 1961:382).

The Critical and Exegetical Commentary posits the alternate rendering, “Hear, O Israel: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone” thus asserting that Israel is to have no other gods, except Jehovah (Jamieson 1945:637) which seems the most logical. Mark 12:32 affirms this thought one step further in the words of the scribe to Jesus, “He is one, and there is no one else besides him” affirming the emphasis is on the uniqueness and sole existence of Yahweh alone. Grudem further alleges that this understanding of unity would endorse a unity of purpose and a unity in thought, in essence and essential nature, fundamentally, one Being (Grudem 1994:238).

This tenet of belief was the core of the generational instruction mandated in the first verse of this same chapter. “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it” (Deuteronomy 6:1). And this was to be passed down to the subsequent generations as

demonstrated in the second verse, “so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command you” (Deuteronomy 6:2), which suggests the initial value of unity is a common belief system that would be followed by a common practice of behavior. Part of this instruction was formative discipline of which Kingdon notes:

Discipline in Proverbs is aimed at the shaping of godly character, character that reflects something of the wisdom and righteousness of God (Kingdon 2000:449).

This *echād* is once again alluded to in Genesis 2 (cf. Malachi 2:15), as God seeks to establish within the marriage relationship, a unity or oneness akin to the *echād* held within the Trinity (Tackett: Truth Project), one that is a covenant reflection of the expectant unity to come in the marriage of Christ to his Church (cf. Ephesians 5:31-32). By God’s own affirmation in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him”. In taking the rib from the side of Adam, God identified that Adam was made to be relational;⁶ he subsequently purposed to complete the fullness of man. As this is merely an introduction to the unity of marriage, a more complete picture will be presented in Section 3.1.2 examining a spiritual, metaphysical side of unity rather than merely this physical oneness, this study of *echād*.

The Lord causes a deep sleep to fall upon the man so that he is in an anesthetised state able to endure the “surgery” about to take place, a sleep so profound it amounts to a near suspension of the entire nervous system (Jamieson 1945:45). The rib is strategically selected and removed thus, being of the same substance of the male; yet, the female is destined to be an entirely different person. Absent the investigation in this study is the parallel identification to the *homousios* of

⁶ 21 “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.’ 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24; NASB).

the members of the Trinity. The woman was created directly from the being of Adam rather than of the dust of the earth so that “she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with man” (Keil 1975:88). By this act the dependence of the woman upon man (Keil 1975:88), as well as the model of economic subordination are introduced in the marriage relationship as well, both emulating the nature of the Trinity. As such, the husband and wife enjoy a greater relational unity and fellowship than even that of parental units. The wife is “taken out of man”, of the same material, thus referencing physical intimacy, yet in a greater sense indicating a greater metaphysical or spiritual relationship. Having been of the same substance prior, they will again experience a reunification of sorts. Upon waking, Jamieson, in agreement with Josephus and many other Jewish writers, surmises that the “mental eye” of Adam was keenly aware of the entire scene of formation as he identifies her origins immediately upon his “rapturous” awakening (Jamieson 1945:45). The subsequent biblical usage continues to affirm the unity, and unification nuances *echād*; Cazelles notes the utilization of *echād* in Exodus 26:6 in regards to “the tabernacle shall be one whole”, and cites as well the usage of the term in Exodus 28:7 and 39:4 “in connection with the ephod of the high priest as a symbol of the unity of the twelve tribes” (Cazelles 1980:196).

The word *dābaq*, translated as “joined”, or “soldered” in Genesis 2:24 in the English, denotes a binding or fastening of two objects with intense proximity (Kalland 1980:178), such that the attempted separation of the two would cause severe damage. Far exceeding a mere contractual obligation, this covenantal relationship is a nuptial bond so powerful that nothing in this primitive divine declaration of the marriage institution has made provision for any dissolution (Jamieson 1945:47). The two entities in the covenant relationship are considered to be of such unity that they identify with the Trinity in some lesser respect; they are one being consisting of multiple persons. It was an ordinance of God designed to model the nature of the holy Trinitarian nature, a relationship of mutual, indwelling love (Jamieson 1945:47). Hence, when divorce is introduced into the paradigm of mankind it is no mere act of physical separation but a transcendent, metaphysical separation of a unity modelled after the inseparable Trinity.

Furthermore, this desire for a transcendent unity, extended among all believers, is proclaimed in Psalm 133. Although the word used to describe it is not *echād*, it is a synonym, *yāchad*. This same unity is expressed visually in light of Joshua Chapter 1:12-18, where the brethren, specifically the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh are informed by Joshua of their positions in the battles of Canaan to which they readily agree. Their acts are those of unity and obedience, which reveal themselves to be instruments of encouragement, an example not to be lost on the entire church, that unity is no idle luxury (Davis 1996:20-21). The unity of Israel will further be evidenced in a negative fashion in that when Achan sins, the potential to spread rapidly throughout the nation is greater enhanced by the close proximity, and unity of the people.

This *echād*, or *heis* (LXX), which is deemed a *perichoretical* forerunner, will be further examined in light of John 17 and Philippians 2 passages sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.7.

3.1.2 Genesis 2 -The Unity in Marriage: Adam and Eve⁷

A notable text underlining the unity of the oneness under investigation is found in Genesis chapter 2, wherein the definition of marriage is more deeply investigated, from more of a metaphysical perspective. As verse 18 opens God declares that, “it is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helper suitable for him”. God is not content with Adam being celibate (Clarke NA:45), nor does he even consult Adam about this condition (Hamilton 1990:175). Thus, what is known is God speaks or thinks, for the first time since chapter 1. The Hebrew word for speak, or thinks, is ‘*amar*. This shows that there is a deficiency of sorts, to the degree that divine intervention is needed, and God declares that. The last time that God determined to speak or think in this way was in 1:26, “Let us make man”. Here, God decrees something is so lacking that this helper ‘*ezer*, is needed to rectify the

⁷ (The following is generated in part from earlier research of the writer and was issued as previous academic product).

situation. ‘Ezer stems from the verb ‘azar, which means “save from danger”, or “deliver from death”, (Hamilton 1990:176). Hence, Eve is the one who will deliver man from his death, or perhaps, solitude. This ‘ezer is usually presented with respect to military aid, or divine assistance (Wenham 1987:68), but here brings to light the need for fulfilment from outside of Adam himself. Obviously this “helper” is designed to be of much more assistance to Adam than the animals.

God’s desire to solve this situation in this manner, reveals that he knows the character of Adam, that he is a social being (Kidner 1967:65), that he needs fellowship. God proceeds to make the animals and bring them before Adam for naming, *qara’*. From this it can be determined that Adam is of a high intellectual capacity to be able to identify and generate names for every species and type of creature, according to its nature (Hartley 2000:62). There is no mention of the fish being brought before the man as it was not practical, and not logical that they would be considered “helper” material (Driver 1904:42).

The Lord had desired to create a helper *suitable* for Adam. The prepositional phrase *kenegdo* literally means “a help as opposite him” (Kidner 1967:65), and it is used nowhere else in the Old Testament. God desired to make a complementary being, a matching being (Wenham 1987:68). Though she is a helper that would be opposite from the man, she would “fit” nicely in a complementary fashion. A good translation of this thought may be, “a counterpart”, or, “counter-partner” (Walton JH 2001:177). The fact that this being could not be obtained through any of the other creatures served to help Adam identify his deficiency. God identifies the need, but postpones the fulfilment of that need. These animals were, no doubt, marched in front of Adam in pairs, indicating the necessity for the ongoing of the species (Gill 1960:16). As none of these animals can possibly fulfill his innate need for companionship (Broadman 1973:128), the man senses the fact that he is incomplete to even respond properly to the command in 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply. The man needed the woman’s help in order to be obedient (Sailhamer 1990:48).

It seems that this was certain to be felt even though God was forming, *yatsar*, the animals “out of the ground”, even as Adam was formed out of the ground (Hartley 2000:61). Yet, as they were not fashioned out of Adam, they were not found

to be adequate companions, or helpers. It is at this point of suspense that Adam realizes he is without a mate.

The solution would come in the form of his own flesh, and the result would be so satisfying that he would erupt in a claim of exclamation in verse 23. According to Matthew Henry, the idea that woman is taken from man presents the idea that she is one to be alongside of man, not underfoot, or ruling over. Hence, the Lord causes a “deep sleep” to fall upon the man. The word *tardemah*, may have been used for many reasons. The first is that God was being gracious in anesthetizing the man so he would not feel pain. The other, perhaps, was that the Lord wished to keep this surprise, and his creative process of the woman under wraps (Wenham 1967:89). Also, the Lord may have wanted this unconscious state to fall upon the man because God was so near him. Thus, the desire for a deep slumber is God’s solution.

The word for the “rib” that was taken is ‘*tsela*, used nowhere else anatomically in the Old Testament. When it is used, it is generally referring to the side of a building or a room. It is even thought that this form of referencing is referring to the other “half” (Walton 2001:177). It is considered to have included the bone and flesh from the man, so “side” is a better interpretation of ‘*tsela* (Hartley 2000:62). Thus, the idea that comes out of this is that Adam is only half of the completed project. The word for *built*, *banah*, implies that there was a construction process occurring here, one that involved the utilization of the rib as the “cornerstone”, or foundation of the project. God could have easily fashioned another person out of the dust, but chose to create out of the man himself, thus, “building in” the one-flesh union. In “bringing her to the man”, *bow*’ *adam*, he was, in effect, establishing the first arranged marriage. Noteworthy is the fact that Adam had nothing to do with the creation of this woman; it was God and God alone who provided this gift.

It is indeed a welcomed introduction. Verse 23 may well be the first song, or poetry, declared by man. It is, in fact, the first recorded words of any human in the Bible. There are thirteen Hebrew words in this response. The first, the last and the middle are “this one”, (feminine). It is a definite acknowledgement and affirmation. It is interesting to note that after each creative process denoted in the first chapter of Genesis, God observes, “that it was good”. At the beginning of this creation he

declares, “it is not good”. Finally, in verse 23, it is Adam who is declaring, “that it is very good” (Broadman 1973:128).

Adam, or *‘iysh* takes ownership, accepting this new creation, as he names her, *ishshah* or woman, since she was taken out of man. Even in the name, it is an addition, or completion of mankind, in effect, demonstrating that something was needed for his completion. There is some resistance to accept this as some theologians feel it cannot be determined with certainty whether he is giving her a name, or merely identifying what she is (Walton 2001:177). In response to this, it seems understandable that the generic names for man, woman, and the animals *were* their names, as well. It must be noted that Adam was not even named at this point. Rather, in verse 22 when God brought the woman *to the man*, this Hebrew identification *ha’ ‘adam*, (to the man) is lacking any personal name “since a personal name cannot take the definite article” (Speiser 1962:18). Johnson notes that:

The method in which Adam’s wife came into existence caused Adam to recognize an inseparable relationship with her. Being made from a part of his own body, she was literally, physically bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. To have separated himself from her would have been to have put away a part of his very own self (Johnson 1989:11).

Verse 24 is thought by most to be the addition of the narrator, rather than the continuation of Adam’s excitement. It seems justifiable that a narrator was inserting this as the man and the woman had no earthly parents (Hartley 2000:63). The word *‘al-ken*, is translated *therefore*, or *for this reason*. Thus, it can be understood in the English to mean, “that is why a man leaves his...” A man leaves his family because he is to become “one flesh”, and he cannot do this while still being emotionally connected to his family (Ross: 2004:31). As this was written by Moses in the wilderness with Hebraic tradition in mind, it would have been normal for the man to have continued to live in his parents household, therefore, an interpretation of the word *‘azab*, should be “forsakes”, rather than “leaves” (Wenham 1987:70). The man would not have left the home, but it is implied that the man would “emotionally” distance himself from the patriarchal control of his parents, since he would then be joined as “one flesh” to his wife. Actually, it is the wife that would physically leave her home and move into the family unit of the husband.

They not only become “one flesh” sexually, but also are to be intimately joined emotionally, physically, and spiritually. They are to “cleave” to one another for the satisfaction of these desires, hence, the forsaking of the father and the mother. The Hebrew word for *cleave* is *dābaq*, which denotes a state of union (Owens 1989:480,592). The idea is presented of being pressed hard together, and being caught in a state of “stickiness”; much in the same way two pieces of wood are joined together in carpentry with glue (Kohlenberger 1998:380-381). This cleaving is to be of such integrity that a separation would be nearly, if not absolutely fatal (cf. Deuteronomy 10:20). It implies the connection is like that of a crocodile to its scales, the loyalty of a man to his tribe, and even muscle connected providing support to an appendage (Brown 1952:179-180). The man is to find his completion in the marriage between himself and his wife, not between himself and his family, so much so that they almost have one personality (Bowie 1980:497). The phrase, “become one flesh” is ‘*echād*’ (Section 3.1.1), which implies that the flesh of each is no longer discernable, as the two have indeed become one, or homogenous (Owens 1989:10).

Verse 25 acts as a subscript to their current state of sinfulness: there was none. They were naked, ‘*arummim*, but not ashamed, *buwsh*. The complementary factors of their beings were apparent and obvious; they could logically conclude that they were made for each other. Modesty did not enter into the picture, as they were only revealing to each other what they “had to offer”.

This stands in contrast to verse 7 of the following chapter, when they are aware of their nakedness, or sin, and desire to hide it. In chapter 3, the Lord “helps” them in their shame to cover them with animal skins. This can be seen as a parallel of the penal substitution system established for the Jews that only covers their sin. This pre-sin state which they enjoy at this point is also a glimpse of the future when the substitutionary death of Christ, as foreshadowed in Genesis 3:15, will come to pass. At that moment, however, they were enjoying unity, and the purity, and the guilt-free satisfaction of their pre-fallen condition.

One would do well to note that the primary role of the woman was not reproductive, or work oriented. Rather, it was to complete the man as a full, functional, productive unit. Reproduction was only a part of this completeness, to

rescue him (mankind) from death. She was meant to be an equal, a co-partner, not to serve in an indentured capacity.

As a man and a woman are to cleave to each other with such force, it needs to be comprehended just how devastating divorce is. The idea is that the two become one flesh, thus a separation is a tearing apart that can only leave destruction, or two damaged halves of what once was complete, a devastating division.

The greater understanding of man, in light of Genesis 1:27, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them", is that man is a "corporate" individual comprised of man and woman. The unity expressed here is that relational unity desired of God and further communicated in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 54:5-6 communicates the intimacy and oneness, which was desired of the Lord. "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God". Isaiah 62:5, communicates the joy the Lord has of his wife, "For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you". Hosea 2:19 describes the faithfulness and ownership which God so coveted, "I will betroth you to me forever; yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion". But as Israel was not adhering to the condition of faithfulness and purity, God calls out her impurity, which is the demise of the relationship. The relationship of unity and intimacy with Israel is put on hold because of their infidelity. Several passages point out that it is Israel who had been the infidel:

"Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32; NASB).

"Thus says the LORD, "Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, And for your transgressions your mother was sent away" (Isaiah 50:1:NASB).

“And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also” (Jeremiah 3:8:NASB).

The dissolution of the marriage, the unity, the relationship between God and Israel, comes as the cause of Israel being unfaithful (impure) and compromising the blessing of the Lord. Unity has been sacrificed and Israel has lost her husband. The parallel of marriage to the relationship will once again be brought to light in regards to Jesus Christ and his Bride (Section 4.5.8).

3.1.3 Psalm 133 -The Unity of the Brethren.

Further extending the model of unity to the entirety of the elect, the Psalmist declares in Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” The word *unity* is translated from the Hebrew *yāchad*, which portrays a similar picture to that of *echād*. *Yāchad* issues the same picture of unity as it applies to the breadth of individuals in the tribes of Israel.

The entirety of the Psalm 133 is such:

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!
- 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
- 3 It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing — life forever. (NASB).

This psalm is a Psalm of Ascent, sung by the pilgrims making their way to the Temple to celebrate in unity the fellowship which they enjoyed in God. Certainly, the dominant theme of the Psalm is one of desired unity among those who share common ancestry, the nation of Israel. Goldingay suggests this thesis statement of the first line, followed by justification through similes and explanations, is meant to foster understanding of the epitome of human relationship: unity alongside the other superlatives of the passage (Goldingay 2008:564). In the first simile, the oil coming

down upon the beard, does not signify particular importance upon the beard, but upon the quantity of oil, the “abundance of sacred festivity and thus a powerful image for the wonder of a community living as one...” (Goldingay 2008:566-567). This implies a vastness that would certainly extend beyond the beard and to the ephod which houses the 12 stones of the tribes of Israel (Goldingay 2008:566). The implication becomes clearer when the concept of oil is understood as a demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Goldingay affirms that this process of anointing was to be done as part of a person’s appointment to position, whether prophet, priest, king or other position of ordainment (Goldingay 2008:566). The oil signified the presence of the divine upon that individual, or individuals (Exodus 29:7; Leviticus 8:12). The greater understanding is that the tribes of the nation of Israel are to be unified, or in unity under the presence of the Spirit of God. Goldingay makes it clear that the reference to Aaron need not be the man himself, but merely is a reference to the unity of the nation stemming from the top down, (Goldingay 2008:566) notably the position of the high priest.

The second simile reflects the life-giving nature of water which is key in the nurturing of crops and encouragement of growth, health and multiplication. Dew is crucial to the harvest (Goldingay 2008:567), and the entire agricultural process. The dew of Hermon was thought to be “proverbially heavy” according to Goldingay (Goldingay 2008:567). The dew from above thus blesses the land of the Bible, Zion, below. Zion, after all is the land where Yahweh himself has pronounced the blessing, the eternal blessing. The great suggestion here of an abundant anointing upon the people of God introduces the blessing of life everlasting, that which Christ progressively reveals to be intimate knowledge or relationship with the Father, and with the Christ whom he has sent (John 17:3). As Midrash on Psalms says, “All goodly rewards and comforts come out of Zion” (Midrash 2:338).

Carson argues that this unity is not something that needs to be prayed for, but rather exists and needs to be nurtured. He notes that Christ never felt the compulsion to ask for the unity, as in John 17, but to ask that the disciples maintain and protect this unity (Carson 1980:190). The condensed understanding is the blessing issued to Israel, as it is faithful to exhibit unity. As they are obedient they

receive the blessing, presence and refreshment of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of eternal life.

3.2 Fellowship (*Koinōnia*) in the Old Testament

For obvious reasons the Greek word itself, *koinōnia* is not mentioned in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is however mentioned numerous times in the Septuagint having been translated from many Hebrew terms. From the multiple usages it can be seen that the demonstration of fellowship emanates from the shared characteristic of a given community. Therefore it is necessary to identify that select grouping of people in the Old Testament in order to identify those common characteristics, or *koinōnia*. Kossé asserts that the unity of the people of Israel was based on their fear of God and that though they had Abraham as their one father, they were made up of the 12 tribes (Kossé 2010:1314). The wife of God here alludes to, though is different from, the oneness in the Bride of Christ to be revealed in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:25-33). Though the Old Testament sharing in community is not explicitly expressed in the Greek term of *koinōnia*, the concept itself *is there*, and is an example, and foreshadowing of the *koinōnia* revealed in the New Testament, and that fellowship experienced in the community of true faith.

Reymond argues that the fellowship, or the elect are all those people throughout history who are “redeemed in every age who are saved by grace through personal faith in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, ‘the seed of woman’ and suffering messiah”, whether looking forward to the cross or back. He continues that the true church in the Old Testament is not equal to Israel *per se* as some were only the physical seed of Abraham and not the spiritual seed (Reymond 2001:805).

The true church of the Old testament was the spiritual seed of Abraham, that “Israel” within the nation of Israel about whom the apostle Paul speaks in Romans 9:6-8. The true covenant community of God was then, as it has ever been, the remnant *within* the external community of the nation (Reymond 2001:806).

Reymond further describes the compelling justification that there was indeed a fellowship described in the Old Testament, one that definitely parallels the New

Testament understanding of *ekklesia*. He notes that this chosen remnant was made up of those “whose midst he (God) had determined to dwell in his Shekinah glory, and with whom he had entered into covenant...” (Reymond 2001:806). Reymond continues to define that chosen remnant as those people, who were the product of the Exodus-redemption, having shared in the salvation granted them from Egypt. He identifies that two major words came to designate the people of God out of that experience, the words *edah*, and *qahal*. *Edah*, he cites means “to appoint” or “to arrange in a meeting”, and as Mounce differentiates, is relegated to the Israelites who are gathered for a *specific* goal, whereas *qahal* is used in a more common sense identifying a gathering of all Israel (Mounce 2006:127). Hence, the argument for the idea of “a gathering by appointment”, “assembly”, or “congregation” based on their common redemption. *Edah* is the more commonly used word to describe such “fellowship” throughout Exodus, and through Numbers. *Qahal*, he remarks is used to communicate “assemble”, “assembly”, or “congregation” with a greater understanding that the congregation is in actual assembly (Numbers 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:22, 9:10, 10:4; Joshua 8:35; Judges 20:2, 21:5,8; 1 Samuel 17:47; 1 Kings 8:14, 22, 55, 65), to which Mounce amends is for a particular civil, religious or other occasion (Mounce 206:127), as opposed to *edah*, which refers to the congregation in general “physically” assembled or not (Reymond 2001:806). In Exodus 12:6 and Numbers 14:5 the two words are used together to describe “the assembly of the congregation [“of Israel”, or “of the sons of Israel”] (Reymond 2001:807). The Septuagint almost universally, holds Reymond, translated these two words as *synagogue*, “gathering place”, or “place of assembly”, but particularly in the book of Deuteronomy and later books, *qahal* was translated as *ekklesia*, and thought to refer to “the assembly of the congregation of Israel” (Child 1958:352, cf. Ngewa 2010:1457). Hence, holds Reymond, both of these terms came to be employed as “the general term to designate the people of God as both a local and corporate entity” (Reymond 2001:807), though *ekklesia* strongly points to who the people were corporately, whereas *koinōnia* identifies their commonality of what they shared.

The following passages are examined to demonstrate the essence of community inherent in the people of God.

3.2.1 Psalm 1 -The Righteous and the Wicked

This understanding is further illustrated in Psalm 1, where the righteous people of God are contrasted with the ungodly, wicked, sinners and scoffers.

- 1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish. (NASB)

Two major themes are evidenced in the Psalm. The first is the “clear-cut distinction between the righteous and the wicked” (Stott 1988:6); this psalm bifurcates all of humanity into these “absolute categories” (Stott 1988:6). “The second theme concerns the present fortunes and the ultimate destinies of human beings” (Stott 1988:6). The righteous, and thus those who are the recipients of the beneficial fortunes *are to be* the eschatological benefactors of life in the assembly.

From this basis argument can be made that the physical identification of the assembly, and the usage of these terms, is equally descriptive, and theologically pregnant in the spiritual realm as well. Reymond holds that the key word in the New Testament is this word taken from the Septuagint, *ekklesia*, which again aptly describes both the people of God, and the covenant community of God (Reymond 2001:810). Were this word to be examined in light of the Old Testament paradigm, it would be seen and argued that this term as well is based on the common redemptive elements of the people involved (Colossians 1:13), as the Church is comprised of those individuals called out from the slavery of sin in into the domain of Jesus Christ, and thus, share in the common fellowship (*koinōnia*) in Christ.

The assembly celebrated the common blessings, and the common redemption in their one God at the feast of Passover, as they assembled, and at synagogue.

One commentator notes that, “It is interesting to note that the word for communion in Greek, ‘*koinōnia*’, is used in the Septuagint to translate the word ‘*chabar*’. *Chabar* has the meaning of something that is bound together” (Littleguyintheye 2012), or united, or being united. The word *chabar*, then, communicates the New Testament paradigm of *koinōnia*, or conversely, the concept of *koinōnia* defines or captures the essence of the Old Testament value of *chabar*. Cazelles communicates the “united” to include the general Semitic understanding of “city” or “clan” theme. He further identifies this development to include “clamps” citing usage in 1 Chronicles 22:3 and 2 Chronicles 34:11 (Cazelles 1980:196). Van Groningen develops this theme even more, integrating “fellowship”, as in association, company, and even companionship to the extent of “wifely” usage, justifying this usage in Ugaritic as “community”; Cazelles adds “comrade” evolving toward the understanding of “companion” in the spousal sense, or “wife of your youth” in Malachi 2:14 (Cazelles 1980:193,196), and in the Old Testament usage of being joined in the metaphysical, or spiritual sense (Psalm 94:20), as well as for physical union defending a city in Psalm 122:3 (Van Groningen 1980:259-260). He solidifies this parallel with communion, being “knit together” in his statements regarding Daniel, and in his statement identifying “fear” and obedience as common bonds. Cazelles further holds that such usage in Job 40:30 and 41:6 enforces the understanding of being one in contract with another (Cazelles 1980:196). Cazelles finally holds that employment by the Septuagint renders *chabar* as *koinon*, *koinonos*, and *koinonein* (Cazelles 1980:197).

In Aramaic the term indicates the close relationship between Daniel and his three friends because of their common faith and loyalty to God in Daniel 2:13-18.⁸

⁸ “So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill *them*. Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; he said to Arioch, the king’s commander, “For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch informed Daniel

The Psalmist expressly states that the fear of God is the common bond between “companions” (Psalm 119:63) (Van Groningen 1980:260).

I am a companion of all those who fear You, And of those who keep Your precepts (Psalm 119:63 NASB).

Brooke confirms this understanding of *chabar* throughout the Old Testament, and states that in addition to being used in the joining of fabrics, i.e. ephods, or curtains, i.e. the veil of the Tabernacle, or other materials, it “is also used of people being associated with one another”, militaristically or politically, are included in this context (Brooke 1997:16). He further adds that it announces relationship to the extent of “your wife by covenant” (Brooke 1997:17), or to the opposite extreme of simply “mingle with” (Brooke 1997:18). Fellowship or *koinōnia*, is exhibited in the Old Testament in the nature of Gods’ chosen people, the nation of Israel. To have fellowship was to be included in the nation of Israel itself and thus, to participate in the sharing of the Promised Land and the blessings of God. A strong parallel is communicated between the nation of Israel which was “called out” of Egypt, with that of the Church, the *eklectos*, which are God’s called out to be the Bride of Christ.

Berkouwer notes “the unity of the Church is most closely connected with God’s express intention to gather a people for his name” (Berkouwer 1976:30), which can be equally applied to both the nation of Israel, and to the New Testament Church, to the *chabar*, and to the *koinōnia*.

about the matter. So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.”

“Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:13-18 NASB).

3.2.2 Joshua 22 -Maintenance of the Pure Fellowship

One passage, which encompasses many of these areas examined, the need for *koinōnia* to be pure, is Joshua chapter 22. In this chapter can be seen the desire to maintain unity and fellowship in the people of God, as well as the strict desire to maintain theological precision and thus, assure the purity of the people.

The land has been conquered, and allotted, the Cities of Refuge established as a divine civil procedure that insures a nascent judicial system and finally, in chapter 21 the Cities of the Levites have been established as a safeguard against spiritual apostasy from God. In light of the rest given to the people (Joshua 21:44, 22:4) (Creach 1989:105), and in response to all of the Lord's faithfulness to deliver all the things which he had promised, (Joshua 21:45, "Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass"), Joshua issues a blessing and exhortation to the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan to the east in Joshua 22:1-6.⁹

The blessing definitely has overtones of the injunction of the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6, and suggests that the continued rest in the land is conditional upon continued dedication to God and obedience to his commandments. The implication is that the unity with God suggested by this exhortation, as well as unity with the rest of the people is conditional upon continued obedience. After 7 years of fighting side by side in intense combat in a unified, cohesive body, years separated from their families and lives on the east side of the Jordan, they are dismissed to return to their

⁹ "Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. "You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. "And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan. "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents" (Joshua 22:1-6, NASB).

families and to take the spoils of war as an honorarium. Joshua releases them and has thus, been faithful of his promise from chapter 1:12-15.¹⁰

As Joshua sends them back to their people, the understanding is that this “anticipates” the same sort of exhortation being issued to the other tribes as well as they are released in 24:28 (Creach 1989:106). This newfound independence of rest, prosperity and tribal unity from the Lord would be now tested, as the Transjordanian tribes would evidence an apposite behavior of faithfulness in response to the faithfulness of God, hence, the hostile reaction of the western tribes when they hear of a possible offense.¹¹

Upon hearing of the fabrication of a structure that may have been built in the frontier with the intent of making sacrifices to another god, the western Israelites react. The response is swift and deliberate, one which intended to purge evil from their midst, even if it was at the expense of their own members being annihilated. The understanding is that true unity could not continue to exist among the tribes if the proper worship of Yahweh is in jeopardy. Therefore, a priest, Phinehas is dispatched to ascertain if there is any aberrant theological practice, and to act as a “mediator of the conflict among the tribes” (Creach 1989:108), presumably leaving Eleazar, the high priest in Shiloh to care for the immediate needs of the Tabernacle.

¹⁰ “To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, ‘The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.’ “Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as *He* gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise” (Joshua 1:12-15; NASB).

¹¹ “When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance. And the sons of Israel heard *it* said, “Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side *belonging to* the sons of Israel.” When the sons of Israel heard *of it*, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war” (Joshua 22:10-12; NASB).

The concern seems to be rooted in the building of an altar, more specifically, the motivation of such a building. Was it to worship other gods? Was it to embrace the gods of the Canaanites? Was it to offer sacrifices at all? The answer seems to be rooted in Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 5:7, 12:5, 13 and 14:

Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before Me".

Deuteronomy 5:7, "You shall have no other gods before Me".

Deuteronomy 12:5, "But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come".

Deuteronomy 12:13-14, "Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every *cultic* place you see, but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you" (Deuteronomy 12:13-14; NASB).

The worship of other gods will compromise the unity, as well as the location in which the Lord is worshiped. Woudstra holds that, "The Israelites consider what has happened to be a potential breach of the purity of the religious worship and hence a threat of apostasy" (Woudstra 1981:322). Particular importance is given to the understanding that the people would worship together in one place: a sign of unity. Any failure of the entire congregation to perform in this manner would subject them all to a loss of blessing. Neither was an appropriate response to the Lord's faithfulness, nor to the command of Joshua in 22:5. Phinehas alludes to the command of one worship location in verse 19, but it is easily understood that the worship of another god would severely invoke the wrath of Yahweh as well.

In any case, as has been communicated in Numbers 25, and in the egregious sin of Achan, the errant behavior of the few will have profound effect upon the majority, the most significant of which being the removal of God's blessing, and even himself from their presence. Pate refers to this ancient Hebrew phenomenon as "corporate personality" wherein one person's actions represent the many, not dissimilar to the imputation of Adam's sin to the entirety of mankind (Pate 2013:335-336). In seeking to worship another god, the unity of the brethren would be forfeited, something the Israelites were not willing to concede. The entire congregation assembles at Shiloh to construct a plan, which eventually includes the resolution to

engage their own brethren in war, presumably to annihilate the evil from their midst in order to continue to secure unity and the blessing of the Lord.

Though the altar has been built on the western side (22:11), the inspection team makes its way over to the other side of the Jordan, the eastern side to interface with the two and a half tribes (22:13). In verse 15, the line, “They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying”, identifies the tribes as being “sons of” their respective tribes, rather than “Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites”, seems to be indicating says Creach, that they may “represent some cultic and political entry that is separate from the rest of the nation. The titles seem to suggest a split that is not evident elsewhere” (Creach 1989:109). Whether this is true is questionable as there are over 600 references in the Canon to the “sons of Israel” wherein no consistent implication is made that, when referred to as such, they are approaching doctrinal or behavioral apostasy. Upon reaching the other side, interrogation is made by Phinehas demanding a response.¹²

The implication is definitely that the eastern tribes have sinned greatly, yet Phinehas is allowing a defence to be made. Before that can happen, he reminds the accused of the devastation brought upon the chosen by the errant actions regarding Peor and Achan and allows them the opportunity to inhabit the western side along with the rest of them, the only tolerable option to avoiding the wrath of God (verse 18-20). Joshua 22:20 gives the harsh reminder of such careless actions and the subsequent verdict by the Almighty.

¹² 15 “They came to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them saying, 16 “Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, ‘What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day? 17 ‘Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the LORD, 18 that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow. 19 ‘If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD’S tabernacle stands, and take possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God. 20 ‘Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity” (Joshua 22:15-20; NASB).

Verse 21 begins to reveal the intent and desire of the eastern tribes, serving to dispel the tension. They swear twice by the three solemn names of God that their motives were pure, and rather than seeking to sever unity by the worshipping of another god, the opposite is true, they don't ever want to be forgotten by those to the west of the Jordan.

The resultant effect is unity, and ironically, both were striving toward that end. Harstad writes that, "The intentions of the altar are quite the opposite of all the suspicions. The altar stands for covenant unity, not division, for firm devotion to the Lord, not backsliding" (Harstad 1994:224). However, it must be pointed out that the Israelites were willing to go to the great lengths of severing these unholy, disobedient members if they were not willing to comply. They had seen enough in the consequences of Peor and Achan to comprehend that lesson of disobedience.

One must observe that this behavior on the part of the Israelites was sanctioned by God, as it expressed the heart of God to uphold the mandates of Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 6:5, and the prescriptive exhortation of Joshua, chapter 22:5. The western tribes were well within their God-given rights to act in such a way, even if it meant being at the expense of losing part of the tribes.

The irony here is that both groups had the same intent in their actions, that of sustaining the unity that was theirs through the worship at the altar. Through their history the common long-term unifying factor was not culture, it was the worship of God at the common altar before the Temple. Without this they had no unity, fellowship in common with God, or even with each other.

3.2.3 1 Kings 8:6-11 -Fellowship with God

Thus far, the elements of communion, or fellowship examined have been isolated to fellowship among humans. It is equally important to examine the model of that fellowship which is seen in God's fellowship among men which had been heralded in Exodus 29:45-46, "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God". Exodus

25:8 tells how this fellowship will occur, “Let them construct a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them” which is temporarily fulfilled in Exodus 40:34-35 and the glory of the LORD fills the tent of meeting once again restoring the Israelites to the Edenic presence of God (Walton 2012:296). Leviticus 26:12 issues the reminder of deliverance from Egypt as well, “I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that *you* would not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect” (cf. Ezekiel 37:27). 1 Kings 8:6-11¹³ provides an excellent prophetic fulfilment of God’s promise of communion among men (cf 1 Chronicles 5:13-14).

Essential to the welcoming of the Lord to the holy place, among the nation of Israel, was the environment of sanctity wherein the presence of his holiness could be received. It wasn’t until the Temple was built and consecrated, the consecrated implements were in place, the priests had performed their tasks and the Lord was ready, that glory of the Lord God himself filled that place (cf. Exodus 40:18-38). Walsh notes that it is not until then, in verses 10-11, readers learn “that Yahweh accepts the Temple and consents to fill it with the cloud that embodies his glory” (Walsh 1996:110-111). The divine presence in the Temple is the embodiment of the fellowship of God with his creation.

3.2.4 Hosea 2:18-23; Jeremiah 3:1 -The Parallel of Marriage

Heavy in the book of Hosea is the imagery of marriage, of intimate knowledge

¹³ 6 “Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles from above. 8 But the poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; they are there to this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:6-11;NASB).

and relationship with God. God is speaking to the nation of Israel whom he considers his betrothed, yet who has erred in her commitment to him and therefore, consequences await the unfaithful wife. She is rightfully accused of fostering children not of the divine Father, but rather conceived in adultery, specifically harlotry (verse 2:4). The case is stated against her in chapter 2:5 as she is the one who has played the harlot, and as been the aggressor in such behavior, “I will go after my lovers”. Jeremiah 3:1 adds:

“God says, ‘If a husband divorces his wife
And she goes from him
And belongs to another man,
Will he still return to her?
Will not that land be completely polluted?
But you are a harlot *with* many lovers;
Yet you turn to Me,’ declares the LORD.”

Her reasoning is that she will receive wool, flax, oil and drink from them, an allusion to the Baal worship in which she had been engaged. God’s response is to contain his errant wife through the building up of a hedge of confinement. “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths” (Hosea 6:1). After this disciplinary process initiated by the Lord, she will concede to return to the Lord seeing that her previous situation is no longer as beneficial to her as it once had been. “She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me than now!’” (Hosea 2:7). The disciplinary measures continue in the removal of the benefits to her, I will take back my grain at harvest time and my new wine in its season. I will also take away my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness” (Hosea 2:9). Her unfaithfulness will be seen and her nakedness revealed to those with whom she was unfaithful. God has placed his sovereign hand of restriction upon her blessings and activities until she returns to obedience and faithfulness to him.

The restriction continues in verses 11-12, “I will also put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her festal assemblies. I will destroy her vines and fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages which my

lovers have given me.’ And I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them”.

The feasts and Sabbaths referred to are those occasions of infidelity which will be removed from her, and for which she will be punished (Verse 2:13). The implication here is that she will be restricted for a time and then brought into the wilderness and spoken to kindly in efforts to once again realign her in proper relationship with God, the husband. “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her” (Hosea 2:14). The unfaithfulness had become so commonplace and casual that she had even taken to calling her husband by the wrong name, “It will come about in that day”, declares the LORD, “That you will call me Ishi. And will no longer call me Baali” (Hosea 2:16).

- 18 “In that day I will also make a covenant for them
 With the beasts of the field,
 The birds of the sky
 And the creeping things of the ground.
 And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,
 And will make them lie down in safety.
- 19 “I will betroth you to me forever;
 Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice,
 In lovingkindness and in compassion,
- 20 And I will betroth you to me in faithfulness.
 Then you will know the LORD.
- 21 “It will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the LORD.
 “I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,
- 22 And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,
 And they will respond to Jezreel.
- 23 “I will sow her for myself in the land.
 I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,
 And I will say to those who were not my people,
 ‘You are my people!’
 And they will say, ‘*You are my God!*’”

After the times of denial and the kind words, the wife will once again be reconfirmed as the rightful spouse to Yahweh, in effect reaffirming the vows in verse 19, and verse 20 confirms that again the unfaithful spouse will “know” the LORD, that she will engage in intimate knowledge of her husband. It is only after this process of discipline and restoration that blessings will once again rain upon her and will be confirmed as belonging to Yahweh- and claim once again that, God is her God.

3.3 Induction of the Biblical Texts on Division

Though passages appear earlier on in the Scriptures regarding division, it is clear that there are others that precede these chronologically in reference to the falling of Satan from his domain (Jude 6, “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode”). These clearly evidence total excommunication from God, if not the first incident of excommunication altogether. Other passages such as Ezra 10:7-8 point to division on a disciplinary level, which is relegated to severance from the community with expectation of return at some point. Berkhof holds that this, “Exclusion from the assembly became a measure of ecclesiastical discipline” (Berkoff 1996:599), and not permanent exclusion from the community. The purpose of examining these passages is to establish division as it relates to the character of God, and the practice of God.

3.3.1 *Isaiah 14:12-19, Ezekiel 2:11-19 -Satan cast out of heaven*

Isaiah 14:12-19 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 are two prophetic remembrances, which are held to describe Satan and the other fallen angels being excommunicated from the presence of the Lord; the word translated in the NASB is from the word *shalak*, “I cast you to the ground” (Ezekiel 28:17), and “cast out of your tomb” (Isaiah 14:19), both uses communicating a violent effort of repulsion as a result of the offence and arrogance of Satan (Accordance 7993) (See also section 2.4.3). The recounting is spoken through the prophets to the two kings of Babylon and of Tyre, though the deeper communication is directed toward the greater source or that evil-Satan.

Finally, in this area of Satan’s initial excommunication is the brief reference of Christ in Luke 10:18, “And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.’” This statement is given in the context of Christ speaking to the seventy who were sent out. As the disciples return to Christ, he issues to them the accreditation of their efforts and likens them to the removal of Satan’s wickedness from heaven; the removal is “like lightning”, the implication being with expediency, and away from the holy, as an immediate division was necessary. The understanding is that the affect of the 70 during their evangelical witness was one of

great binding of the effects of Satan; he had no reign in the realm of righteousness, his influence was not felt, as he was absent from the event.

Thus, although it is relegated to the spiritual realm, the first permissible division revealed in Scripture of any being is the removal of Satan and his cohorts from the presence of the Godhead in heaven. It is recognized that Satan will be granted an audience of God at certain points in the future, for example Job 1 and 2, and in the Garden of Eden, but does not enjoy a continued blessing of the presence of God (Job 2:7).

The argument has been delivered in such a way as to present Satan's fall prior to the fall of man (Genesis 3), as the fall needed to be precipitated by the one who would lure the woman into sin. The logical argument being that Satan had to have been cast out of heaven before he would have even had the desire to mislead mankind. These two passages will again be examined in more detail in Section 3.5.1.2 through the lenses of excommunication rather than division.

3.3.2 Genesis 3:22-24 -Adam and Eve cast out of the Garden

The expulsion of Adam and Eve is the next occurrence of division reported in Scripture after having enjoyed unparalleled companionship with God, something no other person has enjoyed to this degree. Genesis 3:22-24 recounts this event.¹⁴

A "divine council precedes the creation of man" says Leupold of Genesis 1:26. "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness". By this understanding of being created in the image of the holy Trinity, "the singular dignity of man is very strongly stressed" (Leupold 1984:85-86). Mankind is imparted with certain communicable attributes which minimally, but in part, reflect the image of

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" — therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life (NASB).

a Trinitarian God (Grudem 1994:185-206). They have “walked” with God without the contamination of sin. The intimacy of relationship would be forever shaken after sin had nested in the camp of mankind. No longer would this degree of unblemished fellowship be experienced until the Lord returns. Man receives the penalty of more extreme and difficult working conditions, the result of the earth being cursed, but in addition he has been condemned to death in the physical sense, and also the spiritual sense of separation from God, spiritual death, a division which is now imperative, as a holy God cannot dwell in the midst of sin (Revelation 21:27). Habakkuk 1:13 says, “*Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you can not look on wickedness with favor*” (NASB).

Adam and Eve will be looked at in greater detail in 3.5.1.1 in regards to excommunication.

3.3.3 Genesis 4:9-16 -Cain sent out from the Presence

The castigation continues in Genesis 4:9-16,¹⁵ as Cain dispatches his brother out of envy, and his offense to God will force the evil to be removed from his presence. Cain is sentenced to be a vagrant and a wonderer absent of the presence of his “home”, and removed from intimate relationship. Sin is the cause for separation, and though this is construed here as a punitive act of God it seems likely it is for the protection of others from this strain of Cain’s thinking.

¹⁵ 9 “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” 10 He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 “Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 “When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.” 13 Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is too great to bear! 14 “Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” 15 So the LORD said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. 16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden” (Genesis 4:9-16; NASB).

In the final execution of the sentence, a sign of the Lord protects Cain, yet he is deprived of the presence of the Lord. The privilege of relationship with Yahweh has been stripped from Cain.

The compulsion for God to guard, protect and to maintain his holiness, through the people whom he calls his own is even seen in the act of sending water upon the earth to flood the earth, cleanse the evil of mankind, and allow a new beginning. Though all but 8 people are “excommunicated” God has demonstrated that evil is not to dwell among his people and will be dealt with to the ultimate extreme. The expulsion of Cain from the presence of God will be covered in greater measure in Section 3.5.1.3.

3.3.4 *Leviticus 12-15, 22 -Levitical Mandates Stipulating Separation*

Much of what is to be gleaned from Scripture regarding division and separation is found in the Levitical texts, mandates regarding division for such events as leprous evidences, seminal emissions, menstrual discharges, and exposure to dead bodies (Leviticus 21:11), conditions which defile, or are evidences of defilement which are to be avoided. Walton notes, “We have generally seen the sacrificial system in terms of providing a means to care for the sin and impurity of the people. An alternative approach, however, focuses on the need to preserve and maintain sacred space” (Walton 2012:293).

The central passages in Leviticus revolve around the themes of cleanness and uncleanness, wherein Nobuyoshi rightly notes “older exegetes were closer to the truth when they saw a connection between uncleanness and truth” (Nobuyoshi 2007:204), or the “holy and the profane” (Leviticus 10:10). He argues that the parallel of holiness to cleanliness is a foreshadowing of the clean nature one will need to exhibit in order to have life (Nobuyoshi 2007:212-213). Additionally, he argues that, the “very terms ‘clean’, and ‘unclean’ and ‘holiness’ refer to a person’s state before the Lord and thus must be distinguished from biological life” (Nobuyoshi 2007:215). The considerations as one being “unclean” and thus the need for separation until such time as the purificatory process has been completed, are what Nobuyoshi parallels as “body-tent” symbolism, wherein he suggests that the body is the individuals’ tent, and thus is in order to be cleansed, a prescription he contests is

“substantially and spiritually the same as the Lord’s tent of meeting”, and “since the house appears to be inseparable from its occupants” (Nobuyoshi 2007:267). The foreshadowing is pointing to the work of Christ in the cleansing of individuals who are ritually unclean, for example the leper, and the woman suffering from hemorrhaging (Nobuyoshi 2007:213).

The command for separation rests upon those occurrences of childbirth (Leviticus 12:1-8), menstruation (Leviticus 15:19), seminal emissions (Leviticus 15:16-18,32, 22:4), contact or exposure to a corpse (Leviticus 21:11), to the point that, “his dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Leviticus 13:46) and shall thus remain there, being inspected by the priest (Leviticus 14:3) and only be allowed to enter back into the camp after there is no longer a sign of uncleanness (Leviticus 14:8; cf. Mark 1:44), a very essential link to the understanding “casting out of the garden” explained in Genesis 3:23, the prototype action for permissible division. Menstruation and disease are a parallel to sin, an evidence of sin, and are thus to be separated from the camp of God. One must note that this addressing of uncleanness comes after the teaching on Nadab and Abihu in chapter 10, and the stipulations of avoiding unclean foods.

Chapter 12 of Leviticus addresses the uncleanness of childbirth. Some commentators have contended that the reason this act of childbirth (and to some degree the entirety of reproductive elements (Douglas 1999:177)), is considered unclean is because of the original sin, and thus the consequences of that sin (Kellogg 1988:330-336). She must place herself under the expiatory mediation of the priest and undergo the entirety of the purificatory procedure in order to once again enter the sanctuary (Nobuyoshi 2007: 219), or minimally she must be made clean by the atonement offered up by the priest (Leviticus 12:8). This ritualistic language communicates her “primordial nature” still exists (Nobuyoshi 2007: 219).

When addressing these passages in light of the sacred compass of sacred space, Walton further claims that:

The proposal set forth...suggests that Leviticus deals with issues of equilibrium zone by zone as it speaks of space, status and time, and the qualifications and procedures associated with each. Chapters 1-23 concern equilibrium relative to deity, and chaps. 24-27 concern equilibrium relative to Israel” (Walton 2012:299).

The stipulations are further identified in the area of priestly service to the Tabernacle (Douglas 1999:177). No officiate tainted with leprosy, contact with a corpse, seminal releases, contact with “teeming” things, etc. is allowed to serve in the Temple until he is clean; “that person shall be cut off from before me; I am the LORD” says the Lord of hosts (Leviticus 22:3). Douglas asserts that this ritual purity is “a kind of two-way protection, a holy thing is protected from profanation, the profane thing is protected from holiness” (Douglass 1999:11). It is under these presuppositions that valid concerns and justifications for separation begin to emerge.

A key observation here is that either God or the priest were responsible for evaluation of the “cleanliness” of the individual, not an ordinary Israelite; this provides greater significance in the New Testament Church when the plurality of elders in the Church discern the level of offence according to the word of God, and the subsequent action required in section 4.4.2 (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:4-11).

3.3.5 2 Chronicles 5-7 -The Glory of the Lord Appears

Second Chronicles chapter 5 announced that the Temple of the Lord is being built and Solomon is being given the privilege to do that; he has been given the opportunity to fashion this Temple for the Lord. But what is essential for the presence of God, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the Spirit of God to occupy that place is that there need to be sacrifices, as the people cannot be a sinful and unrighteous people and expect to share fellowship with God. Chapter 5 of 2 Chronicles verse 6 says, “And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered”. The people knew what was necessary, what had been commanded for them to enjoy the presence of God is that the blood of the sacrifices needed to cover the sins of the people. There needed to be death in order for them to be able to enjoy that closeness, that presence of God. Verse 13-14 says, “in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD *saying, ‘He indeed is good for his*

lovingkindness is everlasting,' then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God". 1 Kings 8:6 and 10 communicate the great day of dedication under the hand of Solomon, "Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim" and, "It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD". In order for the Lord to occupy his Temple those sacrifices needed to be offered up and those children of Israel needed to have a right spirit within them towards the Lord. God does not inhabit the Temple until it is consecrated by sacrifices.

Chapter 7 verse 1 continues, "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house"; which must have been an amazing scene. God knew what was required. The people knew what was required- atonement, a covering of sin needed to take place. And then God's presence filled the house, his priests are able to come and to commune in the fellowship of God's household. But following after the example of the people in Genesis where people did what was right in their own eyes, the people of Israel continue to do "evil in the sight of the Lord", in spite of the fact that the Lord kept sending prophets to warn them. In spite of the fact that God had incredible patience upon his people, they still failed to turn to God, away from their sin, to repent from their sin; they still desired to worship at the high places. They wanted to worship other gods. They wanted to ignore their one true God for which there would be consequence.

3.3.6 *Ezekiel 9-11 (9:3, 9-10, 10:3-4, 10:18) Ezekiel 43:1-5 -The Glory Departs*

The thread of the presence of the Lord filling his Temple continues in Ezekiel chapter 9. God has tolerated the people of Israel long enough and there is going to be a consequence for neglecting him. Ezekiel 9:3 says, "Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple". The glory of the Lord was housed on the Ark of the Covenant that was on the mercy seat between the cherubim that were on top of the Ark. The next several

verses reveal a progression of the glory, a progression of the Spirit of God exiting the building, exiting the city, and going outside the wall of Jerusalem.

Verses 9-10 of chapter 9, identifies this abandonment. “Then He said to me, ‘The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great, and the land is filled with blood and the city is full of perversion; for they say, “The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!” But as for me, my eye will have no pity nor will I spare, but I will bring their conduct upon their heads.’” This is the consequence to their actions, behavior and their sin. And God spells it out for them, “The reason that I am revoking my Spirit from you is because of the iniquity that you have continued to build up”. Chapter 10 verses 3-4 continue, “Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the Temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the Temple, and the Temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD”. The Spirit of the Lord has gone to the front door of the Temple and he is exiting the building and He is doing it in the same order in which He had done it some 300-400 years prior.

The exit continues in verse 18 and 19, “Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the Temple and stood over the cherubim. When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD’S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them”. So the Spirit of the Lord, after he has filled the Temple with his glory is leaving the Temple and he has an entourage of cherubim, and is himself making his way to the eastern wall, right near the outer wall of Jerusalem, as he continues to make his way away from His chosen people. Verse 12 of chapter 11 indicts, “Thus you will know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in my statutes nor have you executed my ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you”. They had intermarried. They had made forbidden alliances, and God reminds them once again of those areas where they had been egregiously sinning against him. The Temple itself will eventually be destroyed by the offending armies after the Spirit has abandoned it. The hand of the Lord is being removed from his people.

The culmination of this exodus is in verse 23-25, “The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me. Then I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me”. The Spirit of the Lord goes out to the Mount of Olives, the mount east of the city and he has left the people. The Hebrew term used here is *ichabod*, God has abandoned them because of their sin. A holy God cannot fellowship with an unrepentant people. God had allowed a city, which had defiled his name, had desecrated his Temple to yield his Spirit, and be brought down by another nation.

Ezekiel 43:1-5¹⁶ makes it clear not only that God desires to be in the presence of His creation, but that even though he has removed His presence from the Temple he will return in similar fashion to dwell in the millennial Temple (MacArthur 2005:938-939). Walton makes it clear that the state of equilibrium is offset once again when the glory of the Lord departs, “When God's presence left the Temple (Ezekiel 10) and it was destroyed, sacred space was absent for 70 years, until the Temple was rebuilt and the sacred compass reestablished” (Walton 2012: 297).

Beale notes that:

His presence would return with the restored people and would once again take up residence in another temple. It is likely that this did not occur in the second temple that was built after Israel's return. God's tabernacling presence expressed itself in the coming of Christ as told in John 1:14 (Beale 2004:255).

God's presence had left the Temple at least by the time of Christ's coming, since he himself became the place of the special divine presence in the midst of the nation instead of the temple, as well we see, in the ultimate fulfilment of Haggai. It is quite possible that the divine presence never returned to the post-exilic temple (Beale 2004:117).

¹⁶ 1 “Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; 2 and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. 3 And *it was* like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. 4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. 5 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house” (Ezekiel 43:1-5;NASB).

The reference in Haggai to which Beale refers is the affirmation that his Spirit does indeed dwell in their midst, in this case the people of Israel, in the form of Christ. He also notes that chapters such as Ezekiel point to an end-times Temple that will be non-structural void of conventional architecture, the heavenly temple of extreme holiness (Beale 2004: 336-337).

3.3.7 Lamentations 2:1-22 -Divine Abandonment

In one sense excommunication is abandonment, communally, and divinely for the purpose of maintaining purity in the individual, or in the corporate body. Beale notes that God had moved out of the Holy of Holies at the beginning of the Babylonian exile (Beale 2004:388), not to return to the Nation of Israel until the presence of Christ, suggesting that God does not inhabit the second Temple after the return from exile. The Book of Lamentations is a “death cry” of this abandonment of the Spirit of the Lord, a reminder that God is a righteous God, righteous in his character, in his law and in his retribution. This chapter is the epitome of broken fellowship between the Sovereign and his people, and the consequences which fall in due course, as a result of this division. This desolation was self-imposed due to the result of disobedience (Ryken/ Crossway 2001:737).

Lamentations 2:1 says:

How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion
With a cloud in His anger!
He has cast from heaven to earth
The glory of Israel,
And has not remembered His footstool
In the day of His anger.

This verse is reminiscent of how God wanted to lead his people out of Egypt utilizing a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God wanted to lead his people in the correct direction and he wanted have fellowship with his people; in the form of a cloud he came down upon the Temple, upon the Holy of Holies in an effort to have fellowship with his people and to lead them (Longman 2007:353). But these people had been so rebellious that God communicated that he would no longer lead them

by a cloud, but would blind them in a cloud of his anger. He communicates that they have been arrogant due to the location of the Temple in Jerusalem (Longman 2007:353), they have been rebellious, and do not want to be led, so they will be blinded. He has cast down from heaven to earth, the glory of Israel. In Hebrew understanding the highest point possible was heaven and the lowest point possible was earth. He has cast down from the highest point to the lowest point the glory of his chosen people. The glory of Israel is taken away; it is no more. Israel had been the bride, which God had adorned in Lamentations chapter 1, with fine jewelry and linen attire. But they had melted it down in an attitude to be unfaithful to their husband God, and to seek after other lovers.

“God has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger”. Specifically the Ark was known as his footstool where he rested above, and rested his feet upon the Ark. And he has remembered this footstool in the day of his anger. He is no longer willing to position himself there in this place. He does not consider it anymore. The Ark will disappear around this point from the care of Israel. There is no longer intimate fellowship with the husband of Judah, God.

Verse 2 continues this verdict:

The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared
All the habitations of Jacob.
In His wrath He has thrown down
The strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
He has brought *them* down to the ground;
He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.

Amos confirms that God would tear down, as he promised all the citadels of Jerusalem. God is beginning to cast down the material pride and the worldly pride that Jerusalem has had. They have been an arrogant people knowing that they were chosen people. God has cast all this down to the ground, as he is angry at their actions.

Verse 3 continues the description of the punishment:

In fierce anger He has cut off
All the strength of Israel;
He has drawn back His right hand

From before the enemy.
And He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire
Consuming round about.

Literally he has cut off every horn of Israel; a horn was the symbol of strength, and he has cut off not one, but every symbol of the strength that Israel had. Not only that, but he has drawn back his right-hand implying that he has made them powerless and then proceed to lift his hand which has been protecting Judah from the enemies, so as to communicate that he will no longer be their protector, but rather leave them vulnerable (Longman 2007:353). God is pushed to a point where he says there will be no more fellowship.

- 4 He has bent His bow like an enemy;
He has set His right hand like an adversary
And slain all that were pleasant to the eye;
In the tent of the daughter of Zion
He has poured out His wrath like fire.
- 5 The Lord has become like an enemy.
He has swallowed up Israel;
He has swallowed up all its palaces,
He has destroyed its strongholds
And multiplied in the daughter of Judah
Mourning and moaning.
- 6 And He has violently treated His tabernacle like a garden *booth*;
He has destroyed His appointed meeting place.
The LORD has caused to be forgotten
The appointed feast and sabbath in Zion,
And He has despised king and priest.

In the indignation of his anger the bow of the Lord is additionally aimed at Judah. The text does not infer that God is truly an enemy or an adversary, but that he is *like* one. God is focusing his hand of destruction upon them. He is taking down their arrogance, and their material arrogance. He has become like an enemy of which nothing can compare. There is no anger like that of the Lord; there is no discipline like that of the Lord. God is not so much an enemy to the individual as he is an enemy to sin. But his wrath turns upon his appointed place. The Temple which had been so meticulously constructed with gold overlaid upon wood, the implements of the Temple, and the structure of it, the curtain and the Holy of Holies where God desired to dwell in the Holy of Holies, was now the violent object of his wrath as he

treated it as a garden booth; the essence is of a mere shack in the middle of a field, which God has eradicated. The place where he desired to have fellowship with his chosen people, his appointed meeting place was destroyed. God had additionally appointed his feasts and Sabbaths in Zion so that he could enjoy fellowship with his people; that was the intent of the Passover and the different feasts for which people would come to Jerusalem to fellowship with each other, but also for the purpose of having fellowship with God. And he has caused these to be forgotten, or remembered no more.

Lamentations 2 verse 7.

The Lord has rejected His altar,
He has abandoned His sanctuary;
He has delivered into the hand of the enemy
The walls of her palaces.
They have made a noise in the house of the LORD
As in the day of an appointed feast.

He has despised both governmental and liturgical officials in his anger. God has systematically gone through and destroyed the sanctuary, the altar, the Temple, the priests and the kings. He has also taken away the feasts and the Sabbaths, so that the spiritual arrogance is gone. These are the people who cried out, "We have the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord. Surely the Lord is not going to cast us down". They were arrogant and relied on the fact that the Temple was in their midst and that they were God's chosen people, and they treated God poorly because of that. God has rejected the very altar that he had permitted for them to have atonement, for them to come with sacrifices and offerings, and has made it clear he is no longer willing to accept sacrifices from this disobedient people who were insincere about how they had been approaching God.

God had entirely given this place over to the enemy, and the enemy makes their way into the house of the Lord and celebrates the penetration because they have conquered Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem, something the Jews did not think would ever happen.

8 The LORD determined to destroy
The wall of the daughter of Zion.

He has stretched out a line,
He has not restrained His hand from destroying,
And He has caused rampart and wall to lament;
They have languished together.

Verse 8 affirms that the Lord was intentional about the destruction that he was bringing upon this place. He was so specific that he has stretched out a line. The comparison is to a chalk line, or a plumb line to specify how he would methodically and with precision accuracy he would wipe out Jerusalem. He has not restrained any part of this vengeance; he is the master of demolition and is surgically taking out that which is offensive to him, as well as the first line of defense, the wall (Longman 2007:355). There is a national price that Judah is going to pay; their gold, has been taken, their silver has been taken, their precious things are gone, their elders, their king, their land, their Temple, their altar, but their greatest loss which they may not even realize at this point is that God has removed his glory away from them. Fellowship has been revoked.

The God of order, the God of creation had caused this calamity which seems contrary to his nature, but Isaiah 45:7 says, “The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these”. God does allow, and even cause it at times for the purpose of turning away from evil, or turning people away from their evil.

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground,
He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes are among the nations;
The law is no more.
Also, her prophets find
No vision from the LORD.

Jeremiah continues to describe the state of spiritual and moral bankruptcy which exists, as well as the loss of governmental authority (Ryken/ Crossway 2001:747). The Law has no more bearing upon the people who do not respect it, and the prophets are no longer proclaiming the Word of the Lord, as they are not connected in fellowship with the Lord and they have hardened their hearts. There is no longer direction from the Lord.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion
Sit on the ground, they are silent.
They have thrown dust on their heads;
They have girded themselves with sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem
Have bowed their heads to the ground.

The elders are no longer ruling from thrones or from the place of the Sanhedrin's authority but are silently seated on the ground; they are not pronouncing anything. These are the previous spiritual leaders of Judah who have thrown dust on their heads, girded themselves with sackcloth. And the virgins who have been hopeful of a future have lost hope and are despondently looking at the ground in depression.

11 My eyes fail because of tears,
My spirit is greatly troubled;
My heart is poured out on the earth
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people,
When little ones and infants faint
In the streets of the city.

12 They say to their mothers,
"Where is grain and wine?"
As they faint like a wounded man
In the streets of the city,
As their life is poured out
On their mothers' bosom.

Jeremiah is so grieved that he cries out in anguish. He says literally that his liver is poured out upon the earth. The daughter of the people is hungry as the city has been besieged by Babylon, a siege that takes place for 18 months, the people inside the walls are starving, and the infants are expiring due to lack of nourishment. They are starving to death as they are held in the arms of their mothers. Verse 13 reveals that Jeremiah is so grieved and confused as to how to advise them:

13 How shall I admonish you?
To what shall I compare you,
O daughter of Jerusalem?
To what shall I liken you as I comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For your ruin is as vast as the sea;
Who can heal you?

Jeremiah is announcing that their ruin, or literally, their “wound” is immeasurable, all because they have been unfaithful to their God. Jeremiah cries out in desperation as to the nature and identity of one who could possibly heal them, only God himself (Ryken/Crossway 2001:750).

Lamentations 2:4:

- 14 Your prophets have seen for you
False and foolish *visions*;
And they have not exposed your iniquity
So as to restore you from captivity,
But they have seen for you false and misleading oracles.
- 15 All who pass along the way
Clap their hands *in derision* at you;
They hiss and shake their heads
At the daughter of Jerusalem,
“Is this the city of which they said,
‘The perfection of beauty,
A joy to all the earth’?”

Jeremiah is again pointing out the reason for their spiritual bankruptcy. The prophets are misleading the people (cf. Jeremiah 28); they are lying and receiving or generating prophecies that are not of the Lord (Ryken/ Crossway 2001:747). They are stating that this time in Babylon would be a couple of years rather than many years. The iniquity of the people is not being revealed to them so they cannot turn from their evil ways. They are callous. The surrounding nations are coming by observing a devastated land, bodies in the street, and the effects of starvation, buildings and palaces which have been brought down and they are questioning in disbelief whether this is the long exalted city of admiration which is a joy to all the earth.

- 16 All your enemies
Have opened their mouths wide against you;
They hiss and gnash *their* teeth.
They say, “We have swallowed *her* up!
Surely this is the day for which we waited;
We have reached *it*, we have seen *it*.”

The surrounding neighbors of Judah have heard the arrogance of how God has always protected them, and how this city would not be brought down. These are

the neighbors who had also witnessed the chosen city being unfaithful to God, bringing in other gods. The nations now rejoice in the calamity and fall, and that they themselves have lived to see the day.

17 The LORD has done what He purposed;
He has accomplished His word
Which He commanded from days of old.
He has thrown down without sparing,
And He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you;
He has exalted the might of your adversaries.

God had promised from Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Amos, Ezekiel, Jeremiah that he would do these things, that they would be brought down if they would not listen to his statutes and his ordinances. God has not been a liar. He has exalted his might, and is again focusing on the “horn” of power now being assigned to the enemies; they have been empowered.

A major movement takes place beginning at verse 18, as advice is given as to the direction Judah may take. Jeremiah begins to answer the question he posed in verse 13, how they can attain again the favor of the Lord.

18 Their heart cried out to the Lord,
“O wall of the daughter of Zion,
Let *your* tears run down like a river day and night;
Give yourself no relief,
Let your eyes have no rest.
19 “Arise, cry aloud in the night
At the beginning of the night watches;
Pour out your heart like water
Before the presence of the Lord;
Lift up your hands to Him
For the life of your little ones
Who are faint because of hunger
At the head of every street.”

Jeremiah is advocating repentance from the callous hearts and sin, and a turning to the Lord. He is exhorting them to be convicted about what they have done, repentance, and lamenting for their actions, and to let the tears flow incessantly (Longman 2007:360). At intervals throughout the night they are advised to get up and make confessions of remorse to God for the purpose of restoration; to lift up

hands is to pray to the Lord. This has to be repentance from the heart, sincere and honest. This has been one of the greatest challenges for Israel as summarized in Isaiah 29:13, “Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of tradition learned *by rote*.’” Jeremiah is giving the people of Israel directions how to navigate their way back to the Lord. As they would be willing to do this, to focus on the Lord, the benefit would be to subsequent generations.

In the vein of Daniel 9, the prayer of intercession for the people Jeremiah offers up a prayer on behalf of the people of Judah. Jeremiah questions if God has been so destructive toward any other people group. Jeremiah then identifies four major areas of destruction through which they have gone.

- 20 See, O LORD, and look!
With whom have You dealt thus?
Should women eat their offspring,
The little ones who were born healthy?
Should priest and prophet be slain
In the sanctuary of the Lord?
- 21 On the ground in the streets
Lie young and old;
My virgins and my young men
Have fallen by the sword.
You have slain *them* in the day of Your anger,
You have slaughtered, not sparing.
- 22 You called as in the day of an appointed feast
My terrors on every side;
And there was no one who escaped or survived
In the day of the LORD’S anger.
Those whom I bore and reared,
My enemy annihilated them.

The implication of this interrogation is that no others have suffered to the degree of Judah and the suffering is more egregious than deserved (Longman 2007: 360). The mothers had been reduced to cannibalism of their own young, announcing to the Lord the inappropriateness of the situation. They are eating their offspring who were born healthy. They had been preyed upon by Babylon. They had been starved out of the walls of Jerusalem. The women had resorted to the pinnacle of desperation. Jeremiah is drawing attention to the Sovereign that something is improper. Additionally, he questions that servants of the Lord should

fall victim to so dastardly a fate. Jeremiah is having trouble reconciling these situations.

Old people are dying as well, as they are not able to stand. And the amount of people facing destruction is as vast as those invited to a great feast of Israel. Rather than people coming to celebrate this great day of praise and honor to the Lord, and fellowship, they were facing doom in great numbers. Fellowship is dead, and the only praises of joy are those who are the conqueror of Judah.

Much time has been spent on this particular text, as it is an apt demonstration of the process of division and precise description of the reason for that separation. Hope is not absent in Lamentations, but it is a reminder of where hope is to be sought, and how to receive healing, and doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord. The nation has been duly disciplined; yet, the desire of God is that those disciplined would be restored to him, yet fellowship has been severed at this time.

3.3.8 2 Kings 17:20-24, 24:20 -Israelites “Cast Out”

As noted earlier in section 2.4, *shalak*, or “casting out” of the nations of Israel, and Judah as well as the city of Jerusalem is a common representation of division in the Old Testament (Thiel 2006:94). This is demonstrated in 2 Kings 17:20-24, 24:20¹⁷ wherein Israel is allowed to be abducted, and is thereby cast out of the Promised Land.

¹⁷ The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight (2 Kings 17:20).

When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin. The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day (2 Kings 17:21-23).

The king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled *them* in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities (2 Kings 17:24).

It is also described in Jeremiah 52:3, “For through the anger of the LORD *this* came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence”, Jeremiah 7:15, “I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim”, as well as several Deuteronomistic passages. The prophetic consequences has been laid out in many passages, that the Israelites would suffer separation from the Promised Land which the Lord had given to them. They would be extricated from their land in stages; both at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians they would be expelled, excommunicated from their land and absent the benefits of the Lord.¹⁸

Disobedience toward God and his Torah was a cause for a man to be ostracized from the community and from the presence of God (1 Kings 9:9-57); this

For through the anger of the LORD *this* came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:20).

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 28:15 “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”

Deuteronomy 28:25 “The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be *an example of terror* to all the kingdoms of the earth.”

Deuteronomy 28:36 “The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. 37 “You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the LORD drives you.”

Deuteronomy 28:45 “So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.”

Deuteronomy 28:49 “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. 51 “Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. 52 “It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. 53 “Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you.”

64 “Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.” Deuteronomy 28:15-64;NASB).

action regularly refers to the consequences of the enemies of God, but are applicable to both Israel and Judah themselves. Psalms demonstrates the pervasive attitude towards the wicked, and the evil as they are cut off (Carpenter 1997:739).

Many other areas of the Old Testament manifest division including Psalm 51 where David is concerned, in effect, of being cast away from the presence of God's Holy Spirit, "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). David has sinned egregiously in the sight of the Lord. He has committed adultery, deception, murder, and once confronted with his sin by Nathan, acknowledges the error of his actions (2 Samuel 12:1-15). In a foreshadowing of the disciplinary step in Matthew 18:15, Nathan "shows him his fault"; he communicates how David is out of the will of the Lord, and David relents of his actions. Though he has sinned against Israel, against Uriah, against Bathsheba, and against his own household, his confession is, "I have sinned against the LORD".

The Psalms are particularly rife with implications of division. Many of the imprecatory Psalms are designed to appeal to the Almighty to destroy the enemies of the righteous, even to the point of blotting out their memory and their posterity (Psalm 34:17, 109:15; 37:28, 109:13) (Hosel 1995:346). One additional area of the Old Testament that specifically deals with division is Psalm 22, though it pertains significantly to prophetic Christological separation between the Father and presumably the Holy Spirit, and the Son while on the cross, therefore it will be dealt with in section 5.6. David, however, is writing this Psalm, and the elements conveyed pertain to him to some degree as well.

Division, or command to be separated, is abundant in the Old Testament in regards to Israel being separated from other nations who would adversely affect their spiritually. This can be seen in God's stern command to totally exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan so that they will not "pollute" the chosen, holy people of God. (cf. Jeremiah 16:18). This division is further enforced in regards to the inter-marrying of the Israelites among other nations, again, reinforcing the need to be separate from any influences which would serve to weaken the relationship of God to his people.

Ezekiel 11 though does not leave the Israelites without hope.¹⁹ If they were willing to walk in his statutes the Lord would call them back to himself, and continue to be their sanctuary.

This is what God had wanted in the first place, a people devoted to him, and thus, he had promised to bring them back.

“And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. “But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 11:19-21).

God promises restoration from this discipline and to renew them to himself, but for those who do not repent, the same fate of separation exists.

3.3.9 1 Kings 9:7, 2 Chronicles 7:20, Jeremiah 2 -The Loss of Land

As noted in 2.4, the deprivation of the land was parallel to the loss of Yahweh’s presence in the Temple, and occurred subsequent to the departure of the Lord from the Temple. Since Israel’s land was seen “sometimes as the ‘Garden of Eden’ with connotations of the first primal sanctuary” (Beale 2004:186), the expectation is that they would care for, and maintain purity in the land, as was the commission for Adam, to care for and maintain purity in the land. Solomon was warned that God will “cast out of his presence” the house that he has consecrated

¹⁹ “Thus you will know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you”. Now it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?” “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.”’ “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it” (Ezekiel 11:12-18; NASB).

for his name (Thiel 2006:94). This reveals the two-fold endeavor of God in regards to his holiness, to both remove himself from the area of defilement, and also remove those defiled far from his presence.

Then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight (1 Kings 9:7;NASB).

Then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples (2 Chronicles 7:20; NASB).

Jeremiah 27-29 defines the actions that will take place in the removal of the people from their land, the duration and how they are to occupy that land under the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, all because they have allowed themselves to be unholy. Jeremiah 27:6, “Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him”, because they have failed to honor God. Brown draws out the end result of restoration to those who undergo the disciplinary actions of God, that it is the desire of the Lord to bring comfort on those whom he has afflicted, or scourged (Brown 2010:360). Jeremiah professes in chapter 29:14, “‘I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’” The condition of being found, is seeking after him, or coming into the understanding of his desire, simply being obedient. Consequently, their fortunes will be restored (Jeremiah 30:3), and they will return to their land, yet, more importantly, the presence of Lord shall again be upon them (Jeremiah 29:14), he will be found once again. The loss of land and the loss of life could once again be included here in regards to the flood and the desire for sanctification of the earth in Genesis 6-8.

Isaiah 5 describes the hand of the Lord being removed from Israel. It is made through the parallel of the vineyard of God, and the house of Israel as the stewards of the vineyard. God has given every grace with the hope that his people would bless him, and honor him with all he has lavished upon them. Upon defilement, the

result is the loss of the use of the land, and then a loss of the land itself, which comes as a result of the exile to a foreign captor.

3.4 Old Testament Conflicts

The Old Testament is replete with personal conflict, discord, and quarrels across many platforms, genders, classes and ages. The conflicts depicted are not only behavioral, but theological, ethnic, and familial as well. Conflict is assumed in Ezekiel 33:8 “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand”. Thus, is correction assumed in the affirmative. Following are examples of the prolific nature of conflict in Scripture.

3.4.1 Genesis 4:1-8 -Cain and Abel

One of the first conflicts in human history, assuming only negligible conflict in the first marriage, is that of the brotherly enmity brought about between Cain and Abel and develops in light of the varied methods of worship between two siblings. Genesis 4:1-8 describes the offerings brought by the two men. Abel brings forth livestock and fat, Cain, fruit portions. Genesis 4:7 gives one of the earliest affirmations of the consequences of free will in the Lord. “If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:7). Cain is furious, and his contentions, if only internal, bring him to the point of exercising lack of mastery over sin. After the plan of deception is conceived, so is the sin to murder his brother Abel.

Sailhamer contends the story is about what kind of worship is pleasing to God, and responds that it is worship from a pure heart. He continues that both offerings were, in and of themselves “acceptable” as they are both described as “offerings”. The problem was in the heart of Cain, not his offering (Sailhamer 2010:97). The conflict here is not relegated merely between Cain and Abel, but between Cain and God, or more generally, Cain and what is right to do.

This separation was due to anger and envy, and perhaps insecurity on the part of Cain.

3.4.2 Genesis 21 -Sarah, Hagar cast out

It is of interest that on the day of a great feast to celebrate the weaning of Isaac, an act of community celebration, that there is division in the camp. Hagar's son, Ishmael, was observed mocking the toddler Isaac, and this act precipitated division. Sarah, in her anger and perhaps embarrassment demands that Hagar be "driven" (NASB) from the land. Matthews questions the appropriateness of Sarah's reaction (Matthews 2005:269). The word "drive", or "get rid" in the Hebrew *gares* "describes the evictions of Adam, Cain, the removal of Moses by Pharaoh, and the dispossession of Canaan's population" (Matthews 2005:269). The cause seems to be attributed by Sarah as one of offence though it seems clear it was an over-reaction of spousal or maternal jealousy, leading to a great global conflict that endures to this day. It cannot be neglected that this tension was in part precipitated due to sin, in that Abraham deviated from the promise of God to provide in his sovereign timing.

3.4.3 Jacob and Esau

One of the greatest sibling rivalries is in Genesis 27 where Jacob deceives Isaac and receives the blessing. Esau is indignant, "So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob'" (Genesis 27:41). The plan is that the intended fratricide will be postponed by Esau until Isaac passes away, but this entire debacle of familial hatred emanates from the sin and selfishness of the previous generations.

3.4.4 Joseph and the Brothers

Once again in Genesis familial separation can be observed. In Chapter 37 the brothers of Joseph conspire to rid themselves of the arrogant Joseph who has just told them of a dream which involved the supremacy of Joseph and the subservience of the brothers. The ensuing separation is carried out in hatred toward Joseph but the sovereign hand of God is revealed as God uses it to protect the remnant from starvation.

3.4.5 Numbers 12 -Moses, Miriam and Aaron

In Numbers 12 Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses in disobedience and complaint. The Lord causes the direct enforcement of punishment upon them in the form of a leprous Miriam which is tantamount to excommunication from the camp until she is “received” again into the camp after she is made well, but not before God has made his will clear to the erring twosome. As Boniface-Malle puts it, “the real issue seems to have been the jealousy of Moses’ supreme role as channel of God’s revelation, as indicated by their complaint, “Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” (Boniface-Malle 2010:185).

3.4.6 2 Samuel 13 -David’s Failure to Correct

The failure to address and correct is abundantly seen in the failure of David to deal with the offenses of Absalom in 2 Samuel 13. After Amnon has raped his sister, David elects not to respond in any corrective manner thus allowing Amnon to rebel with impunity to the extent that he ushers in calamity upon the household. Absalom steps in to right the wrong, securing the death of Amnon, and severing the integrity of the household to the point that Absalom takes David’s wives and defiles them in front of all Israel. The house is divided, not in the process of correction and discipline to purity, but in the absence of it.

This error was observed as well in the household of Eli who although he reproved his sons, left it there upon their unwillingness to repent 1 Samuel 2:22. The

resultant effect was this “Profaned the name of Yahweh and the place of his presence and violated the purity of the community, especially the women who are serving” (Bargerhuff 2010:175).

3.4.7 *David and Saul*

The previous six examples have been familial separations. The division between the first two kings of Israel was a one-sided separation due to insecurity and disobedience on the part of Saul, and presumably some sort of delusion on the part of Saul that David is seeking to harm him. This was demonstrated by the amount of guilt that David had in even cutting off the hem of Saul’s garment, “It came about afterward that David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s *robe* (1 Samuel 24:5). Saul indeed at times was overtaken by a spirit of depression which caused him great consternation and mistrust of David (1 Samuel 16:14-16, 23, 18:10, 19:9). In spite of the tension, David persists in honouring Saul.

All of the aforementioned divisions emanated from sin, none of which would have been sanctioned of God.

3.5 Old Testament Prescription of Excommunication

3.5.1 *Excommunications Initiated by God*

Though the prescription of “casting out” is issued by the Lord for his people to carry out, several of the excommunications in the Old Testament are those which are invoked by the Lord himself. Blocher identifies that God’s veracity demanded this sort of penalty, that such offense as sin demanded retribution of death (Blocher 2005:73). As such, they are “prescribed” specifically by the action and model of the Lord, thus are sanctioned by him as well; some are by immediate death while others are “banishment”. As the process of excommunications should go, divine discipline precedes the extreme act of banishment.

A poignant illustration of this condition is presented in the last phrase of Psalm 23:4. The Psalmist identifies comfort from the rod and the staff of the Lord as shepherd. The staff is certainly an implement intended to keep the sheep on the right path, and to aid delivering from being lost (cf. Isaiah 53:6). The rod as well is utilized in the correction of any deviant behavior, yet, with a much more severe delivery. Many note that as a sheep or lamb demonstrated a tendency to be disobedient or having a proclivity to wander, the shepherd would utilize the rod to break the leg of the animal. The animal prone to wander would not exercise that errant behavior any longer. As well, the shepherd would be forced to carry the animal on his shoulders during the healing process, all the while establishing a closer relationship. This can be seen as a foreshadowing of the act of discipline in the Church.

If the people of God are to clearly understand this example in light of divine discipline, the lamb must be seen as an errant believer who is under divine discipline. Therefore, it is for another believer to come along, and seek to restore a person who is indeed under the hand of God's chastisement.

3.5.1.1 *Genesis 2:16-17, 3:21-24 -Adam and Eve*

According to placement in Scripture, Adam is the first human to experience the excommunication of the Lord, which is from the Garden of Eden. The Lord had completed the miracle of creation and declared it to be good. Adam and Eve had enjoyed something no other human beings had appreciated, which was being in perfect positional and experiential holiness within the sacred space of the Lord. As such, the Lord was able to commune with them, and to dwell among them, as there was nothing unclean about them. Yet, he imposed certain conditions of obedience upon them and made clear the consequences of disobedience to his word in Genesis 2:16-17:

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17; NASB).

Genesis 2:16-17 defines that restriction that was to be placed upon mankind in the governance of their behavior in the Garden. God is willing to allow this relationship to continue in perpetuity but not without these conditions of holiness. He is communicating the specific restriction of eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which in a broader sense is demanding adherence to the will of God. In essence, there is one law needing to be observed in order to sustain this level of intimacy with God. The consequences of not obeying that command are that the man would “die”. The man had been given free reign over every part of creation except one portion forbidden by God himself, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus, the “future of the race centers upon this single prohibition” (Leupold 1984:127). Yet the Lord rich in mercy issues only one divine ordinance, so mankind would not be confused by the multiplicity of issues, and it is set against the “background of broad permission” (Leupold 1984:127). Yet, the consequence was certain death. Literally, “die” is communicated twice (in the infinitive plus qal imperfect) indicating the certitude of death (Wenham 1987:67; cf. Exodus 20:5,7,11); idiomatically, the original Hebrew states, “Dying you will die” (Bauer S 2011); the understanding is that there would be a severe two-fold ramification to disobeying God in the Garden.

The first is that mankind would die physically; mankind would not live forever in their present bodies. Rather, they would deteriorate physically, to become emaciated and riddled with disease, suffering the effects of aging. They would get old, lose their teeth and hair, lose their vision and eventually expire back into the dust from where they emanated, that was the physical death. This physical curse would cause his life consequently to terminate and he would be returned to the dust (Genesis 23:19), but only after living a life of contention against the physical world in order to survive (Genesis 3:17-19).

But more serious than that was the second death, the death to the relationship between himself and God, as dying is separation from God (Leupold 1984:128); this was a spiritual death, the relational and spiritual death of division from the Creator as they are sent out from the presence of the Lord. That curse upon mankind is prevalent through the ages to the entirety of mankind.

In Genesis 3:1-8, the disobedience and thus the curse of Genesis 2:17 comes to pass when mankind falls to the deception of the deceiver.²⁰

Satan questions if God really said what he said. In fact, he questions if there is even a judgment at all. Satan plants the seed of uncertainty as to whether there is even an element of accountability. He suggests that God is holding out on the man and the woman, because they have the opportunity to become like God if only they would eat of the fruit. They are enticed by this promise of knowledge. As her eyes are delighted by its sight, she takes and eats of it, as well as the husband. They understand immediately the difference between good and evil. They understand they have done wrong in the eyes of God. In a minimal way in order to hide their sin they take figs leaves and tie them together and attempt to cover their nakedness, so as to try to hide what they have done from God. But God comes walking through in his sacred space, his holy space in the Edenic Temple in the breeze of the day. Adam and Eve are hiding as the Lord asks the question, "Where are you?" And they respond that they are naked. After God inquires who told them of that fact, the truth is revealed, and suddenly this holy sacred place becomes the tribunal of God, wherein the guilty verdicts are handed out to Satan, to the woman and to the man.

This is evidenced in chapter 3, as the great primitive "Temple of Eden" is morphed into a courtroom where justice is dispensed in verses 3:14-19.²¹

²⁰ Genesis 3:1-8, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:1-8; NASB).

²¹ "The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.' To the woman He said,

Subsequently the sentence is executed regarding separation, but before that, verse 21 says, “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them”. From this text can be understood that the fig leaves sewn together by Adam and Eve were insufficient to allow them a perpetual audience with God. God intervened and fabricated garments of skin. It is unclear from where these garments were procured, and it is possible that God could have omnipotently generated them from any source, however, it is more likely that they were taken from a live animal source. This record of the first death “recorded” in the Bible was the first model of the atonement in Scripture. Thus, since God has not made any other men at this point, he produces skins from an animal creature, thus demonstrating the prototype of the sacrificial system, revealing the first sacrificial atonement is initiated by God.

In order for God to be in their midst, or rather allow them to continue to be in his sacred space, Genesis 3:21 relates that he clothed them with skins thus, “covering” their sin. The implication is that the blood of the animal was shed to allow the humans some sort of “positional atonement” for the brief amount of time they had remaining in the Garden. But this covering precedes the very drastic fate of separation from the presence of the Lord. Still, there were additional consequences to bear in light of their actions.

They will eventually suffer the very real abandonment from God. Genesis 3:22-24 continues the saga:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24; NASB).

‘I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat from it”; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:14-19;NASB).’”

They were not allowed to remain in the primitive Holy of Holies, in God's presence in the Garden as they had been compromised with sin. It is seen as a blessing to the man to have been restricted from any engagement with the tree of life, the other tree in the Edenic garden. Had he, or they, made their way to, and participated from the tree of life, it is conceivable that this could have had the effect of allowing their sin-ridden bodies to live, or exist forever (Leupold 1984:181). God does not want Adam to get hold of that fruit for fear he would further complicate matters, for if he would have eaten of that tree, his body would have lived forever in an ever dying physical state, suffering decay in perpetuity, not being allowed to ever completely die. Thus, their earthen vessels would have continued to erode, and atrophy, but not to the point of being allowed to completely die and return to the dust, being forever under the bondage of that which he (Christ) was to master (Leupold 1984:183).

Adam is going to be excommunicated from that perfectly pure Temple since he is defiled. "When Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast out of the Garden, lost their access to sacred space, and up-set the equilibrium that God had established" (Walton 2012:295). The Edenic paradise is the embodiment of God's perfect creation and it is communion with God. As a consequence Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden and protected from gaining entry back into its perfection (Genesis 3:23-24). The text says that the LORD "sent him out of the Garden", and then, "He drove the man out", both indications the man was being "cast out", "cut off", or more specifically, excommunicated from the presence of the LORD, though those terms are not specifically employed.

It is not communicated whether or not Adam would be "allowed" back in, or whether there was any attempt made or experienced. Neither is it communicated that God restored Adam to positional holiness to stand before him in his sacred space. It is therefore unclear how "permanent" this excommunication was, though it is certain, it minimally included an excommunication from the Garden, from the Primordial Temple of God (Lioy 2010:25-27), and thus, from the presence of God.

Thus, Adam has disobeyed the Lord and defiled himself, with sin tainting his state of a "moral being standing on a very high plane of perfection" at the point of his creation (Leupold 1984:129). As a consequence he is banished from the holy the

Primordial Temple of Eden. The Garden is the conceivable perfection of God, wherein Adam was able to commune with God, essentially unrestricted. It was from this realm, from this most intimate relationship, which he was excommunicated.

3.5.1.2 *Ezekiel 28:1-19, Isaiah 14:12-15 -The Fall of Satan*

Though the written account of Adam precedes any written account of Satan being cast out of heaven, at least in the confines of Scripture, there is a reference to this event that would likely precede it chronologically, as referenced in Section 3.3.1. In fact, it is thought, since God looked upon all that he had made at the end of Genesis chapter 1, and pronounced it as good, it is logical that Satan who himself was part of the created world, had not yet fallen. This event, found in Ezekiel 28,²² is surmised to have taken place somewhere between the end of Genesis 1, and the

²² 1 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas’; Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God — 3 Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you. 4 “By your wisdom and understanding you have acquired riches for yourself and have acquired gold and silver for your treasures. 5 “By your great wisdom, by your trade You have increased your riches And your heart is lifted up because of your riches — 6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God, 7 Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor. 8 ‘they will bring you down to the pit, and you will die the death of those who are slain in the heart of the seas. 9 ‘Will you still say, “I am a god,” In the presence of your slayer, Though you are a man and not God, In the hands of those who wound you? 10 ‘You will die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, for I have spoken!’ declares the Lord GOD!’” 11 Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 12 “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. 14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 “By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. 18 “By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. 19 “All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified and you will cease to be forever.’”” (Ezekiel 28:1-19; NASB)

beginning of Genesis 3, as Satan is definitely expressing an attitude which is opposed to the Almighty.

The passage is thought by many to be directed toward the Prince of Tyre, although by inclusion of the words in verses 13-16 points to the presence of Satan being instructed and reprimanded. Schultz cites the affirmation of this interpretation by notables such as Origin, Tertullian, and Gregory the Great as well as systematic theologian Henry Thiesen (Schultz 2005:342).

The Isaiah texts import additional understanding.²³ As Satan has been found to be guilty of aspiring to be God, or to place himself above God, he receives a verdict and sentence as well as Adam, and a corresponding fate, a casting out from the presence of God. In the same way that Adam is excommunicated from the sacred space of God, so is Satan excommunicated from the presence of God. Other texts in support of this event are linked to Luke 10:17-19, and Revelation 12:7-9,13.

The divisions examined thus far are those brought about by God himself, those of Satan from heaven, Cain from the presence of the community or family, and the Israelites from the Promised Land.

Although there may appear to be a fine line at times, there are subtle differences between division and excommunication. Division being the separation of any kind, where as excommunication is for the specific purpose of removing an

²³ "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God." The fact that he was in the Garden, That he was honored with jewels, that he was a cherub, that he was cast down from the holy mountain of God, that he was in the midst of the stones of fire, and that he was blameless, refer specifically to an angelic being rather than that of a man. He was the form of perfection, the form of beauty, he was honored by God (as demonstrated by the stones), had a position of authority (anointed cherub), he enjoyed the presence of God, and he was blameless. Isaiah makes it clear this led to a desire to be God, "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:13-14; NASB).

offender from the presence of God, or from his people for the benefit of the flock. God has commanded certain instances where it is the responsibility of the people to divide or separate themselves from those errant among the people.

3.5.1.3 *Genesis 4:9-15a -Cain*

Despite the killing of his brother which was deserving of death (Sailhamer 2010:98), the Lord displays mercy upon Cain merely in letting him live. Although he is to be banished from relationship with God, he is allowed to live another day. Cain has compounded his original sin of murder, in addition to the sin of deception and committing murder in his heart, by adding lying to the Lord, telling him, “I don’t know”, in response to the inquiry of Abel’s whereabouts. For these offences he will be found guilty by the Lord, and sentenced to hard labor of the ground, but more significantly he will be a restless wanderer on the earth, a wanderer absent of the presence of God.

Genesis 4:13-14 describes the response of Cain, “Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.’” Cain grasps the severity of the verdict and in the midst of the hard labor element, and the fear of others hurting him; he identifies the true nature of the sentence that the Lord’s face will be hidden from him, and that as unbearable as that implies, a lack of protection from the community. Yet, the Lord, knowing he is deserving of death, relieves him of this punishment for the time being by placing a mark upon him (Genesis 4:15). This, Sailhamer finds, displays some sort of repentance, anguish, and therefore he is given this mercy (Sailhamer 2010:101). Cain follows in the ignominious footsteps of his father in being driven away from the divine relationship. Sailhamer concludes that Cain’s punishment foreshadows the exile described in Deuteronomy (Sailhamer 2010:100) that would be repeated many times over in the theodrama (Vanhoozer) of mankind.

3.5.1.4 *Leviticus 10 -Nadab and Abihu*

Obviously, there are differences in the nature of many excommunications represented here; some are permanent while others certainly have time constraints based on the behavior, repentance, or other conditions of those cast out. For example, of those which are permanent, Satan is cast out of heaven, the product of pride and attempted insurrection never to enjoy that intimate relationship with the godhead. He is only granted entry to stand before God in rare cases such as in the Book of Job, the Garden of Eden, and regarding Jesus in the wilderness.

Others who obtain terminal excommunication are Nadab and Abihu whose sin is so egregious and unholy that apparently no opportunity to repent is even considered (See Section 3.8.5). Seemingly this punitive element is carried out with a swiftness to protect the rest of the priests from defilement, and to set an example of the consequences of disobedience, which is experienced once again in the New Testament, in the swift consequences carried out toward Ananias and Sapphira following their sin before God. Again, this is the case as well with the sons of Korah. In all of these cases the essence of excommunication is indeed expeditiously terminal.

3.5.1.5 *Numbers 16:1-50 -Korah*

Another one of those “extreme” excommunications is seen in the event of the Sons of Korah. The entire story is contained within the chapter of Numbers 16 and defines the story of a rebellious tribe, which has descended from the line of Levi through Kohath. Allen notes that though Korah had a high level of authority working in the Temple, he desired more, and promoted such by using “subterfuge to further his claim by advancing the false piety of common holiness before the Lord” (Allen 2012:243). Other tribes gathered to join Korah and malign Moses in order to bring about his demise; their charge was that Moses had gone too far in taking full reign of

their spiritual leadership. The ensuing trial before God rivals that of Elijah and the false prophets in the efficacy of judgment at the end of that “trial”.²⁴

Judgment was swift and public that the people might experience in the heat of the moment the consequences of contention regarding those whom God has placed as overseers. Though this was an extreme excommunication, as it was permanent, this was to display God’s approval of Moses as the spiritual leader and the disapproval of the rebels, thus purifying the camp. Allen states, “This judgment was immediate, catastrophic, horrible and complete,...yet, there is something in it that is also satisfying: something of the honor of the Lord and the servants he had named, of the purity of the camp, and, in a sense, of poetic justice” (Allen 2012:252).

3.5.1.6 *Joshua 7 -The Sin of Achan*

Yet another is the case of Achan who has disobediently garnered for himself plunder from Jericho that was explicitly forbidden. The effect is that the presence of the Lord is not upon the people of Israel in the first battle of Ai, as it had been with them in the battle of Jericho. It was the presence of the Lord after all which caused the walls of Jericho to fall, permitting the Israelites to enter the time-tested stronghold and overtake its inhabitants. The consequences of Achan taking materials which were under the ban brings defilement upon Israel, which is not acceptable to God. The nation takes on the guilt and is corporately punished for his actions as the presence of a holy God requires a holy people. It is only after the defeat that the leadership of Israel seeks the face of God, seeking answers as to why the defeat happened. In a fashion, the Lord claims he will no longer be with the people unless

²⁴ “As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, “The earth may swallow us up!” Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.” (Numbers 16:31-35;NASB).

the cleansing is made. The Lord advises the method to be used to implicate the person responsible for bringing this judgment upon the nation. Rather than merely pointing out the offending party, the process is brought before the entire nation, in an open courtroom for all to witness, and an affirmation of the omniscience of Yahweh. After a lengthy and arduous investigation as to who the offending party may be, the lots fall to Achan who does eventually confess though seemingly lacking contrition or repentance, and is subsequently dispatched along with his family and livestock (Joshua 7). Again, in full sight of Israel, the forbidden plunder is retrieved from the tent of Achan, poured out in front of the “sons of Israel”, and the punishment of Achan, all his family, livestock and possessions is carried out in the sight of all, to be a deterrent to all, the consequences of any sin which is brought into the camp of God’s holy people. He has brought dishonor to the Lord and judgment upon Israel for his actions. He is no longer given the opportunity to repent or turn himself in; he has lost that right by not stepping forth. His fate has been sealed and “excommunication” is terminal; the sort of surgery required on this body is equivalent to an amputation of the infected member rather than a mere slap on the wrist.

These three examples, along with the case of Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament (Acts 5) contain 2 of the three elements of Calvin’s purposes of excommunication (Section 2.5), that God may not be insulted by the behavior of his people or angels, and that the people or angels would not be corrupted by the bad behavior. Such were the offences, or the magnitude of the offenses, that God did not allow any room for repentance, but in his foreknowledge deemed this event impossible in each of them, or an action which he simply would not allow. Rightly the question needs to be posed, “Is excommunication of this sort considered punishment?” For those embracing a sovereign loving God, one would need to respond in the negative, asserting that God is so jealous for the purity of his people and that the holy name of Yahweh not be insulted. Thinking in terms of the New Testament, Russell affirms that sin, “affects all who are in the church of Jesus Christ” (Russell 2000:72).

3.5.1.7 *Joshua 2:9-11, Joshua 6 -Rahab the Harlot*

A final note on the casting out of people would be the account of Rahab the Harlot and her family, as it is observed in the second and sixth chapter of Joshua. Rahab is, or had been a woman who engaged in the immoral act of prostitution. She had lived in a country rightly judged by God to be an evil nation, presumably a people group who engaged in idolatrous pagan worship. She had undoubtedly been considered an unclean women living in an unclean world. Nevertheless, she had expressed faith in the God of Israel (Joshua 2:9-11), and consequently received assurance that she would be spared. On that fateful day of the Battle of Jericho, Rahab and her family were extracted from the battle only to be relegated to live *outside* the camp of Israel (Joshua 6:23). Conceivably this was done to permit a time of “purification” for her and her relatives due to their “ceremonial uncleanness” (Woudstra 1981:115). In essence to assure that she had indeed embraced the lifestyle and beliefs fitting of a God-follower, and thus would not infect the nation with any erroneous beliefs or impurity. She is eventually granted “citizenship” in to live in the midst of the nation of Israel (Joshua 6:25). Again, the Lord has established guidelines to protect his people from possible harm, and consequently he has guarded his name from damage.

3.5.2 ***Other Old Testament Elements of Excommunication***

Excommunication and all aspects of discipline are essential to the health of God’s people, and beneficial to all inhabitants of the earth. Not only is it imperative for the offender to be corrected, but also for the overall assembly to be involved in the process; it is not optional. The very direct command for ostracism is seen simply in the failure to honor the Sabbath and continues from there. “Therefore you are to observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Exodus 31:14).

3.5.2.1 *Ezekiel 33:6-9 -Consequences of Failing to be Rebuke or Reprove*

Ezekiel 33:8 presents the consequences of failing to engage in the process of correction within the community of faith.²⁵

Alexander simply affirms this passage as the commission to Ezekiel to be the watchman and his exhortation of individual responsibility, a responsibility that by extension applies to each individual member in the Body of believers. Ezekiel has been faithful to issue the exhortation to turn to the Lord in verse 11, and thus has relieved himself of any culpability of blood upon his hands (Alexander 2010:826). On a familial level the father of a family is to reprove, correct and direct (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), with consequences as those revealed in David, Absalom, Amnon and Tamar, in addition to the sons of Eli of which was said, “Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD” (1 Samuel 2:12). In order to avoid guilt, the overseers are to engage in the correction of wrong behavior.

Leviticus 19:17-18 adds to the responsibility of the Body to act as overseer to the brethren. “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.’” The understanding is that to avoid a countryman who is willfully or ignorantly engaged in acts opposed to Scripture is actually to “hate” him, in the respect of allowing him to continue on an errant course. Sin may well be incurred if an individual was to willfully neglect the proper restoration of a sinning brother or sister.

²⁵ 6 “But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman’s hand.” 7 “Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me. 8 “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. 9 “But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life” (Ezekiel 33:6-9;NASB).

3.5.2.2 *Psalm 94*

Psalm 94 cries for the justice which the Psalmist desires, but that justice is accompanied by the understanding that the purpose of discipline is to yield knowledge:

10 He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
Even He who teaches man knowledge?

12 Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD,
And whom You teach out of Your law;
13 That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity,
Until a pit is dug for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not abandon His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
15 For judgment will again be righteous,
And all the upright in heart will follow it.
16 Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?
(Psalm 94:10, 12-16:NASB).

Vangemeren holds that this Psalm displays a national and personal lament (Vangemeren 2008:710), and yet, an understanding that the Lord is trying to teach those who are opposed to his will. The message is clear, he holds, that the Psalmist is proclaiming God's blessing, the blessing of knowledge to every individual who will respond rightly to his discipline (Vangemeren 2008:714). True, the people of God have a "clearer form of" this revelation, but the blessing is there for all who obey (Vangemeren 2008:715). Thus, disciplinary procedures are employed toward those who are outside the camp, in order that they may have knowledge, or know the Lord as well.

3.5.2.3 *Deuteronomy 8:1-5*

Deuteronomy 8:1-5²⁶ paints a clear picture of the intent of discipline and the hand of God's sovereignty in every step of the way. As a result of the sojourning in

²⁶ 8:1 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your

the wilderness God wanted Israel to know they were being disciplined for their complaining, and disobedience to take the land. Verse 2 defines the purpose to “humble and test”, or strengthen the nation, to see if was in their hearts to obey the commandments (Biddle 2003:149-150). The analogy of the father to the child in verse 5 should not be lost as one of affection as this theme “together with the motif of educative discipline are prominent wisdom themes” (Mayes 1979:191). The desert experience then served to be one of a “learning experience rather than a punishing one” (Merrill 1994:186).

3.6 Covenantal Failure

Woven throughout the Old Testament is the idea of faithfulness, especially in the context of the covenant of marriage. This parallel is made several times in regard to the covenantal people of God being referred to as his wife. Addressing Israel in Isaiah 54, God says, “For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth”. The understanding is clear and the mandate understood, of faithfulness in a monogamous relationship with only one (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4).

3.6.1 Exodus 34:12-16 -Harlotry with Another

The severity of such unfaithfulness is cautioned against repeatedly. The temptress is to be avoided for fear of becoming defiled. Proverbs 7:25

forefathers. 2 “You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. 4 “Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 “Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. (Deuteronomy 8:1-5;NASB).

communicates this repeatedly in prose, “Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths”, as well as other passages such as Exodus 34:12-16.²⁷

Before the people even enter into the land they are cautioned as to how they could fall into unfaithfulness from their husband,²⁸ yet, that is the action that they will take, worshipping other gods, and thus undergoing the discipline of the Lord (cf. Deuteronomy 8:1-5). Failure to maintain purity in this covenantal relationship comes at great costs.

3.6.2 Joshua 9, Ezra 9:1-10-44 -The Problem of Inter-marriage

As astute as Joshua was in maintaining faithfulness and being consecrated to the Lord (cf. Joshua 5), he errs when he enters into a covenant with the Gibeonites by not seeking the direction of the Lord (verse 14), literally, “But the mouth of the Lord they did not ask” (Howard 1998:226); this, in addition to the actual covenant were the two known offenses of which he was guilty. Joshua and the elders are unwittingly enticed to enter into a covenant relationship with an adulterous nation in Joshua 9. Though he makes the best of it conscripting them to service in the Temple, which some may even question as correct, the covenant affects the nation of Israel some 400 years into the future as the nation is undergoing a drought due to Saul’s persecution of the Gibeonites. Joshua does maintain however, the allegiance to the vow, knowing the termination of such would bring other consequences.

In light of the reputation expressed in verses 1-2, one cannot judge the Gibeonites for their act of deception; the narrative flows out of this reputation, which

²⁷ “Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. 13 “But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and cut down their Asherim 14 — for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God — 15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons *also* to play the harlot with their gods (Exodus 34:12-16; NASB).

²⁸ Thus, the need for the Israelites to re-circumcise themselves as an act of dedication and reconsecration of the vows to follow YHWH.

leads to the elders taking a vow, or a covenant, absent the counsel of the Lord. The end result is a covenantal relationship contrary to the direction of the Lord.

The consequences of failure to maintain a covenant or a vow are illustrated in 2 Samuel 21 wherein famine has fallen to the nation of Israel. David, as opposed to Joshua, “sought the face of the Lord” in 2 Samuel 21:1, and was able to ascertain the cause of the drought, and obediently respond to the will of God. Upon investigation David is illumined as to the cause which was Saul’s failure to honor the 400 plus year covenant with the Gibeonites, which was entered into by Joshua. Saul had wilfully attacked them, and sought to persecute them, though they were covered by this persistent pact. David allows the Gibeonites to mandate the punishment of this crime and thus, the implication is that the barley harvest will be a prosperous one (2 Samuel 21:9); blessing and prosperity is restored to Israel.

Breneman asks the question, “What should a leader and community of believers do when an issue arises that threatens the life and effectiveness of the community?” (Brennan 1993:146); the response is provided in Ezra 9:1-10:44. Ezra 9:1 communicates that the people had not kept themselves separate from the surrounding people groups, and were thus engaging in acts and worship contrary to the commandments. After contrition and repentance demonstrated and led by Ezra, the people offer a plan through Shecaniah,²⁹ a plan of recovenanting.

Breneman also holds that the Hebrew word for “marrying”, *noseb*, means literally, “cause to dwell”, implying a broken covenant, and apostasy with God, but not necessarily a marriage that was honored in the first place (Breneman 1993:157).

²⁹ “Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. “So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law” (Ezra 10:2-3;NASB).

3.6.3 Hosea 1:9 -Rejection of Unfaithfulness

And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God”. These words express the consequences for the infidelity of God’s wife- Israel. “You are not my people” or clan suggests Wolff, is an expression of “Not my flesh and blood” (Wolff 1989:21). He states here that God is no longer their YHWH as Israel has broken her covenant and returned to her position among the nations being defiled (Wolff 1989:22). “Yahweh’s rejection must- the reverse side of free election- be proclaimed to those who forsook him like an unfaithful wife” (Wolff 1989:22). This same scenario is communicated in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17, “Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, ‘The two shall become one flesh’. But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*”.

Exemplified in these texts is the understanding that obedience after covenantal failure is still attainable though at a very high price. Yet, restoration is still the desired goal.

3.7 Fellowship Meals

Since the institution of the first Passover meal the intent was one of identifying and celebrating the benefits that a certain community held in common; this was an external witness of that communion. For the Israelites, those benefits consisted in the sharing of salvation from the land of oppression, and deliverance from death as the angel moved over the land of Egypt. The participation was to define the unity held among that people group. The rite of fellowship was seen in the account of Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre and a time of fellowship over food (Genesis 18). It is again revisited as the elders celebrate the participation they all share after the giving of the law; this oneness is demonstrated over a common meal (Exodus 24). Of such importance is unity, *koinōnia*, and fellowship, that the Lord God established multiple feasts (*appointed times*), of remembrance and joint celebration (Howard 1997:13). Reymond holds that the “assembly” gathered at the festival times for covenant renewal and to bring offerings and worship at Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Reymond 2001:809). This was definitely meant to reflect community

and relationship as represented by the drinking from one cup and the taking of one loaf.

As noted earlier, the assembly celebrated the common blessings, and the common redemption in their one God at the feast of Passover, and the other feasts of Israel, as they assembled, and at synagogue. Jeremias holds that the Jewish Passover celebration at the time of Christ was both retrospective and prospective, meaning a time of remembrance, and looking toward the future, eschatologically (Jeremias 1966:205). This is similar to the Jewish practice leading up to that time.

Exodus 12:1-34 communicates the format of just how this remembrance is to take place. One essential piece is the element of the “purity” of the bread- defined to be the absence of leaven, or yeast in the bread. Originally, the absence of it was due to the limited amount of time the Hebrews had to vacate Egypt; the absence of leaven will evolve into an understanding of purity, as the presence of this foreign material will gravely impact the dough into which it is placed (1 Corinthians 5:6; cf. Ecclesiastes 10:1). Says Jeremias of the Jewish Passover, “at this festival the people of God remember the merciful immunity granted to the houses marked with the blood of the paschal lamb and the deliverance from the Egyptian servitude” (Jeremias 1966:205-206). It was a remembrance of the deliverance but also a looking forward to the coming deliverance through the Messiah, thus the singing at the termination of the event of Psalm 118. Jeremias further holds that, “It is an ancient oriental idea that a common meal binds the table companions into table fellowship” (Jeremias 1966:232).

Of such importance is the meal for the people to identify themselves with each other, and as the pure people of God, the consequences of forsaking it are made clear:

‘Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance. ‘Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel’ (Exodus 12:14-15;NASB).

An individual risks complete banishment for failing to recognize and participate in this event as they were dishonoring their covenantal remembrance.

3.8 Sacred Space and the Approachability of God

Walton asserts that, “The OT establishes the significance of sacred space from its earliest pages. Students of Genesis over the last couple of decades have recognized that the creation narratives view the cosmos as a temple” (Walton 2012:295).

“Can a relationship with God be had?” or “How can a relationship with God be realized?”, are essential questions to consider when moving beyond the mere identification of God, to the existence and nature of God. Observance of nature points to the fundamental existence of a god, the greater questions needing to be asked and answered are: “Can one get close to God?” “How can one get close to God?” and “How close can one get to God?” Those are greatly addressed in the concept of sacred space.

3.8.1 The Holiness of God

Throughout the entirety of Scripture there is the common thread of the holiness of God, and the restriction of anything impure coming before his presence or else it would incur serious consequences. This holy space is the area around God, and is understood to be the sacred space around God in which he encounters his people and engages in a relationship with his people. God is omnipresent, he is everywhere, but the idea of holy space is the idea of area around God in which he himself communes with his creation. It is where his worshippers are permitted to come into his presence, or relationship with the Almighty. God is spirit and it is understood that the physical beings come into this mystical presence. The physical creation is allowed into the Tabernacle, into the Temple, into the throne room, or even into the church; there is the conception that people come into these realms as a metaphor to the sacred space of God, the perceived area around God. Nothing defiled, unclean, unholy or impure is allowed into the heavenly presence of the holy

one (Revelation 21:27). God demands holiness around him, a buffer zone from the impure elements of a fallen world.

In Exodus 3:5, when the bush is burning, God commands Moses, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground”. It is not the fact that the ground in and of itself is holy, but it’s the presence of the Lord seeking a relationship with Moses, and it’s that holy presence and sacred space that God is commanding be respected. God is communicating that he is dwelling *among* Moses, and that he desires to commune *with* him.

This thread of redemption and holy space is woven clearly throughout the pages of Scripture beginning in Genesis 2 and 3. The creation event was perfect and God proclaims everything, “Good”. This is what is known as the Edenic Temple; this is the Garden of Eden where God’s presence meets his creation on earth. Lioy refers to the physical temple in the Garden of Eden as the “primordial temple”; it is the primitive earthly Temple of God. To this Walton concurs, “At the climax, Deity comes to take up his repose (rest) in the temple. God has brought order and equilibrium to the cosmos and maintains them in the world he has created. Further distinctions in sacred space are made as Eden is identified as the place of God’s presence with the garden planted adjoining it” comparing Eden with the Holy of Holies (Walton 2012:295). Everything that God has created is good and has his hand of perfection upon it. Thus, he has created man and has unimpeded communion with him.

Adam and Eve stand alone as people of God who have enjoyed this untainted communion with God, something very distinct from any other mere mortal who has walked the earth (other than Christ Jesus); they have been able to walk in God’s holy presence and not be consumed because of their sinlessness. The reason is because they are holy; they have no sin upon them. They had committed no sins and were thus free from any original sin or iniquity. They were experiencing God in the Edenic Temple in a way unknown to man. God loved this, God made this creation of mankind to enjoy this kind of intimacy. That is, until the fall described in Section 3.5.1.1 wherein the man would suffer defilement and physical death.

Of a more severe consequence was the spiritual death to be experienced because of disobedience and unholiness. It was spiritual separation from God. It was a loss of relationship with God. In the day that Adam would commit this infraction, the relationship would suffer, because Adam would no longer be holy and undefiled before God in the Edenic Temple.

Cherubim are contracted to announce God's glory, and in placing some at the east gate they are "protecting" the glory of God as they are securing the entry of sin back into the sacred Temple of the Lord. Adam has been denied that state of absolute communion with God, as nothing unholy is allowed to be in the presence of a holy God, and it is seen that fellowship with God is conditional upon obedience to his words. Adam had enjoyed the Edenic paradise, the ultimate habitation which had been declared good by God, but now he was expelled due to his corruption. As will be seen, the Garden of Eden is the archetype to the land of Canaan where God would dwell with his people until the time of separation due to their disobedience.

3.8.2 *The Design of the Tabernacle*

In Exodus chapters 25-30, the demand for purity in the sacred space of God is physically represented in the Temple of the Lord, and is in no way random or abstract but detailed, precise and intentional, and structured to re-establish relationship with himself. This Temple, as Beale puts it, was to be, "the theological temple of the earth" (Beale 2004:334). The effort of tracing the Tabernacle and Temple in the grand narrative of Scripture yields a concept of the dwelling place of God- notably where it is holy, or has been consecrated to his presence. Walton notes, "The plan of the Tabernacle (and later, the Temple) was designed to reestablish equilibrium in a sacred space—God's presence on earth— while retaining restricted access", and representing the Edenic temple replete with "cherub décor" (Walton 2012:295). Gorman suggests there were specific guidelines to maintaining this presence of God:

These categories can also be used in reference to the larger issue of maintaining divine equilibrium. Sacred times must be identified, maintained by the priests, and observed by the people. Sacred space must be delineated, and its sanctity preserved. Statuses of priests and people must be regulated

by specific guidelines. These guidelines enable the priests to determine who has access to sacred time and sacred space and how particular levels of status can be achieved or maintained (Gorman 1990:28-29).

Initially the Lord commands supplies for this place of communion to be gathered *from* the people. The purpose described in verse 8 is so that the Lord may dwell again among the defiled people of his creation, but the restored fellowship would come at great cost and effort, as opposed to the free gift of communion in the Garden of Eden.³⁰

Following these commands are the intricate details of the implements to be created and used for re-establishing fellowship with the Lord, which include the intricate details of the Ark demonstrating the presence of God among them (Exodus 25:10,17-22).³¹

The primary or central point of the Temple of the Lord is the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark is representative of God's presence in that location; it is spoken of as his footstool (1 Chronicles 28:2). God is not beginning with the structure of the Tabernacle, and then telling how to fill it, but God is beginning with his very

³⁰ 1 "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. 3 "This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 4 blue, purple and scarlet *material*, fine linen, goat *hair*, 5 rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it" (Ezekiel 25:1-9; NASB).

³¹ "They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. "You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. "Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim *of one piece* with the mercy seat at its two ends. "The cherubim shall have *their* wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be *turned* toward the mercy seat. "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel (Exodus 25:10,17-22, NASB).

presence; the central point of the location is Yahweh. The central focus of the people is Yahweh. He is initiating the relationship with Israel and it begins again in verse 18 with the cherubim; they are there to remind people of, and to guard the glory of the Lord and his holiness. The Ark is covered with gold, the most valuable of metals overlaid upon acacia wood, and inside are the commands of the Lord.

Verse 23 describes the table, “You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high”. The focus begins to move away from the centrality of the Ark. It describes the table overlaid with Gold. Verse 31 describes the lampstand, “Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand *and* its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be *of one piece* with it”. Gradually, the focus moves away from the central point of the Ark, but the elements continue to be covered with the purity of gold.

As the description continues the covering of the tabernacle is described in Exodus 26:1-6.³²

The construction of the building is being built in very intentional layers. The first layer surrounding the insides are made of fine twisted linen. It is refined linen, most likely garnered from their time in Egypt, and brought with them along the trip after Passover. It is woven into fine colors of scarlet, blue and purple. This is the covering next to the Ark of the Covenant on the interior of the Tabernacle. The characters woven in are those of cherubim, again to suggest a protection of the holiness of the area because the presence of the Lord. The finest of materials, including clasps of gold are those utilized to communicate the essence of purity in

³² 1 “Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet *material*; you shall make them with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. 2 “The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall have the same measurements. 3 “Five curtains shall be joined to one another, and *the other* five curtains *shall be* joined to one another. 4 “You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the *first* set, and likewise you shall make *them* on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set. 5 “You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite each other. 6 “You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps so that the tabernacle will be a unit (Exodus 26:1-6, NASB).

the Holy of Holies. Beale asserts that, “God’s presence in the heavenly temple extended to the Holy of Holies” (Beale 2004:397).

The second layer of the wall being described in verse 7, and materials of a lesser degree of refinement are being prescribed as movement away from the Ark continues. “Then you shall make curtains of goats’ *hair* for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains in all”. This is the tent that covers the Holy of Holies as God begins to enclose this area. The clasps required diminish from gold to bronze in verse 11, and the progressive reduction in the refinement of the materials continues to lessen in stature, the elements become less valuable. The first layer is fine twisted linen, the second layer goatskin. Verse 14 describes the third layer which is made out of rams skins which are dyed red and covered with porpoise skins, which are emblematic of what is taking place inside that tabernacle, that the sins of the people are being atoned for by blood. Finally, the NASB describes the covering as porpoise skins, whereas others interpret them as sealskins or the skins of manatees. The idea here is that the people are in the wilderness and are in need of a weatherproof covering to protect the interior from dust, sand and moisture.

Next the framing is described in the exoskeletal design. It is no wonder that people look to the Old Testament and think that God is distant or hard to get to, but that is not the fault of God, but the challenge of those imputed with sin. There had to be a buffer zone or a chasm between a holy God and sinful man who was defiled. God is not resistant to that, but makes it clear that more effort would be required and would be very intentional. Verse 30 describes the actual tabernacle to be constructed which is 15 feet wide and 45 feet long, “Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain”. This structure will house the presence of God in a sense. God desires to divide the interior section into 2 parts. Verses 31-34 describe the veil which will divide:

31 “You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. 32 “You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks *also being of* gold, on four sockets of silver. 33 “You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. 34 “You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies (Exodus 26:31-34; NASB).

The room has a constructed curtain of fine material inlaid with images of cherubim upon it, announcing the holiness and the glory of God which is at the far end of the room, an area 15 foot wide by 15 foot deep by 15 foot high room. The Ark of the Covenant is stored here and will be the room into which the high priest will make his way to atone for the sins of the people of Israel, and he will do that once a year.

Chapter 27 begins to describe construction again moving away from the central room, the Holy of Holies, “And you shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits”. This is outside of the tent of meeting in the courtyard which is housing the tabernacle and is there for the purpose of sacrificing the animals used for the atonement. The blood would flow upon that altar and be gathered before coagulation could take place and used in the process of service. Adjacent to that is the laver where the priests would wash themselves prior to service. They would wash their hands and feet in anticipation of going into the Holy of Holies.

Finally, the courtyard is described in chapter 27:9-19.³³

This is communicating that the courtyard housing the tabernacle is to be 75 feet wide by 150 feet long. Verse 21 describes the perpetual offering that is to be presented there, “In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the

³³ 9 “You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side *there shall be* hangings for the court of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for one side; 10 and its pillars *shall be* twenty, with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver. 11 “Likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings one hundred *cubits* long, and its twenty pillars with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver. 12 “For the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits *with* their ten pillars and their ten sockets. 13 “The width of the court on the east side *shall be* fifty cubits. 14 “The hangings for the *one side of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets. 15 “And for the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets. 16 “For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, *with* their four pillars and their four sockets. 17 “All the pillars around the court shall be furnished with silver bands *with* their hooks of silver and their sockets of bronze. 18 “The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, and the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits of fine twisted linen, and their sockets of bronze. 19 “All the utensils of the tabernacle *used* in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, *shall be* of bronze” (Exodus 27:9-19;NASB).

testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel” (Exodus 27:21; NASB); the purpose of which is to provide a holy place for the LORD, to provide a place where the sins of the people would be covered, and where the fellowship would ensue.

3.8.3 The Consecration of the Priest

The architecture of the Tabernacle has been established and communicated to Moses, but there still is the matter of getting close to God, so yet to be communicated is the mediatorial agent to carry out the priestly services, someone who knows how to approach God. This is defined in Exodus 28.³⁴

There is a certain prescription here, regarding the preparedness of the priest to enter the Holy of Holies and offer up sacrifices. God begins first and foremost with the priestly attire, the vestments which will qualify them to perform the service of the Lord. Among other elements are the stones upon the ephod which communicate and represent the unity of the nation of Israel. A certain breastplate, ephod, certain stones, a certain turban, a certain sash, and a plaque upon their heads that said, “Holy to the LORD” as yet another reminder that they are going into the presence of a holy God.

After that attire is secured, chapter 29:4-7 communicates that is not enough but:

³⁴ 1 “Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me — Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons. 2 “You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. 3 “You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. 4 “These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. 5 “They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet *material* and the fine linen. 6 “They shall also make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple *and* scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen, the work of the skillful workman (Exodus 28:1-6; NASB).

4 “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. 5 “You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; 6 and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. 7 “Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him” (Exodus 29:4-7; NASB).

After the priest is dressed accordingly, he needed to be washed or cleansed, but more than that, he needed to be anointed. The anointing was something that was done to a prophet, or a priest or a king to announce that God’s hand, blessing or Spirit was upon him to enable him to perform the service required. This affirmed his ordination, or affirmed he was selected for that particular service or position. The service required was to be in a certain way as well.

20 “You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the lobes of his sons’ right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the *rest of the* blood around on the altar. 21 “Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons’ garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons’ garments with him” (Exodus 29:20-21, NASB).

It still was not enough to be washed with water, or covered with the affirmation of the anointing oil, but they needed to be consecrated with the blood of atonement themselves, because they were going into the presence of a living and holy God themselves, and they cannot have any sin upon them, as is made clear in the case of Nadab and Abihu when they try to taunt God; they are incinerated immediately. The priests need to be marked as holy and pure before they can enter into the Holy of Holies and make supplication on behalf of the people.

Finally, in chapter 30, verse 22, the anointing oil is defined:

22 Moreover, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 “Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred *shekels*, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty, 24 and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. 25 “You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil (Exodus 30:22-25; NASB).

God has selected individuals from the Levitical line, from the Sons of Korah, from the Sons of Aaron. These are the only ones who are to be engaged in the priestly offerings, and so they come into the courtyard, make sacrifices on the bronze altar, still far away from the Holy of Holies, yet moving strategically toward the presence of the holy and pure LORD. The bronze altar is present and stands between the entrance to the courtyard and the entry to the Holy Place. The animal is sacrificed, and the blood which is carried in subsequent years in a conical vessel to remind the priest of the urgency of the task at hand, and to do so quickly so as not to allow the blood to coagulate, and so he would not set it down. It is taken into the Holy Place, past the lampstand and the table of gold, there is the bread of consecration on that table, and as he walks into that Holy Place the cherubim are woven into that screen that surrounds him as an ever present reminder of the requirement of his posture toward the LORD. He approaches the veil with the Ark of the Covenant on the other side, the shekinah glory of the LORD which is to divide the holy from the profane. It would divide fallen man from a holy God. God has said that nothing unholy shall come before him (Revelation 21:27). The veil stands there, not unlike the flaming sword in the Garden of Eden which prohibits entry back into the Garden into the presence of the Holy LORD; the real presence of God on the other side. There he would stand, ready to enter into the presence of the LORD.

3.8.4 The Role of the Priest- Isaiah 6

Walton holds that, "God's continued presence served to maintain equilibrium and uphold creation. The priests, through rituals, therefore were seen as having a role in upholding creation" (Walton 2012:297).

It can only be imagined that as the priest stood before the throne room of God, that he was filled with anxiety and trepidation, vessel in hand, wondering if he had performed everything appropriately to this point, if his heart was right, and if the sacrifice would be acceptable to the LORD or would he be smitten while inside the Holy of Holies. The barrier, which stands as a representation of sin would be pierced as he pulls the veil aside and walks in towards the Ark, wearing a prescribed fashion commanded by God and pours out the blood, sprinkling it seven times on the mercy seat. It is then, and only then, that God has fellowship with his people as the sins of

the people have been atoned. The righteous, holy and pure God is once again able to enjoy relationship with his people.

In many ways it was a serviceable system, but in no way was it the perfect system because it only covered the sins of the people, not taking them away, and it needed to be performed every single year. Hebrews 10:1 will acknowledge that this act was a foreshadowing of the work and offering of Christ to be performed in the heavenly Temple. As Walton notes regarding this system, “the sacrificial system was not intended as a means of taking away sins from individuals. Instead, it provided a way to decontaminate a sanctuary tarnished by individual and corporate sin and, in so doing, preserve equilibrium in God's presence” (Walton 2102:298). From the Edenic Temple, to the Tabernacle, to the Temple, to the heavenly Temple to the bodies of individual believers in “which his people have thereby become the object of the *kipper* that his blood performs” (Walton 2012:298), God is seeking to restore the equilibrium to the sacred space, symbolizing the restored relationship of God to man.

Isaiah recognizes this holiness of the Lord in the heavenly Temple and is permitted to experience it though in his humble state, in Isaiah 6. “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). Leviticus 8 describes the consecration of the articles of Temple that needed to be performed through the sprinkling of oil, or water upon them. This “paradigm” will change as the dwelling place of God moves from a physical building to the Church as the dwelling place of God. As a precursor to that indwelling, each individual “living stone” will need to be consecrated as well, to receive a holy God.

3.8.5 *Failure to Perform as Instructed*

The illustration is ever made clear as to the consequences of such a careless act in the account of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu as they choose to enter in to the Holy of Holies in arrogance or ignorance and offer strange fire.³⁵

It is difficult to ascertain the exact cause of the rejection of the Lord but it is clear that the actions of Nadab and Abihu were unacceptable before the Lord (cf. 2 Chronicles 26:19-21- the leprosy of Uzziah due to his being ceremonially unclean). It is clear that they were in liturgical violation to some extent whether intentional or out of ignorance. The action deserving of severe consequence is an offering of “strange fire” before the Lord (verse 1). The violation is swiftly repudiated and excommunication is immediate, visual, dramatic, and permanent as the Lord sends fire out from his own presence to “cleanse” the actions of the offenders (verse 2). In verse 3 the Lord affirms his reasoning for this offense; it is because he was not treated as holy by the two, nor had they honored him. Their charred remains are carried outside the camp (verse 5), and Moses commands the father and brothers to not mourn over the loss of Nadab and Abihu (verse 6). Verse 10 implies that Nadab and Abihu were not behaving well because they may have been intoxicated and

³⁵ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the LORD spoke, saying,

‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy,
And before all the people I will be honored.’”
So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.” So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said. Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so that you will not die and that He will not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the LORD has brought about. “You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the LORD’S anointing oil is upon you.” “So they did according to the word of Moses” (Leviticus 10:1-7; NASB).

But Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered strange fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children (Numbers 3:4a, NASB).

unable to discern the egregiousness of their actions. This conclusion seems justified because of the warning given in verses 8-10 to not drink wine or strong drink, “so as to make distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and clean”.

Of such danger was this sacred space that the Lord required certain behavior, and certain “status” to those allowed to come before him. Psalm 24:3-4 makes it clear that there are conditions in coming before the Lord of Hosts. “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully”. The person who may ascend to meeting with the Lord is that individual who has righteous behavior (hands) and a pure heart; a heart that has right motives, holy thoughts, clean desires (MacDonald 1974:48), who has not been deceived in his doctrine, nor lied with his lips; these are conditions of being granted an audience before God.

As stated earlier, one structure implemented in order to protect the unholy from immediate annihilation was the veil which stood between the holy place, and the Holy of Holies, where the glory of God dwelt. The veil acted as a spiritual reminder and caution to those unwary or careless and yet, it served as a visual reminder to that which was not allowed in the spiritual realm, the profane finding an audience before the holy God in Heaven. Such will the victory be as the veil will be torn by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Irreverent penetration into the sacred space of Yahweh is also seen in the inadvertent actions of Uzzah in trying to defend the fate of the Ark when it was falling. Though the intentions seemed right, he was in opposition to the command of the Lord, and was not holy to touch the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Exodus 25:14-15 intimates the need to establish buffer zones between the holy and the profane, therefore the mandate to have the poles included in the construction of the Ark.

Aberrations of the profane being barred from the presence and holiness of the almighty God is the scenario presented in Job. Satan is allowed to present himself. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them” (Job 1:6). Satan has fallen at this point and is still considered by all rights to be unholy, yet he gains entry to the presence of

Yahweh. Also, this allowance of Satan is seen in the Garden of Eden when the Lord grants permission of sorts for Satan to be in his presence, at least near enough to hear the sentence being pronounced upon him by the Lord (cf. Matthew 4:1-11), but such allowances are few, and only permitted under the sovereign will of God.

3.9 Synthesis of the Texts

Upon close examination of the Old Testament texts one can readily identify the common theme woven throughout, as the theme of unity and fellowship as demonstrated in the Trinitarian Godhead, marriage and God's people; yet, in certain instances that bond is to be intentionally severed for the reasons examined. It is no revolutionary insight to announce that one such reason, as Grudem points out, is the overall purity of the people of God, as demonstrated in the multiple Old Testament illustrations.

As Nobuyoshi points out, the implications of the Levitical purificatory elements are pointing clearly to toward the sancitificatory profile of a person's spirituality (Nobuyoshi 2007:268). The identified lepers who have been isolated from the camp, and subject to live on the periphery of society due to their uncleanness, are only allowed to be received back into fellowship upon the completion of purification, for fear that their exposure would introduce increased likeliness of infection to the healthy among the assembly.

An attempt was made to show that God's people, whether those of the chosen nation of Israel, or the Church, those redeemed through the blood of Christ, reflect the glory of God, have much in common because of the work of God, and therefore exhibit unity. Psalm 133 makes the case that unity is only conceivable as it is engaged under the presence of the Lord, and in the empowerment of the Almighty. As will be seen, comparable to the request of the Lord in John 17 for unity, is the ideal for unity expressed here. However, neither ideal has been achieved, and as a consequence the witness of the brethren has been compromised. As Goldingay writes, "This devastates their witness as it removes the goodness and the loveliness from them; it removes their joy and surrenders their blessing" (Goldingay 2008:569). He continues that this Psalm should cause Christians to examine the "loveliness" of

the brethren living together as one (Goldingay 2008:569). Conflicts are only allowed between those who are following God and those who are not; they are not permitted for the sake of personal convenience.

Achan's sin was not going to be tolerated and was publicly denounced in front of all the sons of Israel, not as an act of humiliation, but as a deterrent to the people who engage in things displeasing to the Lord.

The story of Joshua 22 illustrates a godly desire for the people of God to remain in unity, yet not to compromise that unity by allowing any unorthodox theological understandings, nor behavior into the Body.

God's sovereign right is to protect himself from damage to his name, and additionally from elements threatening the health of his people. Part of that required health is to allow Israel, as when they were sent to Babylon, to undergo discipline, not punishment, but disciplinary measures to correct their errant behavior. Walton writes:

Chapter 16 of Leviticus "offers a description of annual ritual that was designed to reset the equilibrium of the entire sacred compass. The rituals of the day were intended to disinfect the sacred space from whatever desecration had occurred that had not been cared for by specific rituals throughout the year. The ritual prescribed for Yom Kippur features the high priest's moving into the center of the sacred zone, bringing the accumulated impurities out, and finally sending them outside the camp" (Walton 2012:301).

The design of the sacrificial system in the Tabernacle is a theological construct commanded by God for the purpose of experiencing the presence of God. This is demonstrated by the lesser, or common materials exhibited on the perimeter of the compound, moving toward an ever-increasing purity of materials, and the priests movement from outside to the interior of the Holy Place. The process exemplified is one of not stepping haphazardly into the presence of God, but graduating, ever mindful, into the immediate presence of his glory. This structure is carried with the Israelites around the wilderness as a "tool" to facilitate communication and communion with the Divine, and is very representative of the heavenly Temple which had been the blueprint for such a design (Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:24). The veil which will be pierced is the separating of the Holy from the profane,

or God from man, but will be torn, as well as the flesh of Christ (Hebrews 10:20). The Tabernacle and Temple texts in the Old Testament call Christians to recognize that sacred space is a grace and not a right (Carvallo 2008:148).

In great part then, relationship with God as Walton asserts is the removal of impurities within the camp, within the sacred zone, which are to be extricated from the camp and thus continue to allow, or foster the presence of a holy God. Walton further contends that, “Israel was very aware of the idea that there was a need for increasing levels of holiness and purity each time one moved closer to the place of God’s presence” and so there was limited access to each of the sacred zones (Walton 2012:303) by only those consecrated to enter such regions.

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to present “Informing Theology”, those Old Testament theologies which would apply to the New Testament concepts of division in *koinōnia*, yet serve in the construction of this research. The principle being sought is God’s perspective of division among his people. Argumentation was not meant to be presented here, advocating, or debating Covenant, or Replacement theology, rather simply to identify that the nature of God is to remove evil from his midst, and to show the exhortation to the people of God to do the same. Old Testament examples confirm division is promoted not only in relational and spiritual purity, but also in cases of hygiene and other areas considered unclean, including but not limited to nocturnal emissions, sickness and menstruation.

Thus, multiple passages affirm that excommunication was to be utilized upon a person for behavioral, theological, and even physical conditions.

Chapter 4

EXPOSITION OF ANCHOR TEXTS

(Biblical Examination of New Testament Texts Regarding Division)

4.0 Introduction

Having examined Old Testament constructs for the approval or mandate of divisions in the community for such reasons as holiness and protection of community, such investigation is needed to ascertain the New Testament counsel on such matters. This will be accomplished through examination of anchor texts as well as a multiple other texts addressing division, orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Considerable attention will be given addressing disciplinary procedures in the Church.

4.1 Divisions

Though not exhaustive, the New Testament does provide an abbreviated list of areas to be avoided in order to facilitate oneness in the Body. The Body is called to avoid sin which causes disunity, including sectarian pride- Mark 9:38-40; quarrels in regards to favoritism of human leaders- 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Hypocrisy- Galatians 2:11-14 (cf. 1 Peter 2:1); favoritism- James 2:1-4; and lusts James 4:1-2;

disunity that arises from immaturity, jealousy, strife and cliques- 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, cf. 1:10-13 (Kregel 2005:563).

Commonly the word *schism* is utilized to represent this breach in unity (Westminster 1983:523). The New Testament picture presented is the tearing, or rending of a piece of cloth, consisting of two sides both in mutually hostile organizations (Westminster 1983:523). The rhetorical question posed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Is Christ divided?" was to be answered universally throughout the ages with a resounding negative.

Paralleling the Old Testament in regards to holiness, separation or division is mandated on a cultural, or "secular" level as well. The chosen people have always been exhorted to be separated from sin, or any influences which would serve to weaken their purity:

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?
15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; NASB).

Second Corinthians 7:1 continues this through practical application, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God". The implication once again being that as Adam was to maintain purity in the Primordial Temple, and the Israelites were to maintain purity in the Promised Land "Temple", so is the Body of Christ as High Priests (1 Peter 2:9) to maintain that same high level of holiness in "the Temple". As the research should bear, there is no difference between sanctioned division, permissible division and discipline; they are one and the same. There is need to keep the Church holy; those who reject the discipline are choosing to reject the *koinōnia* of the union and the instruction of God.

As Paul has written in 2 Corinthians, there is an urgency to not be culturally absorbed, or even negatively affected by uncleanness. As this is affirmed, it is essential to understand what those areas are which negatively affect holiness. Therefore, the encouragement for the Body to act as sentinels of holiness in Hebrews 3:12-13:

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13;NASB).

4.1.1 Romans 14:1-23

Romans chapter 14 points to a breadth of permissible beliefs and practices which do not fall into the category of permissible division, are rather in the area of personal tolerance, and perhaps forbearance, even preference. Grudem notes that, "there are issues of conduct on which Christians legitimately disagree, Paul encourages a wide degree of tolerance" (Grudem 1994:897).

The matter at hand is the concern of an individual exercising Christian liberty at the expense of causing another to stumble, the weak in faith versus the strong in faith. Romans 14:1-3 exhorts the brethren to embrace unity, and not divide over the eating of meat, drinking of wine or special days (verses 5-6), as "Christians neither live nor die to themselves" (Pate 2013:268-269), and are ultimately accountable to God (verses 10-12). Pate argues the message is to "limit their own liberty in Christ", if it is to bring unity to the Body (Pate 2013:272), and not cause another to stumble (verses 13-16). Things are to be sacrificed if they erode the unity, "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" (Romans 14:19). Essentially, freedom is exercised; but to the one who is convicted otherwise, of a particular action, he should not engage in it; "Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

4.2 Doctrine and Practice

Obviously, at the forefront of dividing lines in the Church are the doctrines of the faith, followed closely by conduct; the two in fact are to be inseparable, since it is the belief system that determines or dictates behavior. Jesus, Paul and John all make clear defences that what is believed can be dividing lines in the retention of the purity of the faith. Stott asserts that:

The visible unity of the Christian Church is a proper quest, but only if unity is not sought at the expense of doctrine. Jesus prayed for the oneness of his people. He also prayed that they might be kept from evil in truth. We have no mandate from Christ to seek unity without purity, purity of both doctrine and conduct. If there is such a thing as 'cheap reunion', there is 'cheap evangelicalism' also, namely the proclamation of the gospel without the cost of discipleship, the demand for faith without repentance. These are forbidden short cuts. They turn the evangelist into a fraud. They cheapen the gospel and damage the cause of Christ (Stott 1978:51-52).

MacArthur writes that, "Right doctrine is essential to right living. It is impossible to live a faithful Christian life without knowing biblical doctrine" (MacArthur 1986:116). The balance to this, marks Nkansah-Obrempong, "Believers must take care not to label legitimate differences in emphasis within the Christian culture as heretical" (Nkansah-Obrempong 2010:1579). Mohler holds that, "Theological confusion and compromise that mark the modern church are directly traceable to the church's failure to separate itself from doctrinal error and heretics who teach it" (Mohler 1998:183). One of the most consistent messages of the New Testament is the explicit warnings against those false teachings of false prophets and teachers (2 Peter 2, Jude 4); "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves" and, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ".

Francis Schaeffer lamented this, and "emphatically denied that a church could be a true Christian fellowship and allow false doctrine" (Mohler 1998:183). As such, the admonition to the office of Pastor is found in 1 Timothy 5:19-20, "Do not receive

an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*” and affirms the task is to involve multiple witnesses, and the rebuke is in public as any offences are “sins against the entire congregation” (Mohler 1998:182).

The caution against bad instruction is rooted in many Old Testament prescriptions (Exodus 22:20; Deuteronomy 7; 13:12-18; 20:16-18); the caution is just as pronounced in the New Testament, “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them” (Romans 16:17). Anderson argues that the false teacher in the community, presumably of the church, fills the same role as the “sinning” brother in the context of Matthew 18:15-17 (Anderson 2002:226). This position argues the same guidelines for one who is absent orthodoxy as the one who is absent of orthopraxy (Anderson 2002:270). He argues that the sin itself would be in that specific errant preaching from that person (Anderson 2002:271).

In 1 John 4:2, John makes it clear again those individuals who truly belong to him, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God”. This is a minimal profession of correct doctrine to be believed, the hypostatic union of the theanthropic person. “The discipline of false teaching on its various levels is one of the most important functions of the leadership of the church” (Anderson 2002:226).

Thus, false doctrine promoted by an appointed person of authority, or even by an attendee in the church needs to be removed from the flock so as not to infect or affect the health of the rest of the sheep, who are all too often open and receptive to errant teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

4.2.1 Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5 - “Shake the dust off your feet”

The implication here in the New Testament of shaking the dust off the feet when a town or a people do not accept the correct teaching of Scripture is that they are forsaken. This cannot refer to those who are, or were in the Body, who have

fallen into a state of unrepentant sin. Rather, they are to be prayed for and encouraged along the way that they would return to the Lord.

4.2.2 1 Timothy 1:20, 4:16 ,5:20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; Ephesians 4:14

Paul makes very clear in his first letter to Timothy that errant or blasphemous doctrine is not tolerated. “Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme”. Paul is going to cast these two out from under the protective hand of the church and its leadership, allowing them to be without the nurturing care of the Body; as they have not expressed allegiance to God, they will be under the domain of Satan (Anderson 2002:233). According to Anderson, “being delivered to Satan anticipates imminent divine punishment” (Anderson 2002:234). Their heresy is again referenced in the next letter, and the effects it has had on the flock, that their talk has spread like gangrene. Anderson informs, “Hymenaeus's error was mentioned a few years later in 2 Timothy 2:16-18 as gangrenous chatter that led to straying or wandering from the truth” (Anderson 2002:232). “Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some” (2 Timothy 2:17-18). The resultant effect of bad doctrine is to mislead or upset some of those in the Body. Again in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you”. The instruction is for the shepherd in line with 2 Timothy 2:15, to rightly divide the word of truth- to make clear cuts. Yet, even in this context the hope that the two would repent and be restored doctrinally is evident, that their spirits “may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (Grudem 1994:894).

As is communicated in many passages of the New Testament, there is to be a maturity expressed in the Body; as Ephesians 4:14 says, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” but each individual in the Body is to act as sentry over the spiritual health of the flock, especially the leadership (1 Peter 5:2). This is expressed in Acts 18:26 as Apollos is seemingly immediately corrected regarding his zealous, though errant or insufficient

doctrine; “and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately”.

4.2.3 Titus 3:10-11

Paul continues in his cautionary remarks toward another pastor regarding those who continually disrupt the flock by twisting scripture. “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned” (Titus 3:10-11). The Greek word here translated as, “perverted”, is the word for warped; the implication is that there is a hint of what was once truth, but the individual has so distorted it that it has now become a menace to the Christian community. This banishment from the community, states Jeremias, “where an analogous disciplinary process to that of Mt. 18:15-17 is laid down, it is the authorized apostle rather than the congregation who excommunicates” (Jeremias 1983:752). Thus, Jeremias holds that authority to extricate this individual lies in the leadership of the church rather than in believers at large.

4.2.4 1 John 2:4-6; 2 John 9-11

John evidences the manner of behavior to be emulated by a true believer. “The one who says, ‘I have come to know him,’ and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in him: the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked” (1 John 2:4-6). One who proclaims obedience to the Lordship of Christ, and yet walks in a manner contrary to his example is suspected of not having experienced a true conversion, as his words are not in accordance with his actions. John backs this up with his words in the second open letter:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (2 John 9-11;NASB).

John makes it clear that the actions of any given individual are to be in agreement with the teachings professed. Though this points heavily toward the unbeliever, the principle is a litmus test to orthodoxy and orthopraxis being observed. The passage affirms the need for the use of discipline to assure both moral and theological instruction as well.

4.2.5 3 John 10-11

In alignment with Galatians 1:8-9, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” John affirms one of the great areas of separation should be in the integrity of the gospel.

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church (3 John 9-11:NASB).

Diotrephes is actually doing to those in the church, what the church should be doing to him- casting him out of the church so he will not have any influence. Both teachers who have at some point received Christ, and those who are false teachers, are subject to the same fate, removal from the flock so as to not infect with improper teaching.

4.2.6 1 John 3:4-10

John once again intricately weaves the importance of right action following correct doctrine. It seems here he is concerned primarily about those sins of a habitual nature, not those for which a person is struggling and of which they are penitent and seeking to overcome (Romans 7).

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother (1 John 3:4-10;NASB).

The key is given in the phrase “practices sin”. The implication being that this is a deviant behavior which is embraced by an individual with reluctance to repent, and surrender this to the Lord. In light of Romans 7, this cannot be pointing toward the ill-advised doctrine of entire sanctification.

4.3 Unsanctioned Personal Conflict

4.3.1 Barnabas and Saul

Examples of personal conflict are no less evident in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Perhaps the most troublesome is the rift between Paul and Barnabas. The separation of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 is not a valid citation to justify division among Christians.

Following in the wake of the successful doctrinal resolution in Jerusalem, in contrast to the prayer of Jesus John 17, and thus, detrimental to his glory, there is a severe schism, which emerges between this divine pairing of Christendom in the 36th through 39th verses of chapter 15.³⁶

³⁶ After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are.” Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had

Paul and Barnabas had returned from the Jerusalem council “doctrinally refreshed and motivated” to minister to the saints. With the relational giftings of Barnabas and Paul’s mastery of the law and intellect (Hughes 1996:202), perhaps the success of their first missionary journey could be achieved again, but that was not to be.

Most believers are painfully aware of this great “divorce” that occurs between this highly effective team; one of the most brutal and Scripturally “public” displays seen in all of the Bible, and indeed a “somewhat embarrassing moment” (Thomas 2011:434). Though it is not entirely certain whether this conflict is of social or theological merit, it seems this agonizing separation may be precipitated by the inconsistent behavior perceived by Paul in regards to Peter and the refusal to eat with the Gentiles; Barnabas was implicated in this behavior in Galatians 2:13 (Jacobs 1979:432). Minimally, the deduction is that the separation is relational, one concerning a person rather than a doctrinal divide (Murphy 2010:339; Kollman 2004:416). The exact reasons not fully known, though it clearly involves the commissioning of young John Mark once again to the ministry. Verse 37 in the Greek makes the emotion “desirous” (Ogilvie 1979:237), or “desired and planned” (Larkin 2006:524), on the part of Barnabas, much more pointed, implying the steadfast determination of Barnabas to include John Mark. Paul did not concur, and the word used to describe his emotions, “insisting”, in verse 38 is even more severe (Reese 1976:560). Verse 38 describes the action of “deserting” *apostanta* (*aphistemi*), actions of John Mark to be “apostasy” from the mission, a much more effusive word than the “return” or simple “depart” of Acts 13:13 (Reese 1976:561); and the stance taken by Johnson is that Barnabas, and John Mark to some degree, had engaged in a kind of apostasy (Johnson 1992:287). Perhaps, only the product of speculation, Paul appears to accept with eagerness, which is typical of the man, the newly ascribed position of primacy, and is assertive in making a fundamental decision of refusing to take John mark on the second missionary trip. Both Barnabas

deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39;NASB).

and Paul were resolute in their position. The two divide sending Barnabas and John Mark to Barnabas' native island of Cyprus, and into the annals of biblical history. Pervo suggests that "like Peter (and the other apostles), Barnabas and John Mark have served their purpose and may be set aside", (Pervo 2009:386) which seems to be of little exegetical value.

The Greek term *paraxusmos* rendered "sharp agreement" (Acts 15:39) is the idea of a divorce, a tearing apart or a cutting of a unity, "an irritation of the mind" (Reese 1976:561), "a violent action or emotion" (Hughes 1996:203), something so damaging and divisive that would not be sanctioned in the realm of Christian fellowship. Thomas suggests the word for "sharp" implies the use of a sickle (Thomas 2011:434); it is a brutal argument. The best that can be acknowledged by Christendom is the humanity of both men, and it must be accepted that, *at least one*, and possibly both men are to some degree at fault. Grudem seems to lean in favor of defending Paul as he sites in his *Systematic Theology*:

Scripture hints that Paul was right and Barnabas wrong in this controversy, since it tells us that Paul and Silas left Antioch "being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord" (Acts 15:40), whereas nothing similar is said about Barnabas (Grudem 1994:878).

Grudem is objective however, in pointing out that:

This incident is simply reported in Acts but is not strong evidence for the appropriateness of diversification of ministry, since the report of a "sharp contention" (v.39) between Paul and Barnabas indicates that we should not think of them as entirely free from fault (Grudem 1994:878).

Though Grudem seems to have the support of Barnes and Larkin in the "correctness" of Paul (Barnes 1983:237; Larkin 2006:524), one must not read too much into the argument from silence in the absence of a blessing to Barnabas by the Antiochan church being recorded, as it was indeed Paul who would have been the source of information to Luke in this regard; yet Paul may have been ignorant of any such "ordination" or blessing to Barnabas. It is altogether conceivable that Barnabas received such a blessing from the same congregants of the Church at Antioch, or from another contingent of congregants. Grudem contends the evidence of their

behavior is not “strong evidence for the appropriateness of diversification of ministry”, which is uncharacteristically weak for Grudem, as it is in fact no evidence of prescriptive behavior *at all*; it is merely descriptive. Finally, in regards to Grudem’s stance taken regarding fault, he does eventually acknowledge that Paul did not seem to be entirely without culpability in the matter, which is more reasonable. In response to the justification that Paul was correct because, “he was committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord”, Peterson offers the theory that the phrase, “commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord”, suggests that *both teams* were indeed ordained by the church and commissioned to go (Peterson 2009:447,449); this is indeed an interesting theory, however isolated it may be.

Although he has compassion for Barnabas, Hughes categorically finds in favor of Paul being in the right, as he “is the greatest of the apostles” and that Paul was “the greatest servant of all time”, though it is unclear to this researcher where those assertions are affirmed in Scripture, nor why such traits would be sufficient to absolve Paul from any error whatsoever; after all, Paul did refer to himself as the “chief of all sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Hughes also erroneously cites that the church at Antioch “sided with Paul”, as though the church was *exclusively* in favor of Paul (Hughes 1996:203; Pervo 2009:387). The text of Acts 15:40 simply states that Paul and Silas were “committed by the brethren”, not that the church took sides. It would seem the church at Antioch should have been just as excited, and supportive of *any* evangelistic effort to reach the lost.

Again, one must not argue from silence, but it is worthy of mention, that nothing is said of this action being “good to the Holy Spirit”, or that the men at this point were, or continued to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Hughes 1996:204;cf. Acts 11:24, 13:9). Neither is it stated that the Holy Spirit was calling *anybody* to be set aside for *any additional work* to which he has called them, all characteristics of the first journey’s commission.

Arnot contends that, “Although the altercation was sharp at the moment, these two men ultimately adopted a wise resolution, and permanent good sprang from incidental evil” (Arnot 1978:282;cf. Murphy 2010:339); a poor speculation at best to believe the two men who were separating in anger were “adopting a wise resolution”. Chrysostom in his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* suggests that they were not

separating in anger, but merely “accommodating themselves to each other” (Ancient 2006:193). He continues to argue that they parted in full blessing of the other, since each wanted the other to prevail. More realistically, Larkin correctly asserts, “Paul and Barnabas separated, sacrificing unity for peaceful coexistence at a distance” (Larkin 2006:524), rather than the careless offering of Bock that “they reach a solid compromise and create two missions instead of one” (Bock 2007:519). Calvin asserts that God certainly overruled “this melancholy disagreement”, since as a result of it, “out of one pair two were made” (Stott 1990:253; cf. Talbert 1997:145); Murphy assigns no guilt either way, but contends that this is a “positive solution” (Murphy 2010:340). Stott rightly denies these contentions and counters that this example of God’s providence cannot be cited as an excuse for Christian quarrelling (Stott 1990:253), which is a major contention of this research. Howard erroneously concludes that John Mark was not ready to be used in the work ahead of the apostles, as Paul needed someone on whom he could depend, and Howard outright states, “Paul’s choosing of Silas was the right choice” (Howard 2002:354). Baker suggests that Paul may have been so staunch in his position, because Barnabas or John Mark may have demonstrated doubts regarding the Gospel being made available to the Gentiles, therefore justifying “such an adamant stance”, which seems to be a ludicrous theory (Baker 1981:99).

One must not overlook the final words regarding Barnabas in the book of Acts. Once again, he has taken someone, this time in the person of John Mark, whom he perceives to be of value under his wing, someone in whom he may invest time as a mentor. Many years later that investment would bear fruit in the writing of a gospel, and in the work of the kingdom, so much so that Paul would even come to realize the valued gifts of a matured John Mark.

Some may vehemently contest the position ascribed to Barnabas in the context of this dissertation, and in regards to Paul. In light of Galatians 1:11-12, “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but / *received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ”, some may contend that Barnabas had in no way taught Paul to such a substantial degree. However, it must be pointed out that Paul was merely addressing the Gospel knowledge, not subsequent

doctrine, nor methodology of practice. Paul was indeed the recipient of grace in Jerusalem when Barnabas had sponsored him into the family. Paul, for purposes not fully known, was not willing to extend that grace forward, and though he is not challenging Barnabas for theological failure, he allows the division to exist (Bock 2007:520).

4.3.2 *Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi*

Unsanctioned personal conflict is denounced again, this time by Paul in regards to Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi:

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (Philippians 4:2-3; NASB).

Little is known about Euodia and Syntyche, except that they are in disagreement and somehow this is impeding the missional health of the church at Philippi. Hawthorne holds that in light of the fact that Christian unity among believers is an essential element of Christian living, the two women are to reach “agreement in the Lord” (Hawthorne 1983:178). The presupposition here is that they actually can come to a point of agreement that is right an acceptable “in the Lord”, and that neither woman is being specifically isolated as having a viewpoint or opinion contrary to the Lord’s will. The problem is contention between them, regarding elements of thought specific to the two women, not in violation to any doctrinal or practical standards. In any case, it is not permissible division according to Paul.

4.3.3 *1 Corinthians 1:10-17, 3:1-6 -Is Christ Divided?*

As Paul points out, quarrels in regards to human leaders are not to be

condoned within the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.³⁷

The source of the tension, and thus the division, is due to allegiance to a particular mentor or teaching, rather than dedication to Christ alone and to his teaching. The implication is that the source of the teaching (Christ) is to be the dominating, and perhaps the sole factor of dedication. Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 by identifying the various roles that each teacher is playing, “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth”, but still, Paul and Apollos are mere men (1 Corinthians 3:4) and are in no way responsible for the growth.

James endorses this condemnation against petty quarrels as well, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:1-2). James uses the word *polemos* (quarrels), which according to MacArthur, refers to “prolonged, and serious disputing or combat and is often rendered ‘war’” (MacArthur 1998:184). Kistemaker affirms that the expression *war* points to an area of conflict within the Christian community (Kistemaker 2007:130). The word *mache* (conflicts), refers to “violent personal relationships” (MacArthur 1998:184). The implications are perhaps of much greater severity than when translated into English. James continues to address the source as one of hedonism, *hedonon*, which translates into “sensual, natural fleshly desires” (MacArthur 1998:186), the implication being that the seeds in such separations are

³⁷ “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s *people*, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” 13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. 16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void (1 Corinthians 1:10-17;NASB).

due to a focus on the individual, rather than the spiritual, and are therefore condemned by James, as demonstrated in the posing of this original question. The impetus for the quarrels lies within the depravity of man, and breaks the unity of the Body, and is therefore, condemned.

4.3.4 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 -A Matter of the Church

Later, in the same epistle, Paul addresses the minor “civil” cases in which the brethren are engaged, and urges them not to bring them to the open public forum, for concern that such acts are a bad witness. Rather, he asserts the church is to govern the situation itself, in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.³⁸

Paul is disturbed that individuals are taking each other to the open pagan court system in order to settle their issues (minor disputes, financial reconciliations, interpersonal behavior according to Smith; cf. Smith 2013); Paul desires those areas to be handled ecclesiastically- that it is an “internal jurisdiction on the church’s part”, yet, “the church sees itself constrained to develop organizational forms of a worldly kind”, and thereby separate itself from the government of the world (Conzelmann 1975:104). The paradigm from which Paul draws is the Jewish model, or “Jewish court of arbitration” (Conzelmann 1975:104). The exhortation is that those in the church will judge greater things than these in the future, and should therefore be sufficiently able to mediate “petty” disputes among themselves, especially in light of the greater “eschatological standard” awaiting the church (Conzelmann 1975:105). The Church is to act as a self-contained unit to keep itself clean; this litigation element is merely one of those areas of self government. Bargerhuff writes that,

³⁸ 1 “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to *constitute* the smallest law courts? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? 4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? 5 I say *this* to your shame. *Is it* so, *that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. *You do* this even to *your* brethren (1 Corinthians 6:1-8;NASB).

“The church is making a ‘judgment’ on sin in the church, taking a stand for righteous living and purity, but they are not inappropriately or hypocritically judging someone in a manner that even Jesus himself opposed earlier in Matthew” (Bargerhuff 2010:153). Christians should be able to do this on a corporate level since they will in some way be involved in eschatological judging of heavenly spirits (the final judgment).³⁹ Smith holds that this process is headed by the elders in the church, which was evidenced in Israel as Moses and Solomon exhibited these roles among the people of Israel (Smith 2013). He as well holds that these conflicts would not include those of a criminal nature, but that the Corinthians would do better to accept the ruling within the church, regardless of the outcome (Smith 2013).

The implication in verses 4-5 is that in taking these cases to the public square, the witness of the church is degraded, especially in light of the fact that those who are judging are unbelievers. Smith holds there are fundamental value systems between the rulings of the world and the rulings of the Church; those within the Church would be better able to discern the course of action in light of God’s truth (Smith 2013). Verse 6 defines the familial relationship that implies the conflict should be taken care of within the family of God. Verse 7 exhorts that it is better to lose in the court of the Church, rather than win in the public square. Verse 8 condemns those in the Corinthians church for wronging and defrauding each other to begin with, and declares that when they go to open court, they have already lost, because that action bears poor witness to the testimony of the Church, and, as Smith puts it, fails to demonstrate the transformational power of the gospel in our lives (Smith 2013). The believers’ concern should be about love and concern for their brother, *whether or not the verdict is in his favor*. Smith argues that if the only two choices before a Christian are to take another to court, or to accept the wrong, the wrong should be accepted in order to honor the gospel (Smith 2013). The true gospel

³⁹ Dever writes, “Remember that God Himself is a judge, and, in a lesser sense, God intends others to judge as well. He has given the state the responsibility to judge (Rom 13:1-7). In various places we are told to judge ourselves (1 Cor 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; Heb 4; 2 Pet 1:5-10). We are specifically told to judge one another within the church (though not in the final way that God judges); Jesus’ words in Matthew 18, Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 5-6, and other passages clearly show that the church is to exercise judgment with itself” (Dever 2000:29).

though, allows for a Godly resolution, that being the role of the church as arbitrators, thus protecting the unity in the church.

4.4 Discipline

Various levels of thought have existed as to the nature and level of discipline.⁴⁰ Berkhof rightly holds that the Church in part exists to enforce the laws of Christ. He states:

The means that the Church has the right to carry into effect the laws, which Christ has promulgated for the Church. There is an important difference on this point between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches. The former virtually claims authority to *enact* laws that are binding on the conscience, and the transgression of which carries with it the same penalty that is annexed to any breach of the divine law. The latter, however, disclaim any such authority, but maintain the right to enforce the law of Christ, the King of the Church (Berkhof 1996:598).

Therefore, notes Berkhof, the Scriptural teachings regarding discipline are the power that is to be exercised with regard to implementing, or safeguarding holiness in the Church (Berkhof 1996:599). The two-fold nature then, of discipline, asserts Berkhof, is to effectively carry out the laws of Christ concerning admission and exclusion of members, as well as ensuring spiritual edification to the Church members (Berkhof 1996:599). Berkhof does not specifically include the witness of the Church itself, as a justifying element of discipline, but does effectively communicate that this facet is included under the greater umbrella of holiness. Mohler insists, “Authentic biblical discipline is not an elective, but a necessary and integral mark of authentic Christianity and included issues of both doctrine and conduct (Mohler 1998:172). Mohler notes the first authority is God in relation to

⁴⁰ In regards to discipline, Edwards holds that, “When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by *Christ* himself. That is imported in the definition, that it is *according to his will*, and to the directions of his word. And therefore, he is to be looked upon as *principal* in it, and we ought to esteem it as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth personally inflicting it” (Edwards 2000:120).

discipline, and his sovereign right to exercise it at his discretion (Mohler 1998:177). Hebrews 12:5b-11 shows the biblical affirmation of this stance.⁴¹

Verse 5 expressly defines the privilege of the Father to carry out any restorative discipline deemed necessary, and that in doing so, the Father is actually affirming the loving relationship of acceptance that he has toward the child, in that the desired result is the “peaceful fruit of righteousness”. The discipline is often evident in suffering, as defined by Paul in the book of Romans, chapter 8, though the attack may be merely a spiritual attack, or assault from the affects of a fallen world. It is this persecution, as discipline, or “undeserved” attack that yields a purifying influence upon the individual, and/or the Church itself. As a side note, this experience stands contrary to the preaching of the prosperity gospel, or dominion theology which promotes “automatic” relief from suffering, and a life of affluence at the disposal of the demanding believer.

Saucy confirms the enforcement of discipline for the sake of the Body:

When the health of the body is endangered by the failure of members to discipline themselves, the church as a community is responsible to exercise the needed correction (Saucy 1972:97).

Bargerhuff notes the benefit of such action is for the Church itself, as well as for the offender to be restored. Though separation is at times an element of proper church discipline, it is asserted that “church discipline, as a practice of the forgiven and redeemed community, cannot be seen as punishments, since the judicial

⁴¹ 5b “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faint when you are reprovved by him; 6 for whom the LORD loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.” 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5b-11;NASB).

retribution for sin has already been atoned for” (Bargerhuff 2010:13).⁴² According to Mohler the dimensions of discipline are two-fold, the first being that God begins the procedure directly, *and* calls upon the church as well to be a custodian of the process (Mohler 1998:177-178).⁴³

The identification of the relationship of the father to the son carries with it the implication that the union with the father is secure and transcendent, as opposed to the communion which can be severed according to the level of discipline.

4.4.1 Progressive Sanctification and the Value of Discipline

As the value of positional holiness was investigated in section 2.9, so it is necessary to examine the other side of the holiness issue, that of progressive sanctification. Positional holiness places a redeemed individual in a relationship (union) with God, though his actions have not been brought into that calibre of holiness, as commanded by Peter in 1 Peter 1:14-16:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (NASB).

The people who Peter is addressing are those called “children”, identifying them as having been reconciled through Christ to God the Father, following Paul’s admonition to the Roman followers (Romans 12:1-2). Both Paul and Peter are encouraging these converts to abandon their former lusts of the flesh and the mind, those lusts of the world, and to refuse to be forced into their slavery again, but rather bring their behavior into one of conformity to the holiness commensurate with the

⁴² Bargerhuff does insist, “We must emphasize that the authority pertains to biblical church discipline based on truth and is not a blank check for the church to have heavenly sanction in all its decisions” (Bargerhuff 2010:158).

⁴³ An examination of Calvin’s posture toward discipline was addressed in Section 2.5.2

positional holiness which they have already been granted. Paul identifies that this needs to take place in the mind.

A common mistake among Christians is to assume that the Gospel is a punctiliar event, meaning it is an action reserved and utilized for new believers only. But it is important to understand the Gospel involves a present experience in this life as well. Not only does the Gospel have the power to redeem spiritually dead corpses from the wrath of God (Ephesians 2), but is able to transform those revived souls in their conformity to Christ. Jesus is identified in Hebrews 12:2 as the “author and perfecter of our faith”. The Gospel of Jesus Christ not only ushers believers into the Holy of Holies, but is then able to sanctify in an ongoing capacity their character, nature, and conduct in Christ.

Paul affirms this in his presentation of the Gospel to the Corinthians in the fifteenth chapter of the first letter, verse 1-2.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain (NASB).

The word “saved”, *sozesthe*, connotes being healed, made whole, saved, safe, or rescued from a direct threat (Foerster 1988:965-969). The NASB translates the word “by which also you are saved”, in verse 2 in an awkward sense (*sozesthe*). The communication here is unclear as to whether the salvific effect of the Gospel is punctiliar; though it presumably communicates that. *Sozesthe* is indeed a finite verb in the English; it should be translated in the present tense indicative, which the ESV has done in this respect.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; ESV).

It is clearer here, and believed more accurate, that there is an on-going process of the Gospel of Christ, which is not punctiliar, but communicates that the resultant effects of the power of the Gospel are not terminated at regeneration. The

gospel is central to conversion but is essential to our ongoing sanctification. Again, process involves one of conforming, and being conformed to the proper image.

God announces in Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (NASB).

After "days" of expressing his handiwork, God desires a creation, something which is fundamentally dissimilar from all others which preceded it, something which bears the "trademark" of the Creator himself. What it means to be created in the image of God- the *Imago Dei*, has been the topic of much debate. While Grudem suggests that rationale, logic, emotion, morality, immortality, and relationships are all possibilities of that imputed image, he also readily discounts them, and suggests that the characteristic implications be ignored accepting the term as only in general terms (Grudem 1994:442-443). It does seem logical that we may apply however, those traits of character which apply to God and are described in Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Though these all have merit to describe the image of God, in which we were made, one more stands out, that is the fact that mankind was created sinless, righteous and pure- holy before God, positionally *and* experientially holy before God. Presumably, these identifying elements of being made in the image of God permitted mankind to exist in a relationship with God. Once sin enters into the scenario, mankind is not allowed to enjoy this relationship with the Creator, at least not to the same intimacy enjoyed earlier. But Romans 8:29 communicates that God knew of this, "For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren". God had eternally known this was to be the case, and the ultimate solution was for man to be conformed once again to the image of God, in this case to Jesus Christ, who is the prototype, as "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). The "solution" to the problem of this lack of experiential holiness was ordained before the "foundations of the world" (Romans

8:29; Ephesians 1:5). The theme is affirmed many times in Scripture, that believers “have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him”. The Greek word for image is the word *eikon*, which identifies Jesus as perfect representation of God in all the Trinitarian understanding. The picture here is one of radical transformation identified as a new creation, one that connotes restoration of mankind to the image once conveyed in Genesis 1:26-27. In this capacity the actual level of sanctification exhibited in a person’s life moves toward the positional holiness granted at salvation.

It is partly in light of this progressive sanctification that the topic of this study is done- that of assuring that a believer is restored to the process of sanctification in his or her walk, thus continuing to restore them to the *Imago Dei*. This is part of the victory announced by God in the Garden of Eden to Satan, in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”. In effect, the seed of woman will “offset” the effects of sin in the Garden, thus assuring restoration. The power referred to in this *protoeuangelion*, will usher the elect into a position of positional holiness and continue to sanctify through progressive holiness.

The process is performed through the radical process of being conformed from the image of God, which has been tainted (Hendrikson 2007:140), into the image of Christ. Paul communicates that it is done specifically through the agent of transformation. In Romans 12:1-2:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (NASB).

The word translated as transformed in this text is the Greek term *metamorphoo*, which is a composite of the two Greek words *meta*, and *morphoo*, meaning “change of one’s self”. Mounce holds that this term means to “transfigure, transform” (Mounce 2006:739), thus communicating that Paul is asserting a radical change in the character, and nature of the person, so as to affect the behavior.

It is along this spectrum that the believer is expected to walk (1 Peter 1:14-16; Romans 12:1-2), and it is along this spectrum of progression that sin is able to derail the positionally holy children of the quest toward the image of Christ. James assures the church of the task to restore the errant, in James 5:19-20:

My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20; NASB).

Support is given that there is a spectrum of progressive sanctification that is taking place; this is most notable in 2 Corinthians 3:18, as it is seen that mankind, along this spectrum of sanctification, is being progressively made more holy.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18; NASB).

The term, “glory to glory”, implies gradual or progressive transformation along the spectrum of holiness. It does not come from a wanton lifestyle of serving ones’ self but through discipline; this is accomplished through discipleship, and as Paul states radical “transformation” (*metamorphoo*), initiated and empowered by the Spirit. As spiritual maturity happens along this spectrum, it is the responsibility, at times, for the Body to restore a brother or sister to right living, and to place them back again upon that spectrum of progressive sanctification. Paul makes it clear in first Corinthians 15:49, that we will bear the image of the heavenly, just as we have borne the image of the earthy, but that will not happen until we see Jesus, when he appears. First John 3:2 declares this: that we will become like him when we see him as he is. But until that time, believers remain on that spectrum of progressive sanctification. Until that time of perfection in conformity to the image of Christ, believers move closer and closer to the positional holiness, which was granted at justification.

It is clear that one of the goals of discipline is to restore a member who is not continuing along that ordained path of conformity to the image of Christ. Thus,

enters the tool of restoration of discipline, which in its strictest form will be addressed later in a closer investigation of Matthew 18. Reymond does caution:

However, the authority to discipline that Christ has given his church is for building up and not for destroying (2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10). Therefore, it is to be exercised in mercy and not in wrath (Galatians 6:1). In this the church is to take the part of a tender mother (1 Thessalonians 2:7), correcting her children for their good, that everyone of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. (Reymond 2001:890).

Bargerhuff sums it up rightly stating, “Discipline is a means God uses in our progressive sanctification” as, “we are to embrace divine discipline because it is how God our Father works to restore us fully into Christlikeness so that we ourselves may be like the One who is holy” (Bargerhuff 2010:109).

4.4.2 Matthew 18:15-20 -The Matthean Model for Disciplinary Restoration

As it has been posited that perhaps, the only two areas of permissible division in *koinōnia* are in the areas of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, a great deal of investigation and understanding should be devoted to the area of proper behavior, in particular, the area of motivating orthopraxy. As such is the case, it is deemed that a thorough and exhaustive examination is in order of the texts which focus on discipline. This portion of the research will encompass a majority of this attention. If indeed a permissible division were allowed under such conditions depicted in Matthew 18, an accurate understanding of that paradigm would be considered mandatory.

The fourth major discourse of Jesus in the Book of Matthew is one passage dedicated to such understanding, and in general, is devoted to the overall health of the Church; in fact, upon examination it appears to resemble the formulaic structure of an early Church manual (Mounce 1991:173). It is sandwiched between the verses 1-14 in regards to keeping the “little ones” from stumbling, and forgiving them when they return (21-35); the “broader context is about our relationships with one another in the people of God” (Russell 2000:73). As a result Russell claims that, “from one perspective we are formed individually, but from the transcendent perspective we are formed together with one another in the Body of Christ. Therefore, our individual

growth should always be subsumed under the desire to see the whole Body grow to maturity” (Russell 2000:73). Though Matthew has certainly been the focus of much study and examination, the purpose here is not as much church discipline, as it is the *delimitation of division in the Church itself*.

The pericope of major focus of this examination is the 18th chapter of the book of Matthew. It is in this passage there is a particular focus on the health of the people of God, both in regards to man’s relationship to God, and members’ relationships to each other in the ecclesial community. It is clearly understood that Matthew 18 has been competently exegeted numerous times, by highly qualified individuals. This examination is to be directed toward Matthew 18 as a justification of division itself, not merely an isolated examination of church discipline. In other words, Matthew 18, and church discipline in general then, is to be seen as a litmus test as to the justifiability of any given division or separation.

In regards to unity, Matthew chapter 18:1-35 is the primary text which has been selected. Upon initial examination one may surmise that the relevant text regarding discipline is solely held in verses 15-20 however, upon closer inspection the entire chapter is laden with addresses to this topic, and will therefore be the central pericope of this research, however, the entirety of Matthew 18 will be examined to establish context.

For the purpose of examination of this chapter, the pericopes will be divided along standard verse lines as depicted in the NASB. They shall be examined accordingly in the following sections:

1-5: Humility

6-7: Stumbling Blocks

8-11: Bodily Protection

12-14: Concern for the Entire Flock

15-17: Stages of Discipline

18-20: Endorsement and Affirmation of Disciplinary Measures

21-35: Forgiveness

Mark identifies that this teaching of Matthew 18 took place in the area of Capernaum (Mark 9:33), and along with Luke (Luke 9:46), notes that what precipitated this event was an argument that took place among the disciples as to who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

4.4.2.1 *Matthew 18:1-5*

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me.”

Setting the stage for this massive teaching on church health is the concept of humility in the kingdom. Christ reiterates the concept that Christ-followers are to “consider others as more important” than themselves (cf. Philippians 2:3), and this attitude is most easily seen in the demeanor of young ones. Young ones are quick to forgive, and generally non-judgmental and ready to move along.

4.4.2.2 *Matthew 18:6-7*

6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 “Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”

Considering the health of the young believers to be of such importance, Jesus is preaching on the consequences of being one who causes unrest, or a lack of faith in the Body; in essence, he is encouraging the health of the Body. Stumbling in the Body occurs internally, and can be promoted by outside forces. Christ is leading up to verse 15, which finds brethren out of line with God’s will, and in need of discipline or realignment.

4.4.2.3 *Matthew 18:8-11*

8 “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. 9 If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” 11 [“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”]

Job established a covenant with his eyes to protect his body and his spiritual purity (Job 31:1). The idea in this pericope is not to place a patch over the eye for the sake of protection, but to gouge it out and toss it away. This can hardly be misconstrued that the eye should be left in the socket to do further damage, but asserts that the unlimited duration of the eye being part of the body is not an option.⁴⁴ Errico holds that, “Tear out the eye and throw it away”, is an idiom that means, “stop the habit that leads you to destruction” (Errico 1991:17).

It is interesting that in a pericope regarding church discipline, or more generally, church health that Jesus focuses on the “body” analogy which Paul will employ greatly in his communication of ecclesial theology (Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, Colossians 1). It is doubtful that Jesus is referencing self-mutilation in verses 8-9, as that would be to cause harm to the Temple of God, at least in a pre-resurrection sense. Errico states that this “should not be understood literally” (Errico 1991:71). Anderson notes that, “Braunius, discussed the distinction made between major and minor excommunication. He argued that if after minor excommunication was practiced against a sinning member and he or she does not repent, ‘then as a rotten limb which would corrupt the whole body he is to be cut off’” (Anderson 2002:246). Rather, Jesus is focusing on the severity of sin, and the measures to be employed in the eradication of it from the presence of the body, moreover, the

⁴⁴ This concept is a reiteration of the similar thought from the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5:28-30.

comparative benefit of losing such a temporal blessing in order to gain the eternal blessings.

4.4.2.4 *Matthew 18:12-14*

12 What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? 13 If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. 14 So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

The concern for the lost of the flock is primary as Christ leads into the teaching of church discipline. The metaphor used is that of sheep which have gone wayward, and may need to be sought out and brought back to the flock (cf. Luke 15:1-10). The instructions for this process, though minimal in verbiage are significant in dealing with the lost and hopefully realigning them with God's word and the rest of the flock. Though unspoken, the implication is that the sheep is repentant or contrite, and once again desires to return to the flock. Rejoicing takes place because, one which was lost is restored, and the rejoicing is so magnanimous that it eclipses the static joy of those already secure. A final exhortation is that in the case of one who is lost, effort needs to be made by the leadership to initiate the blessed restoration by seeking the lost.

4.4.2.5 *Matthew 18:15-17*

15 If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Turner has offered a workable structure for the crux of the passage, that being the verses 15 through 17 (Turner 2008: 444). He has proposed the following:

The Structure of Matthew 18:15-17

- Hypothetical initial offense (v. 15a)
 - First Step:* Personal Confrontation (v. 15b)
 - Hypothetical positive response (v. 15c)
 - Reconciliation (v. 15d)
- Hypothetical negative response to personal confrontation (v. 16a)
 - Second Step:* Peer confrontation (v. 16b)
 - Scriptural support (v. 16c)*
- Hypothetical negative response to peer confrontation (v. 17a)
 - Third step:* Community confrontation (v. 17b)*
- Hypothetical negative response to the third step of confrontation (v. 17c)
 - Fourth step:* Extracommunity confrontation (v. 17d)*

Blomberg holds that, “nothing in this passage limits the sin to certain kinds of offenses deemed particularly serious” (Blomberg 2014). Turner notes of the asterisks, “evidently, the positive response and reconciliation of 18:15c-d would be possible here as well”, simply communicating that repentance and restoration are a possibility every step of the way, and would alleviate the necessity to carry the process further.

Jesus’ example here seems to communicate that the possibility of a brother, a fellow-believer sinning, is in question, or that there is the possibility that he may never sin at all, therefore this would be a conditional statement by the use of the word “if”. Doriani contends however that this phrase is not a contingent action that may never be played out, but rather affirms, “your brother will sin and there are principles to follow when he does” (Doriani 2008:150). Osborne holds this action as more in the tentative realm, and therefore, this response to sin is merely hypothetical or conditional (Osborne 2010:685).

Mentioned earlier in Matthew (Chapter 7:3-5; cf. Luke 6:39-42), Christ cautions against the improper attitude and behavior as one goes to correct a brother lost in sin. The person correcting must examine his own life and rid any

imperfections before he is able to identify sin in another's. The likelihood of his words being heeded is greatly increased in light of his just life being lived.

“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye (Luke 6:39-42).

Before the interpersonal process of correction, or fraternal admonition begins, a person is encouraged to personally inspect himself before he is adequate to discern any shortcomings in another believer. Bargerhuff comments of the “importance of introspection on the part of the one doing the restoration, so that sober-mindedness will prevail, and a judgmental and self-righteous spirit is more readily avoided” (Bargerhuff 2010:144-145). Bonhoeffer writes:

For when does sin ever occur in the community that he [the restorer] must not examine and blame himself for his own unfaithfulness in prayer and intercession, his lack of brotherly service, of fraternal reproof and encouragement, indeed, for his own personal sin and spiritual laxity, by which he has done injury to himself, the fellowship, and the brethren (Bonhoeffer 1954:103).

Russell notes this process is one of accountability that, “Our accountability is not only to deal with our sin individually, but also to deal with our brother's or sister's sin, especially when it affects the testimony of the whole Body of believers” (Russell 2000:72). This also has the additional benefit of adding humility to the individual initiating correction, and allowing the words to be a blessing of restoration rather than a curse, “Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:5-6).

4.4.2.6 “Sins Against You”

One of the difficulties presented in the examination of this pericope is the selection of manuscript used; the subsequent English translations are thus affected as well. The English Standard Version, in harmony with the King James Version, has elected to translate as “sin against you”, which radically changes the message and mandate of the text. The ESV and KJV have, in the view of this researcher elected to utilize the less reliable manuscripts, thus choosing to translate the text for the reader, and therefore compromising the integrity of the meaning. The key point of offensiveness is that an action or doctrine is offensive to God and his word, not any man. Strong cites that Westcott and Hort have omitted these words, and thus communicate that, “each Christian is responsible for bringing to repentance every brother whose sin he becomes cognizant of” (Strong 1907:924). It is, after all, as White puts it, the natural “response to divine mercy and grace” (White 1985:11).

Metzger acknowledges the dubious integrity of this inclusion (Metzger 1971:45), and Morris concedes the difficulty, yet importance, in the textual inclusion of the words *eis se* in the translation, suggesting total omission may even be an option (Morris 2000:466). He further promotes that *if they are indeed included*:

Jesus is referring to what to do when another believer does something that we can only regard as sin against us, as wronging us in some way. If not, he is speaking of what we are to do when another believer sins [in any way] (Morris 2000:466-467).

Adherence to the first scenario would certainly limit the scope of those who may reprove the offending party, as correction would only be allowed to be initiated by the offended party himself, as Kapolyo (erroneously) holds (Kapolyo 2010:1173). Yoder rightly notes that this is the obligation of each individual in the church (Yoder 1985:218), and to interpret it otherwise would be to err:

If this shift is taken seriously, it means that for certain sins where there is no one specific person offended, or the offended person is absent, there would be nothing for anyone to do (Yoder 1985:218).

Astute observation to say the least, however, is Morris' conclusion that, "In either case we are to first take the matter up with the sinner" (Morris 2000:467), which negates the defining limits of the inclusion of *eis se*. He fails to acknowledge, or defend his original statement of import, that of whether or not to include the words *eis se*, and why. Hagner holds to this view as well which is not surprising; he holds that the central pericope is defining relations between members of the community, rather than the subject of sin altogether (Hagner 1995:514).

Most translations do render this as *eis se*, or "against you", including manuscripts like D K L X Δ Θ W etc. Turner and Morris embrace this rendering as well. France, along with Thompson (Thompson: 1970:176-177) do not, but loosely translate this verse in the gender proper to include both male and female offenders (France 2007:689). France adds that the *eis se* is, at best, merely implied and in no way supported, but perhaps stems from "an altruistic concern about a brother's spiritual danger" which contrives this passage into matters of personal grievance (France 2007:689). He further notes that personal implications will be made explicit in verse 21, but to introduce it here would be premature, suggesting that the *eis se* is probably due to a "mechanical reading back of the phrase from v. 21" (France 2007:689). France asserts the shorter rendering from Ⲙ and B is to be preferred as it is more in line with the tracking of Luke 17:3 (France 2007:689).

However, *eis se* is not included in the manuscripts Ⲙ, B f1 etc., and thus, is not translated as such in the New American Standard Bible, the New English Bible, and Barclay which engage those "original" texts of greater manuscript authority. Morris uses the term *omitted* to suggest that they were intentionally left out from subsequent transcripts. He continues to say that perhaps scribes omitted these words to fill a particular agenda to make the passage apply to all sin. He does also concede however, that they may have been absent from the beginning, inserted by eager scribes who wished to bring this teaching more in agreement with verse 21 (Morris 2000:466). Yoder merely observes that these words "against you", are "missing in the most reliable ancient manuscripts" (Yoder 1985:218). As one would gather, this is an issue deserving of some attention.

The New America Standard Bible translates this as, “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private”. Absent is the *eis se* inclusion. The NASB, based on the manuscript is indeed suggesting that sin, focusing on a particular brother or not, is still sin nonetheless, and needs to be corrected. Perhaps noting the obvious, the reason a brother needs to be approached is because he may be oblivious to his own sin, and thus needs to have that pointed out (“show him his fault”), in light of Scripture, which God has entrusted in part to the human element.

One must keep in mind that the sin, all sin, is primarily against God.⁴⁵ Mitchell claims, “Corrective church discipline should be reserved for rebellion against clear commands of God revealed in Scripture” (Mitchell 2000:91). Bargerhuff agrees the sins addressed, “Should include not only rebellion against clear moral commands, but also orthodox Christian doctrine” (Bargerhuff 2010:168). When David sinned and was confronted by Nathan (2 Samuel 12), he had indeed sinned against Bathsheba. He has sinned egregiously against Uriah the Hittite. He had sinned against all of the people of Israel. And finally, he had sinned against himself as well. But the only one he confesses, as to having sinned against, is the Lord Almighty. He declares in 2 Samuel 12:13, “I have sinned against the LORD”. Preceded by this event is the acceptance by Saul of his own guilt in 1 Samuel 15:24-25, “Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.’” Both instances demonstrate a proper execution of confrontation and at least, external contrition of the offending parties. It should be noted here that a justification of severance is not assumed here, as the Church is still engaged in the process of turning the errant from his way of sin.

⁴⁵ Grudem writes, “There does not seem to be any explicit limitation specified for the kinds of sin that should be subject to church discipline...nonetheless, a definite principle appears to be at work: all sins that were explicitly disciplined in the New Testament were publicly known or outwardly evident sins [the exception in Acts 5 1-11] and many of them had continued over a period of time. The fact that the sins were publicly known meant that reproach was being brought on the church, Christ was being dishonoured, and there was a very real possibility that others would be encouraged to follow the wrongful patterns of life that were being publicly tolerated. There is always the need, however, for mature judgment in the exercise of church discipline, because there is a lack of complete sanctification in all our lives” (Grudem 2000:896-897).

The absence of “sins against you”, seems the more likely composition in light of the subsequent texts in verses 16-20; to imagine that a person would be brought under such disciplinary procedure, and then expelled from a fellowship of many, all due to the offense to a single individual would seem foreign to the logic of the text.

4.4.2.7 *The Witnesses*

Verse 15 identifies that the first person to seek reconciliation is the one who is aware of the offense, and that individual is to initiate the act of correction in a one-on-one context (Kapolyo 2010:1173). The idea is that there is a cognitive understanding that a particular action is sinful, that presupposes an individual does not need to go through a “fact-finding” stage to ascertain if a person is sinning. White writes:

Jesus assumes that the moral standards by which sin is to be known are knowable and known. He further assumes that the offender and those who reprove him share a common moral yardstick (Yoder 1985:214).

Yet, there may be misunderstanding, and, as Laney holds, this initial process may clear up any misperceptions (Laney 1985:50). The terms “go”, and “show”, are both imperatives and communicate the lack of option to remedy this situation; it is a command, and therefore, obligatory. This is done by showing him his fault which would include the demonstration of God’s will according to the word, and a proper explanation of those shortcomings. The idea is that the offender may not even know of the sin which he is so freely committing, even if it is unrepentant habitual sin. It is to be a private meeting so that, “this limits the injury caused by the sin and avoids public spectacle, which would tarnish the witness of the Church to the Gospel” (Mohler 1998:180, cf. Grudem 1994:897). Grudem submits that the “knowledge of the sin should be kept to the smallest group possible” (Grudem 1994:897, cf. Bargerhuff 2010:161). The desired benefit is the offender realizing the error and repenting, thus restoring him in right behavior before God (cf. 1 John 1:9). The implication is that the offender would understand the personal admonition and repent. A brother is “won”, as he is restored back into fellowship with God, his will, and the community of believers (Grudem 1994:894); he is reconciled back into

relationship (Bargerhuff 2010:140). This is the end goal of the process, unity, not prolonged division from the Body. Laney affirms if the brother is won, then he is once again useful to the Body (Laney 1985:51). White holds that this initial process may not be limited to just one meeting (White 1985:124); Bargerhuff adds that at any level along the process, multiple attempts may be necessary (Bargerhuff 2010:146).

No authority is given or implied at this point that there is even a possibility of separation between the two parties at this stage. The intent here is to carry out the exhortation of James 5:20, “let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins”. The benefit is to the sinning brother, the one who restores and ultimately to the benefit of the entire church. Strong adds:

When a brother brings a personal matter before the church, he should always be asked whether he has obeyed Christ’s command to labor privately with the offender. If he has not, he should be bidden to keep silence (Strong 1907:924).

Though this is not explicitly stated, it is implied by the additional information from verse 16, that additional witnesses are to be brought in to help. Though no qualifications are placed upon these individuals, the logical understanding is that they would serve as “counsellors, mediators or those who actually participate in the reconciliation process”, minimally bringing an additional level of objectivity and wisdom to the situation (Adams 1986:60). Blomberg observes,

“I have often had people ask me, ‘How can I bring one or two witnesses if no one witnessed the offense?’ This question confuses the concept of ‘eyewitness’ (Greek *autoptēs*) with ‘one who testifies’ (*martus*, the word used here). The point is not that the people must have prior knowledge of the offense, much less have actually seen it, but that they can testify after the meeting between the offender and offended as to what was said, how people reacted, and so on, so that it doesn’t come down to a case of ‘he said, she said’” (Blomberg 2014).

Most would agree that these witnesses are present in a leadership capacity, i.e., elders or pastors, as enforced in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:13, 2:15, 3:10, James 5:19-20 (Grudem 1994:897; Bargerhuff 2010:145-146),

minimally, discerning Godly individuals who would be able to discern, and interpret the proper course of action in light of Scripture.

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction” (1 Thessalonians 5:12;NASB).

“Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2;NASB).

“This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13;NASB)

“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15;NASB).

“Reject a factious man after a first and second warning” (Titus 3:10;NASB).

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20;NASB).

Deuteronomy 17:6,19:15, Numbers 35:30, Hebrews 10:28, and 1 Timothy 5:19 were being supported by Jesus in this claim, that there was a need for a multiplicity of witnesses to work through this situation. This would fall in line with the mandate that it was the priest or high priest, who would determine if “cleanliness” was present, or if there was additional need for “removal from the camp”. Blomberg in alignment with Gundry (Gundry 1994:368) asserts that, “‘Witnesses here means not ‘witness to the original sin,’ but rather ‘witness to the attempts to show sinful persons their wrong’” (Blomberg 2007:56). In the case of elders being corrected, Paul writes to Timothy, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Do not receive an accusation against an elder, except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *his* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of partiality*” (1 Timothy 5:19-21). The authority is recognized, and is to be exercised without prejudice towards those with whom Timothy, or other pastors, may be relationally close (Grudem 1994:899). The mandate for 2-3 witnesses still applies in regards to leadership, but the implication is that the sins of the leadership have indeed affected the general health of the overall Church, and need to be condemned publicly before

the entire congregation and, as a result of the gravity, it appears the step of private rebuke is bypassed, moving directly to the second stage-elder rebuke and witness, and then open rebuke “if they refuse to listen”; recantation and repentance is still the hoped for if not expected result. This is done in the plurality of authority as well, “in the presence of all”.⁴⁶ In other words, it must be an official act of the Church. One should not miss, as White reveals, that the “Witnesses may become necessary to protect the accused as well as to confirm the accuser” (White 1985:92), as “The attention may move from the reconciliation of the offender to his punishment” (Yoder 1985:225). Multiple witnesses would therefore, add a cautionary element to the procedure to keep the focus of restoration in sight.

The finality of this disciplinary procedure, as the offender is brought before the entire church, is to be anchored in the final clause of verse 17, “Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer”; the question is, “What does this imply?” and, “Is this a cumulative disposition or is each qualification separate?” This is to be the last resort, and a rarity in the execution of church discipline. The sinning individual is to be publicly renounced by the entire church, after they “hear the facts and come to a decision” (Grudem 1994:897), as the offender is a threat to the overall continued health, and all should be made aware of that fact. The statement, that he is to be treated as a “Gentile and a tax-gatherer” does not mean he is to be hated, merely that he is considered “unclean”, and kept at bay, until such point as repentance occurs; in fact, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 reminds that:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6;NASB).

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15:NASB).

⁴⁶ Bargerhuff writes, “For the discipline to be enacted properly and fully in accordance with Jesus’ teaching, the formal assembly of the church, along with its communal power and authority to bind and loose, must be *formally* instigated” (Emphasis mine) (Bargerhuff 2010:163-164).

Expressly communicated, the expelled is not to be considered an enemy. Hays remarks, "To say that the expelled sinner must be 'as a gentile or tax collector,' cannot mean that the person becomes a pariah to be shunned by the church; it means, rather that the person becomes an object of the community's missionary efforts" (Hays 1996:102). And Marshall rightly adds, "The offender once again becomes a candidate for the gospel, a recipient of the call to discipleship, a lost sheep awaiting restoration" (Marshall 2001:159).

At the point of repentance of an offender, the church can come along to aid the individual who is weak (2 Corinthians 2).⁴⁷ Radmacher holds that this church, which holds both "physical and spiritual unity" (Radmacher 1996:142), is the local Christian assembly, of which the person has been a part, and that this church has permission to "adjudicate matters of dispute arising among its members" (Radmacher 1996:141). Forrester argues that, "Church government in the New Testament applies only to local bodies" (Forrester 1986:654), and "The management of their business was in their own hands" (Forrester 1986:655). Strong echoes this sentiment, that these decisions are, "the decisions of the whole body of believers guided by the Spirit" (Strong 1907:907). Bargerhuff parallels this thought claiming, "church discipline should be seen as a way in which God's forgiveness and love are being communicated as the Spirit works in the practice of the church" (Bargerhuff 2010:136).

Morris suggests, however, that this fourth step is often erroneously referred to as *excommunication*, but he invalidates that and claims, "*esto soi*", "to you" in verse 17 makes it a very personal offense not to be confused with the desired action of the entire church; it is an action he suggests, of the brother offended to the offending brother (Morris 2000:469). Morris has some support from Turner and Garland in regards to this as Christ embraced sinners compassionately, therefore, an "absolute shunning or total withdrawal from personal contact is not necessarily commanded here" (Turner 2008:445; Garland 1993:192). France agrees that corporate shunning,

⁴⁷ Bargerhuff suggests, "It would seem plausible that due to the fact that excommunication was such a public event, so also should there be a public recognition of forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation once a repentance has taken place" (Bargerhuff 2010:171; Murray 1995:35).

minimally, is not explicit (France 2007:693). Most would assert however, that this is a mandate, at least in example of excommunication, which is equivalent to a corporate shunning (Religious 1891:784). Maybe a little idealistic, Strong holds:

The truly penitent man will rather beg the church to exclude him, in order that it may free itself from the charge of harbouring iniquity. He will accept exclusion with humility, will love the church that excludes him, will continue to attend worship, will in due time seek and receive restoration (Strong 1907:924).

White recognizes that, “The final step of corrective discipline merely recognizes an alienation, which is already present, and presumably recognized by heaven so to be”; yet it is an alienation which he has chosen (White 1985:98,107). Bargerhuff agrees that it “is a recognition of the fact that the person has excluded himself or herself from the community of faith committed to living in truth” (Bargerhuff 2010:136). Anderson holds that this statement (“Gentile and a tax-gatherer”) is a call to treat this unrepentant sinner as someone who is disloyal to the community and therefore should be abandoned of any additional form of discipline (Anderson 2002:228). He expounds even more in regards to the customary actions of rabbis regarding doctrinal error:

Furthermore, the rabbis taught the same process for dealing with doctrinal error that culminated in *herem* as the final stage. They advocated a three-stage process that led to excommunication from the synagogue (Stewart 1975:97-104). The first stage was the *nezifah* or rebuke which was used for minor disrespect of a student towards a teacher and evoked a period of disgrace for up to seven days.

The inference in verse 17 regarding the Church, is that the “offending” person has at least been willing to identify with a particular Body of believers, and thus, has put himself under the authority of the governing body of that institution. This model breaks down if the offending party is neither involved in a church, nor is willing to place himself before the church’s governing body and the believers themselves. The implication is that the “offender” would suffer the same ostracism as an offender who showed up to the deliberation of the elders. White writes:

But the sinner may refuse and the church has no mandate to coerce them. The refusal to be present would constitute the sinner’s rejection of the church’s efforts at reconciliation. In the end the leaders may have to make a

simple statement, call on the testimony of those involved in the case to answer questions and then let the church decide. But the decision of the majority may...prove to bring about the restoration of the sinner (White 1985:126).

Laney stresses:

“Even this most severe step in church discipline should be motivated out of love and fulfilled in a way that encourages repentance and restoration. Excommunication should communicate the message, ‘We find your present conduct unacceptable to God and this congregation. Our love for you therefore demands that we take action, which, though painful, we hope by God’s grace will result in your repentance and restoration to us’” (Laney 1985: 56-57).

Some would argue that the ability to “transfer” churches would render church discipline as useless (White 1985:131); the logic would be for churches to work in conjunction as the universal Church for the protection of the name of Christ, for the individual, and the Body at large.⁴⁸

4.4.2.8 *Matthew 18:18-20*

After relegating an individual to the most severe consequence in the Body of Christ (excommunication), verses 18-20 seem to address the justification of the authority of the plurality of leaders, and the church to impose such a measure.

18 “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.
19 “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

The matter of authority, and who issues it, will be covered by Christ in the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Of monumental importance is that the authority here in chapter 18 as well as in Chapter 28 is corporately given, or delegated to the

⁴⁸ Adams covers this difficulty of disciplinary measures among denominations which are not related and the difficulties which are presented in such a procedure (Adams 1986:99-110).

brethren and is backed up by deity.⁴⁹ Grudem maintains that the binding and loosing is connected with Matthew 16:19, and is connected with authority in the power to preach the gospel of Christ, yet here, refers to the process of being under church discipline (Grudem 1994:889); Errico holds that “bind and loose” was an idiom that was used by Christ to issue authority, right or power for the disciples to oversee, or govern the moral and doctrinal issues among his followers; and that they were “assured that God (Heaven) would back them” (Errico 1991:66). Manetsch contends that:

“The reformers believed that when Jesus entrusted the spiritual ‘keys’ of God’s kingdom to his disciples, he was granting to the Christian church as a whole the authority to bind and loose sinners through the proclamation of the gospel and corrective discipline. Specifically, the ‘power of the keys’ was exercised by ministers and elders as they declared God’s judgment against obstinate sinners through admonition and excommunication (‘to bind’) and applied God’s forgiveness toward those who repented through words of absolution and consolation (‘to loose’) Calvin insisted that the power of the keys did not give the church authority to pronounce damnation or salvation—that decision belonged to God alone” (Manetsch 2013:188).

This doctrine stood in contrast to typical Roman Catholic doctrine, as Catholic pronouncement by a priest “condemns and consigns a man to eternal destruction” (Manetsch 2013:188). Strong contends that a pastor is not empowered with original authority, or sole authority in the church, but should be utilized as “a superintendant of its labours”...that may do the best work in regards to discipline by, “constituting himself as a special policemen or detective, but indirectly, by securing proper labor on the part of the deacons or brethren of the church” (Strong 1907:916).

The statement, holds Piggan, is that the sinner is bound in his or her exclusion from the fellowship of the saints, until such time as he or she repents of the sinful

⁴⁹ Grudem writes, “Jesus is teaching that church discipline will have heavenly sanction. But it is not as if the church must wait for God to endorse its actions after the actions have occurred. Rather, whenever the church *enacts discipline* [bind] it can be confident that God has already begun the process spiritually. Whenever it *releases from discipline* [loose], forgives the sinner, and restores personal relationships, the church can be confident that God has already begun the restoration spiritually (cf. John 20:23). In this way Jesus promises that the spiritual relationship between God and the person subject to discipline will be immediately affected in ways consistent with the direction of the church’s disciplinary action” (Grudem 2000:891).

actions.⁵⁰ At that point they are released from the “binding” of their exclusion (Piggin 2001:222). Mohler observes:

The terms *binding* and *loosing* were familiar terms used by rabbis in the first century to refer to the power of judging matters on the basis of the Bible. The Jewish authorities would determine how (or whether) the Scriptures applied in a specific situation and would render judgment by either binding, which meant to restrict, or loosing, which meant to liberate. The church still bears this responsibility and wields this power. John Calvin, the great Genevan Reformer, believed that the power of binding should be understood as excommunication, and loosing as reception into membership (Mohler 1998:181).

The subjective statements utilizing the word “you” in verse 18 and 19, are in the 2nd and 3rd person plural, the implication being that it is no longer a solitary individual as the “you” utilized in verses 15-17. The authority to bind, or loose is only held where 2 or 3 agree on the matter, a statement that references once again, the authority of two or three mentioned in verse 16. The words for bind and loose, in verse 18, are both issued in the plural as well. The plurality involved in the disciplinary process is key and is supported by 1 Corinthians 5:

1 Corinthians 5:3 “For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁵⁰ Luther writes that from God’s perspective, “But he speaks in this fashion, if you bind and loose on earth, I will also bind and loose right along with you in heaven. When you use the keys , I will also...it shall be one single action, mine and yours, not a twofold one. It shall be one and the same key, mine and yours, not a twofold one. While you do your work, mine is already done. When you bind and loose, I have already bound and loosed. He binds and joins himself to your work” (Luther 1958:365).

Paul is no doubt irritated at the tolerance exhibited by the church to allow yeast in the midst, as “the moral purity and public witness of the church was at stake”; yet he is just as concerned for the unrepentant individual, and has decided to hand him over to Satan. The picture is such that church discipline has not worked to evoke a contrite heart and now he is to be dealt with in the severe spiritual realm, unprotected. Bargerhuff notes “‘to hand someone over to Satan,’ is to place him or her outside of the covenant community, outside of the sphere of God’s protection and blessing” (Bargerhuff 2010:162).^{51 52} It is not a spiritual death, rather, being delivered to Satan’s harassment. Strong exhorts immediate exclusion is best, seeking to discern if true repentance exists, or if a declaration of repentance seems merely a remedy to avoid expulsion:

Notice here that Paul gave the incestuous person no opportunity to repent, confess, or avert sentence...but such fruits take time...These therefore demand the instant exclusion of the wrong-doer, as evidence the church clears its skirts from all complicity with the wrong... (Strong 1907:924-925).

The Church, he holds, is not an institution, “whose object it is to protect and shield the individual members. It is a society whose end is to represent Christ in the world, and so establish his truth and righteousness. Christ commits his honor to its keeping” (Strong 1907:925). Minimally then, the question needs to be posed whether present-day disciples have the same authority to bind as the first century Church, or was that a positional authority, which was held only by the apostles. Grudem holds that church discipline does extend today to the entire “church whenever it meets and corporately carries out such discipline” (Grudem 1994:890); again, making the point that separation is a *corporate* rather than *individual* undertaking. Even Paul, or the eldership in making decisions needs the support of the entire body in order to effectuate the action. The understanding is that the

⁵¹ Additionally, Fee comments what this means, “In contrast to the gathered community of believers who experience the Spirit and power of the Lord Jesus in edifying gifts and loving concern for one another, this man is to be put back out into the world, where Satan and his ‘principalities and powers’ still hold sway over people’s lives to destroy them” (Fee 1987:209).

⁵² Marhsall writes, “This ‘turning over’ is a matter of withdrawal of God’s protective hand (here the fellowship of believers) so that unrepentant malefactors experience the full consequences of the choice they have already made, to ‘abandon themselves’ to sin” (Marshall 2001:155).

eldership is empowered to impose restrictions on the doctrine and behavior of individuals as opposed to having the ability to impart any sort of salvation, and that as they do that, the decision has already been divinely ratified in the heavenly realm, “shall have been bound” (Grudem 1994:891). God, says Grudem, has already begun the process spiritually, whenever the Church corporately enacts discipline, therefore, any person under the discipline of the true Church is under the discipline of God (Grudem 1994:891). Effectively, Grudem suggests that the process of discipline was already in action *before* the actions of the church began. Bargerhuff enjoins Grudem in this thinking saying, “The Greek syntax in this verse is quite unique and even complicated. With both the binding and the loosing, the future periphrastic perfect participle tenses are articulated, which may be translated as ‘shall/will have been bound,’ and ‘shall/will have been loosed’” (Bargerhuff 2010:155).⁵³ Clement of Alexandria states, those deeds done before baptism are remitted in baptism. However, those committed after baptism are purged [through discipline] (Bercot 1998:215).

Much debate has surrounded the terms “binding and loosing”, which Yoder holds have lost their meaning due to their absence in secular or religious forums (Yoder 1985:213). Bowe holds that the “binding and loosing” refer both to “authoritative teaching and to judgments about inclusion or exclusion from the community”, which is granted to the entire community itself, hence disciplinary responsibility and empowerment is conferred to the entire community, rather than a select few, but only after repeated attempts to dissuade the sinner from his error (Bowe 1996:281). Grudem agrees, “that ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ mean placing under church discipline and releasing from church discipline” (Grudem 1994:890), and Errico adds that it means “forbid and permit” (Errico 1991:72). White holds that, “To *bind* means to withhold fellowship, to recognize formally the state of alienation which has come about. To *loose* means to forgive, to open one’s arms wide, to someone

⁵³ Carson remarks, “Whatever he binds or looses will have been bound or loosed, so long as he adheres to that divinely disclosed gospel. He has no direct pipeline to heaven, still less do his decisions force heaven to comply; but he may be authoritative in binding and loosing because heaven has acted first (cf. Acts 18:9-10). Those he ushers in or excludes have already been bound or loosed by God according to the gospel already revealed and which Peter, by confessing Jesus as the Messiah, has most clearly grasped” (Carson 1995:373).

who is being reconciled” (White 1985:98; Yoder 1985:213). Citing Yoder in *Binding and Loosing*, White continues, “The rulings on right and wrong as decided by the rabbis were encoded in the *halakah*, the ‘traditions of the elders,’ so that Jesus is handing on to the disciples powers reserved in Judah for recognized religious authorities” (White 1985:98). White founds the meaning of the terms, *bind* and *loose*, (forbid and allow), in the rabbinic texts of antiquity:

This was the current, precise technical meaning which the terms *bind* and *loose* (i.e., their Aramaic equivalents) probably held in the language of the rabbis of Jesus’ time. Moral teaching and decision making in Judaism took the form of rulings by the rabbis on problem cases brought to them, either “binding” or “loosing” depending on how they saw the Law applying to each case...by taking over these terms from rabbinic usage, Jesus assigns his disciples an authority to bind and loose previously claimed only by the teachers in Israel (Yoder 1985:213).

Jeremias concurs that:

Binding and loosing are almost always used in respect of halakhic decisions. The scribe binds (declares to be forbidden) and looses (declares to be permitted). But this special use of the antonyms, which is grounded in the juridical character of Rabbinic literature, should not cause us to overlook the fact that originally they are used of the authority of the judge to imprison or release, to impose or to withhold the ban. (Jeremias 1983:751).

As is stated in section 4.7.1, Horton makes a key assertion that any extreme disciplinary measures, notably that of excommunication are to be executed solely by the elders or the Christian community (Horton 2011: 819), as they are acting as “a court [which] is convened with “two or three witnesses”, citing 1 Timothy 5:19 and Deuteronomy 19:15 (Horton 2011:434); to this list Yoder would add Matthew 18:16, 1 Corinthians 6:5, and Galatians 6:1 in support of Horton. The implication to Horton is that the elders of any given church are acting in a judicial capacity to affect the “common testimony to God’s character, will, works, and ways” (Horton 2011:434). This is affirmed by Jeremias who holds that such power has been conferred upon the “Shepherds of the flock of Jesus, and vv.15-18 seem to be a direct continuation designed to show that the exercise of discipline as well as love is part of the office of leadership” (Jeremias 1983:752). Yoder affirms, “The church is therefore most centrally defined as the place where ‘Binding and loosing’ takes place” and, “Where this does not happen, ‘church’ is not fully present” (Yoder 1985:220); Yoder does

stop short here of vesting that authority solely in the leadership. Bargerhuff agrees, “The power to bind and loose is given to a covenant community, a community of believers, the children of God, a people who live in communion and fellowship with each other and their merciful God as those who have been redeemed by grace” (Bargerhuff 2010:159). As a parallel to the Old Testament paradigm, the sentence of expulsion is affected by both God and/or the community of Israel (Carpenter 1997:729).

Verse 19 draws upon the power of prayer to entreat divine blessing upon the discernment of the decision, perhaps extending the prayer to the repentance of the errant individual. Russell claims that the use of the words, “again I say”, definitely ties this into the action in verse 18, and must not be separated from the pericope (Russell 2000:70). This is supported by the continual use of “two”, and “two or three”, which support the action and connection to verse 16. Yoder holds that this is the idea of “consensus”, which is “reached by the divinely authorized process of decision” (Yoder 1985:216). The assurance of answered prayer in regards to “anything” surely must be buffered as well; Russell holds that, “it is tempered and limited by the immediate context”, and cannot be affirming absolute positive response of anything asked for (Russell 2000:71). Strong announces the source of this authority in the decision making process:

It is evident from the direct relation of each member of the church, and so of the church as a whole, to Christ as sovereign and lawgiver, that the government of the church, so far as regards the source of authority, is an absolute monarchy.

In ascertaining the will of Christ, however, and in applying his commands to providential exigencies, the Holy Spirit enlightens one member through the counsel of another, and as the result of combined deliberation, guides the whole body to right conclusions. The work of the Spirit is the foundation of the Scripture injunctions to unity (Strong 1907:903).

One of the common fallacies is that verse 20 somehow affirms the presence of Deity whenever a multiple number of believers is present, minimal as that presence may be, as long as it is plural number of believers. Russell in *Playing with Fire*, shows that God’s presence is not dependant upon a quorum of multiple believers (Russell 2000:67-73) (cf. Psalm 23:4); rather, here is the understanding that where the mind of God is affirmed *corporately*, God’s hand of approval and

authority is upon them. Carson concurs adding the context is limited to being “about any judicial matter” (Carson 1995:403). This misunderstanding of verse 20 is certainly much too expansive in nature to be carelessly inserted in to the text here, and must be understood in the more narrow structure of church discipline, the “extremely narrow context”, as “it derives its meaning from the whole (the entire unity)” of the entire passage of verses 15-20 (Russell 2000:69,72). The Church has the blessing of invoking the name of Christ in this process. Strong further adds:

Each member, while forming his own opinions under the guidance of the Spirit, is to remember that the other members have the Spirit also, and that a final conclusion as to the will of God is to be reached only through comparison of the views. The exhortation to unity is therefore an exhortation to be open-minded docile, ready to subject our opinions to discussion, to welcome new light with regard to them, and to give up any opinion when we find it to be in the wrong (Strong 1907:904).

Tying this to the same keys conferred to Peter in Matthew 16, the Church has the authority to bind and loose according to the presentation of the Gospel- “That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (Matthew 16:16).⁵⁴ This is authority conferred upon the *ekklesia*, or “assembly”, a word coming from Jesus only twice in the gospels, here and in Matthew 18:17, as he refers to “bind and loose” (Yoder 1985: 216). As Calvin puts it so eloquently:

But the church binds him whom it excommunicates—not that it casts him into everlasting ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and morals, and already warns him of his condemnation unless he should repent. It looses him when it receives into communion, for it makes him a sharer of the unity which is in Christ Jesus (Calvin 1960:1214).

Not to be discounted, the overarching purpose of the disciplinary procedure has been the purity of the Church, which involves the restoration of the individual to fellowship, the centrality of reconciliation and discipline. As verses 19-20

⁵⁴ Blomberg notes, “One should pursue the imagery of keys that close and open, lock and unlock (Based on Isaiah 22:22) and take the binding and loosing as referring to Christians’ [sic] making entrance to God’s kingdom available or unavailable to people through their witness, preaching and ministry” (Blomberg 1992:254).

communicate, a divine authority is implicit and explicit, upon the earthly members of this process, and that divine presence is enjoined in the process of verses 15-19 by the local church.⁵⁵ Errico states that “in my name” is specifically communicating, “By my authority and for my service and honor” by Christ (Errico 1991:72).

Citing McLain, Radmacher holds that:

“The authority of the local church is final as far as its own affairs are concerned; there is no higher court.”

“The local church has authority to settle its own internal difficulties.”

And, “The local church has the authority to judge its own membership. Even a apostle does not assume to excommunicate a member, but calls upon the local church to do it” (1 Corinthians 5:13) (Radmacher 1996:347-348).

A key gleaning from these verses is the fact that the authority to issue a decision is held in heaven (Kapolyo 2010:1173), and this corporate empowerment is given only to the *plurality* of the church, and is in no way solely vested in any individual regarding any part of church disciplinary procedure. Grudem states that Christ, “reminds the church that his own presence and his own power are behind the decisions made by the church” (Grudem 1994:898). Yoder contends that, “The authority given the church is parallel to the authority given of Christ himself”, that “he lays upon them, and thereby upon us, the same power he claimed for himself” (Yoder 1995:215). The actions addressed in 18 are plural, the actions in 19 and 20 are in the plural, and address the decisions of two, or “two or three”, which establish a strong foundation for the absence of any division in *koinōnia*, without proper plural authority. Any individual, or faction of individuals, exercising disciplinary measures, or not abiding by the disciplinary measures imposed by the Church, stand in direct opposition to the will of God.

Finally, Russell holds that:

⁵⁵ White and Blue write, “So when this authority to bind and loose is further applied to matters of church discipline, it communicates the idea that *when the church acts in concert with the truth on any judicial matter, they can rest assured that their actions are in sync with what has been already declared or pronounced on the matter from heaven*” (White 1985:98).

...We should not conclude that this is abstract “church business” and has nothing to do with the growth of our souls in Christ. Rather, just the opposite conclusion is warranted. This passage gives us practical advice about how to confront one another when we fall into sin. This is not merely a peripheral truth for spiritual formation, but a central one that is probably regularly needed (Russell 2000:73).

The truths held are central to the health of the Church and to each individual. Grudem rightly holds that the “primary purpose of church discipline is to pursue the twofold goal of restoration (of the offender to right behavior), and reconciliation (between believers, and with God), thus rescuing him or her from destructive patterns of life” (Grudem 1994:894). The delegated authority, or license does not cast the individual outside the salvation of God, merely outside the circles of the healthy sheep in the hopes the offenders will repent and return. This holds Strong, is the duty of the Church: “We see that the church has authority, that it is bound to take cognizance of offences, and its action is final (Strong 1907:907).

In regards to discipline White concludes, “If it is conducted under the direction of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the Scripture, it will *have already been ratified in heaven*” (White 1985:98). Yoder affirms the power granted is indeed, by the Holy Spirit (Yoder 1995:216).

4.4.2.9 *Matthew 18:21-35*

As represented by the adverb *then*, as Matthew 18:18-20 begins,⁵⁶ it is likely this subsequent passage bears a close connection to the pericope in verses 15-20,

⁵⁶ 21 “Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

23 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 “When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 “But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 “So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ 27 “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ 29 “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ 30

and indeed it does, as it is connected to the overall thought regarding the health of the Church. Peter's question however, is relegated to the subject of personal conflict and forgiveness, rather than ecclesiastical adjudication. In this parable Lockyer suggest that Jesus is merely illustrating the matter of man's forgiveness of man. He posits that any allusion to the forgiveness of God is only in the "background", that this is not the main thrust of the story, which seems an unlikely premise given the authority and grace of the King (Lockyer 1963:217). He does later concede the personage of the King to be God at a later point, which seems to dispel his own notion that God's forgiveness in this parable is secondary, or subliminal.

Carson notes that Peter literally asks the question, "How many times will my brother sin against me and I will forgive him?" (Carson 1986:405). Peter is inquiring of the forgiveness of *a brother*, someone who is obviously considered to be a spiritual brother due to spiritual connection or *koinōnia*, rather than familial connection, seemingly drawing from the offensive brother of verse 15. It is true that Peter is seeking the answer to the question as to how many times he is to forgive an offending brother, and wonders if *seven* would be a suitable number, far exceeding the rabbinic literature (*Yoma* 5.13; Hagner 1995:537), which states that 3 times would be the acceptable limit of forgiveness, the fourth time would not be expected to be forgiven (Mounce 1991:177). Jesus dispels all notion of a limited forgiveness, as he presents the number to be forgiven, which Carson holds to be seventy-seven, denying that the Greek could be understood to mean *seventy times* seven, but rather an addition of the two numbers, or 77 (Carson 1986:405). Hagner asserts that the numeral, whichever it may represent, is not indicative of any particular number, but merely of the unlimited number of times forgiveness should be extended to a repentant offender (Hagner 1995:537); thus, it is practical rather than numeric. Of

"But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31 "So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32 "Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' 34 "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:21-35;NASB).

special note here is Peter's reference to *hamartesi eis eme*, or "sin against me". Hagner maintains that here as in verse 15, the verb is maintained in the original, "presumably in order to include as wide a variety of phenomena as possible". He further maintains that *eis eme*, "against me" echoes of the *eis se*, "against you" of verse 15 (Hagner 1995:537). A further distinction he points out is that in the former passage, verses 15-20, repentance of the sinning is deficient, in the present text, repentance is "assumed", a major distinction which seems to be supported in the parallel text of Luke 17:3-4, when forgiveness is conditional upon repentance of the offender. Blomberg asserts that, "Forgiveness is only applicable when genuine repentance has occurred" (Blomberg 2007:57). At a genuine stage of repentance the logic of this text stipulates that the public declaration of repentance, for confidentiality sake, may be limited to those in the circle of offense. Standing in contrast to this repentance being axiomatic to forgiveness, are the pleas from Christ and from Stephen, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34) and, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60).

Although verses 15-20 point to the adjudication of the Church, this passage with the introduction of Peter's question in verse 21, moves into the practical realm of man forgiving man, and therefore moves beyond the scope of eternal forgiveness as it is beyond the ability of any man to forgive a mans' sins, that power is reserved for God (Carson 1984:405). Mankind does have the ability to forgive *offenses* between one another, and as the Church; being part of the kingdom of heaven is to follow after the model of God, as such the immediate context of Christ's teaching has reverted to the question repeated, or personal forgiveness (Carson 1986:406).

The kingdom of heaven is compared to this very action of forgiveness as Christ begins with the words, *Dia touto*, "on account of this", or, "for this very reason", which clearly links this parable with the preceding verses (Hagner 1995:538). Here Christ paints a vivid picture of the behavior, which will characterize the members of the community in Heaven. Christ uses the parable, beginning in verse 23, to illustrate that his point is that of the unforgiving slave and a king who is certainly God himself (Thomas 1979:366). The New American Standard and Holman, both accurately define *doulos* as a slave, rather than the erroneous view of a "servant", embraced by the NIV. The scenario is that in which a sovereign seeks

to “settle accounts”, or “reconcile” accounts with his servants. In spite of the fact that Christ is drawing heavily upon the nature of a monetary example, this parable is not about money, nor financial indebtedness (Hagnar 1995:537), though many cite the purported value of the talents to be in excess of a million, or even a billion modern day dollars (Carson 1986:406; Hagnar 1995:538). According to Josephus, in the year 4 B.C., the entirety of collection from Judea, Idumea and Samaria came to a mere 600 talents, thus giving perspective to the relative vastness of such a burden (Josephus 17.11.4 -317-320).

The amount owed to the king by the slave is 10,000 talents, a number represented in the Greek as *myriad*, and believed to be representative of an indefinite very large number, and as a hyperbole, could be thought to be without end (Hagnar 1995:538), in the world of antiquity. It is not known how this slave came to be in possession of such a large amount of debt, but is speculated that he would have been a government aide of some sort, perhaps, the collector of taxes as an emissary to the king (Hendricksen 1973:705). The amount is so large a number that it is inconceivable that any person could repay such a debt. So great is the debt that even the sale of the individual’s family cannot offset the debt, even with such extreme sacrifice. The slave’s plea, “Have patience with me and I will repay you everything”, are certainly delusional, and lack any merit of understanding his own deficiency of ability to assuage that amount of debt in any way, which leads to the speculation that he was engaged in an intentional lie.

The servant’s debt demonstrates an amount, which could never realistically be paid back, yet he immediately attempts to physically extract an amount of a hundred days’ wage from a fellow slave (Carson 1986:406), prior to the utilization of words (Hendricksen 1973:707). To place this in proper perspective, it took 6,000 denarii to equal one talent. Therefore the debt which the wicked slave was demanding was one six-hundred thousandth of his own debt (Hagner 1995: 539). The fellow slaves’ similar demeanor and plea would seem to have called to mind the original slaves’ petition, but that does not seem to be the case, and does not move the man to subsequently remove the debt from the fellow slave (Hendricksen 1973:707). The anger of the original slave has perhaps caused him to fail to see the egregiousness of his own sins (cf. Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42). Slaves having

seen this action, or having come to learn of this action are distraught over such behavior; it is implied that they knew of the cancellation of the first slave's immense debt (Hagnar 1995:539). The king is notified "in detail" of the wicked man's actions, thus, displeasing the king and after summoning the wicked slave, calls him to account, "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?" The understanding being, that there was a definite implication for the slave to model the king's behavior in the area of forgiveness (Hendricksen 1973:708). The slave is thrown in jail with the sentence to repay all that he owes, an action which he will never be able to do (Carson 1986:407).

In essence, Christ is establishing that forgiveness in the right context is to be unlimited. Mounce holds that a person who is unwilling to extend forgiveness is evidencing that he has not received mercy, as God's mercy, and "must of necessity create a forgiving spirit" (Mounce 1991:172). The bottom line is that all those who have been forgiven by God have been done so, far more than they will ever be able to forgive (Carson 1986:405). Therefore, a God of such compassion and mercy cannot embrace those who claim to be his who are absent such reciprocal compassion. The implication is that whatever is owed to man by man, whatever offences are committed against man by man, are miniscule in relation to the vast amount of forgiveness which has been extended to followers of Christ, and should consequently be dismissed after the model of God, and Christ (cf. Philemon 18).⁵⁷

Verses 32 and after, point to a certain drastic end for the erring slave. He had searched out his fellow slave to extract payment. Upon hearing about it, the king revoked the grace previously given and sentenced him to a fate to repay a debt that has already been established, he could not realistically be expected to pay. Thomas posits that a man who has once been pardoned can relapse into wickedness and finally be lost. In this picture could be seen an argument for the Arminian viewpoint of a loss of salvation, but Thomas argues that many have been engaged in this theological argument with no certain victor, as to whether this passage is pointing to

⁵⁷ Bargerhuff claims that, "In the same way that God works through the church to discipline the sinner, so he also works through the church's restorative actions to communicate his forgiveness, acceptance and love" (Bargerhuff 2010:189).

a loss of eternal salvation. Thomas does hold as well, that such teaching was not to have been the focus of this story by Christ. As a result, it is parabolical, and a parable in that it holds many elements of truth not all of which are fundamental to the main focus of the story (Thomas 1979:366-367).

Hagner takes the standpoint that the “king” and “lord” is rightly identified as God himself, who will issue punishment at his discretion to those “slaves”, or disciples, who fail to extend mercy and forgiveness to others, and this forgiveness must take place from the heart (Hagner 1995:540). In light of the entire theme of Matthew 18, Christ is again communicating the health of the entire Church, and what extreme measures must be implemented to assure such wellbeing. “As God’s forgiveness is inexhaustible, so must disciples of Christ cultivate their ability to renew their forgiveness of others again and again” (Hagner 1995:536). Christ has painted a healthy word picture of *koinōnia* being enforced between primary earthly relationships; God and man. The foundation for believer’s forgiveness of others is not based upon own ability to forgive, or even upon the merits of the repentant, but squarely upon the foundation of God’s forgiveness of the disciple (Hagner 1995:537).

Two themes are thought to be evident here, the primary theme is that when an errant member of the Body has repented and desires to be accepted back into the fellowship, as long as the individual is repentant, and willing to forsake the errant doctrine or practice, then he needs to be forgiven and received back into communion; this practice is mentioned again in 2 Corinthians 2:7-10, wherein this time, it is Paul who affirms that their forgiveness is equal to his forgiveness as well (Matthew 18:18-20). The second theme seems to directly address Peter’s question of his own personal forgiveness, to which Jesus responds, that it is not the amount of debt, or sin that is in question here, it is a matter of whether an individual is repentant. God’s atonement covers the largest amount of debt, and therefore if a brother is under excommunication, he is still to be forgiven from the standpoint of those who assigned him to that position. The Matthean passage communicates that, as White sums it up best:

Corrective discipline begins with the recognition that sin produces alienation. It devotes itself to overcoming that alienation. But if it fails in its objective, the church, like the father in the story of the prodigal son, never ceases to long for

and to wait for the return of the prodigal. And when the prodigal returns its delight knows know bounds (White 1985:101).

When the individual evidences repentance, he is to be forgiven by the entire Body for fear that consequences would befall an unforgiving person.⁵⁸ It is important to point out that the Prodigal exercises his own free will, and elects to return of his own accord, however the father is eager to restore him the minute repentance is observed.

Bargerhuff summarizes this redemptive disciplinary process as follows:

Based on the foundation of the person and finished work of Jesus Christ, the Father now enacts his covenantal (fatherly) discipline through the actions of the Spirit-embodied community (the church), so that his redemptive purposes might be manifested on earth through his disciples, who are called to glorify God, build his kingdom, and live by the truth (Bargerhuff 2010:190).⁵⁹

4.4.3 Lukan Passages 7:41-43, 17:3-4 -Forgiveness and Repentance

Luke 17:3-4 adds a caveat to this process of forgiveness; it is an element of contrition on the offender's part, or minimally an expression of desired forgiveness. "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4). Stott expresses this belief in no uncertain terms:

"...But true peace and true forgiveness are costly treasures. God forgives us only when we repent. Jesus told us to do the same: 'If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.' How can we forgive an injury when it is neither admitted nor regretted?" (Stott 1978:51).

⁵⁸ Adams adds, "Any within the body who fail to forgive should be warned of the fact that to persist in such failure would place *them* in jeopardy of church discipline" (Adams 1986:94).

⁵⁹ Bargerhuff continues, "*Church Discipline is therefore God's appeal* (through the church) to one of its sheep who has gone astray. We are the manner and means through which God has chosen to extend his grace. It would make little sense, then, to say that we are committed to spreading the gospel (the message of reconciliation) to a dying world but are unwilling to remain committed to it in the totality of life inside the church. As someone has rightly said, our charge is not to make converts but disciples. Church discipline is an essential mark of a church committed to making disciples. It is not retributive punishment, and it is not hypocritical judging (Bargerhuff 2010:191).

Luke states, and Stott believes this methodology is to be carried out indefinitely; *as long as* the request for forgiveness is sought from the offender, forgiveness is to be granted; yet it is clear in Stott's opinion that that forgiveness is yielded conditionally, and only conditional to the request for it. Standing in contrast to this however, is the request made of Christ to the father while on the cross, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Earlier in Luke 7:41-43, "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have judged correctly.'" Again, refer to Blomberg in the last section regarding the necessity of repentance before forgiveness is granted.

4.4.4 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Timothy 5:19-21

2 Timothy 2:24-26 makes it clear the responsibility is even more important to those who are called to the office of overseer. Anderson holds, "the context allows for that sin occurring through the leader's preaching and teaching" (Anderson 2002:227). "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will". The purpose is clearly identified to be one of restoration and correcting those who are in opposition to God and in danger of aligning themselves with the devil. Mohler notes, "Correction is for the greater purpose of restoration and the even higher purpose of reflecting the holiness of God" (Mohler 1998:178). Those leaders who refuse are under pronouncement of judgment as in parallel to Matthew 18:17, "The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after" (Anderson 2002:227).

4.4.5 Rebuke and Reproofs -2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Timothy 3:16-17 identifies the source of the identification of sin and the vehicle to be consulted in the restoration process, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”. The entire process needs to be done according to the Word of God, the absolute truth. The truth needs to be spoken according to God’s word and in love.

4.4.6 Matthew 16:19; John 20:23

Two difficult passages obscure the lines of understanding. John 20:23 says, “If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained”, and Matthew 16:19, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven”. The inappropriate understanding of these scriptures is to equate them to mean that certain people have the “permission to forgive sins”. The simple and all authoritative answer is from Christ in Luke 5:21, “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”

The proper understanding of anything relative to the authority Christians have is only given by God in the area of fostering health, church discipline, and communication of the gospel (DeKoster 2001:256); the transforming power from conviction to salvation to transformation belongs solely to the Sovereign. In light of this Jeremias holds that this passage in Matthew 16 has, “a strong Semitic character linguistically”, and “Handing over the keys implies appointment to full authority” (Jeremias 1983:749-750), and that “We are to regard the authority to bind and to loose as judicial” as, “It is the authority to pronounce judgment on unbelievers and to promise forgiveness to believers”; “The power of the keys is authority in the dispensing of the word of grace and judgment” (Jeremias 1983:751,752).

4.4.7 1 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 12:1 -Encumbrances of sin

The benefit of discipline, meaning proactive discipline, is encouraged in 1 Timothy 4:7-8, “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come”. The word for *discipline* is *gymnasia*, meaning in the Greek, *exercise*, or to engage in training for the benefit of buffeting the body for the greater reward yet to come.

In part this involves ridding a persons life of those sins which lure and draw away from the primacy of the relationship with Christ. “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1;NASB). This effort is both encouraged and commended by Paul and the writer of Hebrews.

4.4.8 Galatians 6:1-2 -With Gentleness

Galatians 6:1 communicates the importance in the selection of proper words and tones, and the general spirit that is to accompany the correction process:

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2;NASB).

Mohler holds that the “You who are spiritual”, refers to the spiritual leaders in the church; these are the individuals who are to be confronting the offender, and they are to do that with a spirit of humility and gentleness, with the goal of restoration (Mohler 1998:179-180). In light of Mohler's view, the pastors, elders and leaders are the ones who spearhead this process, themselves being the 2 or 3 in Matthew 18:15-20. The burdens here are those areas of sin egregious to God, and the purpose of the leaders is to identify those sins, and help the errant extricate those from his life.

4.4.9 Hebrews 3:13,12:5-13; James 5:19-20; Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:41-42; 1 Thessalonians 5:13 -Correction

Hebrews 3:13 makes it abundantly clear that the Body of Christ is to be engaged in the spiritual maintenance of the Body, “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”. The picture is clear that the writer of Hebrews is exhorting the Body to be actively involved sentinels who guard against the onslaught of sin in the camp, for fear that at some point the sensitivity to sin may be dulled. This advances the cause for fellow believers to be on the guard for errant behavior, demonstrated in the doctrine or practices of those whom God has placed in close circles. This exhortation very closely parallels that of Ezekiel 33:8-9.⁶⁰

This, as noted earlier, is a cautionary statement about the liability of the surrounding believers, to “encourage” those who are willfully, or ignorantly practicing offensive behavior or doctrine, to cease from those infractions. This seems to imply that there is guilt upon the individual who freely neglects to reprove, or rebuke an errant individual. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 states, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone”, thus implying that the unruly, or those disruptive in the household of God need to be brought in alignment with God’s will or removed from it.

Drawing from the example of Proverbs 13:24, “He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently”. The first step in righting may be this Adelpian sort of chastisement and correction, but Hebrews 12:5-6 says, “and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘For those whom the LORD loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives,’” makes it clear the Lord holds the prerogative to involve himself in the disciplinary process himself as he so desires, and the motive is clear, that

⁶⁰ When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life” (Ezekiel 33:8-9).

chastening through suffering draws the believer into deeper fellowship with the Father (Ryken/ Crossway 2001:750). Hebrews 12:7-11 expands this paradigm.⁶¹

The picture of God's engagement in the process indicates that he considers the recipients, his children, as having legitimate sonship, implying those who are not receiving discipline are not his children, and any elements they receive are punitive. Verse 10 further stands to remind that is all for the purpose of holiness that this refinement process of discipline is carried out, for the benefit of the believer (cf. Romans 8:16-25), and often comes at a point of great suffering as the dross is expunged. Mohler points this out as, "God's loving discipline of his people is his sovereign right and is completely in keeping with his moral character—His own holiness" (Mohler 1998:178). The extremities to which he may inflict discipline may be to engage in a "beating" so severe, that the individual would certainly hear. This beating must not be viewed as an act of hatred or acrimony. The behavior is intended to assuage an errant individual from his way, not to punish the individual. The theme is a common one held in the Old Testament and in the eschatological realm of Revelation.

"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD
Or loathe His reproof, For whom the LORD loves He reproves,
Even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11-12)

"I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." (Psalms 119:75)

"Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves,
So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.
"For He inflicts pain, and gives relief;
He wounds, and His hands *also* heal. (Job 5:17-18)

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent." (Revelation 3:19)

⁶¹ 7 "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:7-11; NASB).

The fruit of that correction is described in verses 12-13 of Hebrews 12:

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed (Hebrews 12:12-13;NASB).

As noted earlier in 4.4.2.5 (Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:39-42), is that of the corrector's spiritual state and self-examination. Preceding any attempts to correct an errant believer, the corrector himself is commanded to take care of any unseemly character or behavioral defects present in his own life if his words are to carry weight. As Matthew 7:1-2 points out, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you". Though this is true, White and Blue conclude, "One can't approach a brother about sin without having made at least a preliminary judgment of some kind" (White 1985:88).

Of equal importance is the area of divine discipline and the nature of praying over those who are sick. To be added to this subset is the general topic of praying over anybody for the present state of disappointment in which they find themselves. James 5:13-16 says:

Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:13-16;NASB).

The command is to have elders present; the implication is that elders have something of a particular advantage to bring in the resolution of the sickness. The question presented is, "What could that very involvement be? The solution is most likely found in the spiritual maturity that the elders bring to the situation, notably the ability to discern *if* there is sin in the ailing persons life, and if so, *what* that sin may be. Sickness often accompanies those who are engaged in sinful behavior or thoughts and thus out of communion with the Lord. Therefore, the elders are not

coming to merely pray over the individual, but to examine the life of the person to see if, “there be any wicked way” in him. If they indeed can identify, and point out the errant behavior or thoughts of the sick, they may be able to encourage repentance, and *then* healing from the result of the offered prayers. The presence of the elders also offers an opportunity of confession, and opportunity for corporate prayer. If the person were to be truly under divine discipline due to some amount of sin present, no amount of prayers will remedy the situation. In fact, praying for healing against the desired affect of the Lord’s discipline is to be praying against that which the Lord is using to bring about conformity to his will. What must be noted here is that even in the absence of any human identifying sin in someone’s life (Matthew 18:15), the Lord may expose an individual’s sin through inflicting illness (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30). The “punishment” for unrevealed, or unconfessed sin is addressed directly by the Lord. Thus, affliction has been initiated as part of divine discipline, well before the person may even be aware of his own sin as a means of drawing attention to an area of concern.⁶²

Tangential to this thought is the greater area of dissatisfaction in an individual’s life. One who seeks prayer from other Christians may be engaged in sin and rightfully due the present agonizing circumstances present in his or her life. An apt and relevant question of the person from whom prayer is sought is, “What can you tell me about the present nature of your Christian walk?” Again, it may well be that the errant or sickly person has brought this situation of infirmity or unpleasantness upon themselves due to disobedience. A clarification of the spiritual condition of the individual would seem the most pressing determinant of any subsequent solution.

⁶² Bargerhuff notes, “This is not to say that every situation where weakness, illness, or death occurs is a direct result of divine discipline for sin” (Bargerhuff 2010:180).

4.5 Unity and *Koinōnia*

Many are the passages in reference to unity in the New Testament, most referencing unity in a visual, illustrative and metaphorical manner (Ngewa 2010:1457). *One Flock* of sheep with one shepherd- John 10:16. *One vine*- John 15:1,5. *One Body* of Christ Romans 12: 4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17,12:12-13,27; Ephesians 1:22-23,2:16,4:4,5:30. *One building* of God- 1 Corinthians 3:9; more specifically, *a temple*- Ephesians 2:20-22, composed of *living stones*- 1 Peter 2:5. *One bride* with one husband- 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32. *One household* of God- Ephesians 2:19. *One holy and royal priesthood*- 1 Peter 2:5, 9. And *One chosen race and nation*- 1 Peter 2:9 (Kregel 2005: 562-563).

4.5.1 John 17 -The High Priestly Prayer

Perhaps there exists no greater passage in the New Testament which reflects the heart of Christ in regards to unity, than John 17. Christ is engaged in a prayer of consecration for himself, as well as for the disciples and for the Church (ecclesial sanctification), and for the mutual indwelling of unity to be expressed among believers. Mohler expresses this value:

The integrity of the church is also dependent upon the true unity of its fellowship. Indeed, one of the most repeated warnings found in the New Testament is the admonition against toleration of schismatics. The unity of the church is one of its most visible distinctives—and most precious gifts (Mohler 1998:184).

One cannot help but see this *perichoretical* reference to the *koinōnia* sought by Christ here in this passage, a further evidence of the *echād* identified in Section 3.1. As this prayer is in line with John 14:20, “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you”. Christ has prayed for a mutual indwelling, the interpenetration of his creation and the Godhead, to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 10:16, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” “Sharing” in this verse is from the Greek “*koinōnia*”, communicating intimacy and

identification *in* Christ. Peter endorses this intimacy as well in 2 Peter 1:4, “so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature”. Christ is prophesying about a day which will come for the disciples in which this perichoretical reality will happen; this is arguably at the time of Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Christ and Joel (Joel 2:28).

In John 17:11 Christ prays to the Father, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We *are*”. Christ is praying “they may be one”, a phrase he will invoke 3 times in this passage alone. Carson posits that the Greek understanding is not that they would progressively achieve unity, but that they “may be a unity continually” (Carson 1980:189). This suggests the unity is already a God-given reality, but that it is the opportunity and challenge of the Body to continually be displayed to the world. Yet, the implication is that “dark forces”, or the errant wills and behavior of mankind, even within the Body of Christ, will somehow “strive to break up this unity” (Carson 1980:189). Christ is, in essence, anticipating, or minimally seeking to guard against this in the supplication to the Father. The unity for which he prays is to parallel the unity found in the Godhead, “even as we *are*”. Verse 17 affirms that this unity needs to be preceded by the sanctity of believers, and that consecration comes by way of the word which is truth, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”. Verse 18, describes the commission which Christ is giving to the disciples to carry on the task of evangelizing the entire world, though at this point he is praying simply for the 11 which are accompanying him as he nears ever closer to the cross, “As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world”. Yet, as he moves on to verse 20, he extends that plea to cover all those who would come to believe in him through their word; he is crediting them with the souls who will be one for his sake through their proclamation, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word”.

Again, in Verse 21 Christ uses the term, “they may be one”, as essential to the affirmation of the Gospel in the Church. Carson again asserts that, “this is not simply a ‘unity of love.’ It is a unity predicated on adherence to the revelation the Father mediated to the first disciples through his Son...” (Carson 1991:568). The ultimate relationship of unity and relationship is to be the catalyst, that is the beacon

of the Church which compels the world to believe in Christ. He prays one more time that “they may be one”, which applies at this point to the entire Church, or future believers in Christ as well, and once again affirms that this church-wide unity is to parallel the Trinity. In order to accomplish this demonstrated unity the Lord has availed a measure of his glory.

Christ recounts how his glory has been given to these believers to assist in the unifying process; they have become partakers of the divine nature, *theias koinōnia phuseos*, referenced in 2 Peter 1:4 (Bernard 1963: 578), and as such, a participation in a person and the “common” spirit of Christ (Johnson 1975,1976:528). Though Beasley-Murray alleges that the nature is uncertain (Beasley-Murray 1987: 302), the glory referred to, however, is certainly not the same as his pre-existent pre-incarnate glory, as 17:5 informs, that is to be reclaimed shortly (Köstenberger 2004:498; Meyer 1983:470), but the glory, which the Father has given him, is for his empowerment to complete his earthly mission (Ridderbos 1997:563).

The disciples will be asked to share in this glory (John 17:22), as it is the destiny of Christ, “to follow the path of lowly service culminating in the cross”, and so it will be for them to end in death, in unity with Christ (Morris 1995:650), to be partakers in his death. As the glory emanates from God, “any approach which places the essence of unity in the solidarity of human endeavour is not faithful to John’s insistence that unity has its origins in divine action” (Brown 1970:776); the key to success most certainly lies in God’s power and not man’s (Köstenberger 2004:498). The unity flows from God’s glory, through the Son, to believers, not so as to imply passivity on the part of the disciples but to clarify the primary source of unity (Brown 1970:776). Jesus has identified himself as the revelation of God’s glory, and now he has given this opportunity for the disciples to present that glory as well (Brown 1970:776).

Verse 23 specifies that the unifying nature of this act is found in the presence of the Father and the Son, and results in the unity of the redeemed (Beasley-Murray 1987:302), “just as We are one; I in them and You in Me”. Again, Christ emphasizes that the mutual indwelling is purposive (Morris 1995:650; Carson 1980:198); unity is not the end in itself but is sought for the greater goal of achieving the evangelistic potential (Blomberg 2008:224). Christ has spent several years in bringing them

together, and now supplicates the Father to perfect them in unity, *teteliomenoi eis hen*, which is the remaining part of the supplication that can bring this prayer to fruition, a completed unity (Morris 1995:651). The two references to the unity, being made manifest to the world, indicate that this unity is not purely of a spiritual union (Brown 1970: 776), as demonstrated in Ephesians 4:1-6. There is the certain understanding that unity in Christ involves some element of demonstrated physical community, as evidenced by the sheep in John 10:16, and grapes referenced in John 15 (Brown 1970:776) and is therefore progressive, at least in this earthly dispensation. Previously in 21 and here in verse 23 the phrases, “so that the world may believe that You sent Me”, and, “so that the world may know that You sent Me”, are not to be mistakenly understood that the world will certainly believe and know Christ, rather, that by the unity of the Church, the world “will be presented with a compelling challenge to recognize Jesus” (Brown 1970:776; Carson 1991:568; Meyer 1983:470). Holloman adds to this that this powerful witness in the unity of believers can indeed be promoted practically (Kregel 2005:563), and it must be stressed that it is this Trinitarian presence demonstrated in unity, which is the attractional component that draws the world to belief.

Brown asserts that a unity of the nature, such as the one for which Christ is asking is thus nurturing to the members and would almost of necessity, be an ideal community (Brown 1970:778). Beasley-Murray holds that, in verse 21 the redeemed become one by sharing in the *koinōnia* of the Father and the Son; in verse 23, they become one through shared union with the Son (Beasley-Murray 1987:302).

Tim Keller offers a good description of the purpose of the Church:

The purpose of Jesus’ salvation is not just to save individuals, but to form a new alternate society that is a sign that Jesus is Lord of the world and is going to redeem all of creation (Keller 2003:52)... Christian community is the comprehensive and distinct way to be human in deep relationship with other Christians who are all transformed by the gospel (Keller 2014).

This unity prayed for by Christ, and communicated by John in his gospel is also communicated by John in his first epistle, stressing the perichoretic oneness and *koinōnia* with each other, and the Godhead, that is enjoyed as people are walking in obedience (the Light):

3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:3-7;NASB).

4.5.2 Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Initial biblical models promoting unity are the selfless giving in Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, and the sharing of the Lord's Supper together which emphasizes the unity of believers (Kregel 2005:563). Acts 2:42-47 provides a model blueprint of the first century church.⁶³

Bruce writes that the newly expressed Church, "ascribed all glory to God, and their numbers were constantly increased as more and more believers in Jesus were added by him to the faithful remnant" (Bruce 1987:81). This was the product for which Christ had prayed in the Garden in John 17:23, "so that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you have loved me", and John 17:20, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word". The witness of the new Church yielded growth (cf. Acts 2:41). Acts 2:44 communicates this external expression of unity, "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common". The word for "in common" is the Greek term *koinos*, which refers to those attributes common to the entire assembly.

⁶³ 42 "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47;NASB).

In essence, these things in common were physical expressions or representations of spiritual realities. This fellowship which the new community enjoyed was physically demonstrated in the apostolic preaching, fellowship of one another over meals, the breaking of bread, a reference to the sharing of the Lord's Supper, prayers, and praising God together (Bruce 1987:79).

The importance of unity is to be preserved at a high level of commitment, as it is a reflection of the Church itself. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the Temple of God, God will destroy him, for the Temple of God is holy, and that is what you are". Paul makes it clear the Church body is the "housing" of God, through which he engages his presence with his people. Therefore, any attack against the Church is an attack against the dwelling place of God Almighty. Though modern day judgment may not include the kind of severe and immediate judgment as in the Old Testament, it should still be considered serious and painful (Getz 1995:115).

The unity of chapter 4 is briefly threatened in chapter 6 as the Hellenistic Jews complain of favoritism, that their widows are not receiving the same care. The solution to the problem is that the Hellenized Jews are placed in charge of the food distribution allowing the apostles go continue in their work. "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4;NASB). In line with the spirit of 1 Corinthians 12:13, there is no distinction (separation) between Greeks or Jews, or free or slave.

4.5.3 1 Corinthians 6:15, 10:17,12:13-27; Romans 12:4-6; Matthew 18; Ephesians 5:30 -The Illustration of the Body

Paul utilizes the density of his evocative metaphor of the human body numerous times in his attempt to communicate the unity held in the Body of Christ. He introduced this in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, in reference to diversity and unity, he was stressing purity, and devotion, consecration to Christ, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 6:15). The longest such passage is found in the book of 1 Corinthians 12:13-27 where Paul presents the

human body as a “highly diversified organism” (Kistemaker 1993:429), and parallels that body as metaphor to the Body of Christ, the same as in Ephesians 4:15-16, wherein the head of the Body is Christ, and Christians as members, are all incorporated as part of that Body. Kistemaker develops the idea of Paul by saying, “In this body, the employment of each gift is designed to serve not the individual member but the entire church” (Kistemaker 1993:429). Bruce holds that the phrase “by the Spirit”, is not describing the Spirit as the baptizer, but rather the one in whom we are all baptized (Bruce 1971:120), resulting in one spiritual Body (Mare 1976:264). As a greater understanding, evangelical theology holds that this baptism into the Spirit is the same as the baptism into Christ (cf. Romans 6), the point at which a person is regenerated and becomes a new creature in Christ. It is this diversity of individuals brought from the “outside to the inside” (Kistemaker 1993:430), that yields the unity of the church in its diversity (Mare 1976:264), though is to function efficiently for the benefit to all, and to the blessing of Christ. Kistemaker notes the “interdependent relationship” (Kistemaker 1993:435), and mutual dependence (Kistemaker 1993:433), which each member is to have with one another, another form of interpenetration, or mutual indwelling of each other. Verse 13, Conzelmann notes, “For here Paul speaks only of the unity which is brought about by the abrogation of the (physical and social) differences between believers” and that, “incorporation into it takes place through baptism” (Conzelmann 1975:212).

In Verses 15 and 16 of chapter 12, Paul writes, “If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. And if the ear says, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body”. The apostle herein castigates two major elements of division. The first, in verses 15-16 cautions against any envy of other body parts, or insecurity, asserting in verse 18, that all members in the Body have been sovereignly ordained by the hand of God and therefore, should not be questioned. The second attitude within the Body is the attitude of arrogance, wherein a particular member believes itself to be superior, all-inclusive, and therefore not in need of identifying with the rest of the Body. Paul is saying there are not to be any divisions within the Body due to varying spiritual giftings, or placement in the Body of Christ.

Paul has argued the concept of unity already in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread”. The comparison is to one loaf of bread, hence a unit, but the diversity of the Body is more readily made clear. The metaphor is utilized in Ephesians 4:15-16, and Romans 12:4-8 as well. Romans is a virtual reiteration of the text in Corinthians, “For just as we have many members in one Body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another; Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*” (Romans 12:4-6a).

Verse 25 of 1 Corinthians 12 identifies the purpose for this, that there “be no division in the body”, no *schism* between the members. Harris argues, “But within the church, the members are able to cause a split and the possibility of a schism is real (Harris 1986:544). Therefore if a division were to be allowed, it would be of the direst of circumstances, and only that which is necessary to protect the health of the Body. This has already been argued by Paul in chapter 5 of the book. In verse 26 Paul makes clear the reality of interdependence within the Body of Christ, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”. The understanding is that what affects one member affects them all. If disease or pain inflicts a member the body will experience some element of that malady. Conversely, if a member experiences nurturing or benefit, the Body corporate is the benefactor of that experience. Finally, in verse 27 Paul makes the obvious conclusion to the foregoing arguments, that “Now you are Christ’s Body, and individually members of it”. He has made the assertion of the Body being made up of many members in verses 12, 14 and 20 (cf. Ephesians 4:15-16; Romans 12:4-5), but here draws the conclusion that the Corinthian church *itself* is the reference in the metaphor.

Therefore, the Church is intricately intertwined and needs to govern and care for itself accordingly to avoid wholesale infirmity, and to build itself up in maturity and in health. This is further developed in Matthew 18:8-9, which is covered in section 4.5.5.

4.5.4 Ephesians 4:1-6, 15-16, 1:22-23,2:16,4:4,5:30 -The Oneness of Unity

Paul displays the urgency and reality of the intrinsic unity, held by the members of the Body of Christ in the epistle to the Ephesians in Chapter 4:1-6:

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

MacArthur notes that Ephesians 4:1 begins the transition in the book from “doctrine to duty” (MacArthur 1986:116). Miller notes that this, “Practical Christianity is based upon doctrinal Christianity”, meaning the truths spelled out in chapter 4, and subsequent of Ephesians, are based strongly on the instruction of chapters 1-3 (Miller 1931:133). As is characteristic of Paul in his epistles (cf. Romans, Galatians), he lays out the principles and moves on to practice. Ephesians 4 moves from the doctrine of the church to the prescribed demonstration of that teaching, as Paul is “appealing to believers to walk worthily of their high position in Jesus Christ” (MacArthur 1986:117).

Verse 3 exhorts the Church to be diligent in maintaining the unity of the Spirit. The word “diligent” is often translated in other translations as “strive” (KJV), or be “eager” (ESV), though eager may be too passive a word to be accurate. Miller holds that the Greek word “does not mean to ‘try’ with the possibility or probability of failure” (Miller 1931:135). MacArthur remarks of the unity of the Spirit, “Paul is not speaking of organizational unity, such as that promoted in many denominations and in the ecumenical movement. He is speaking of the inner and universal unity of the spirit by which every true believer is bound to every other true believer” (MacArthur 1986:128), affirming that spiritual unity is not created by the Church, but that the Church is to be a responsible steward of maintaining that unity created by the Spirit. Though this is the case, the fact that Paul uses this command however, implies that the unity *can be “broken”*, and that the Church is involved in some measure of maintaining this *koinōnia*, or minimally the external expression of it. Wiersbe agrees that unity of believers in Christ is already a spiritual reality among believers, as it is a

“spiritual grace” (Wiersbe 1989:94). It is this “supernatural unity” that MacArthur holds, is “the most powerful testimony the Church can have, because they are in such contrast to the attitudes and disunity of the world” (MacArthur 1986:128-129). The seven “one’s” following in the first 6 verses of Ephesians 4 illustrate this unity. Finally, he asserts that this “cause, or basis, of outward oneness is inner oneness. Practical oneness is based on spiritual oneness” (MacArthur 1986:129).

These “ones” are the seven basic realities that unite all true Christians; they identify the irreducible core of unity each believer has with one another. One Body. One Spirit. One Hope, One Lord, faith, baptism, and God and Father. Kregel identifies Christ as the “basis of unity”, and the Holy Spirit as the instrumental Agent (Kregel 2005:561-562). Miller holds that these “ones” are divided up into three categories: the “oneness of the church itself-one Body, one Spirit, one hope; the source and means of “oneness”- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; and the divine author of “oneness”, God the Father (Miller 1931:136). Subsequent verses identify the offices of the Church, the purpose for those offices is described in verse 12, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ”. Thus, as Saucy says, “As each member receives edification through the pastoral ministry, he in turn passes it on to his fellow believer” (Saucy 1972:96).

Thus, Paul saw the entire Body of Christ made up of all true believers, yet striving and growing into experiential maturity and sanctification and, “thereby, experiencing spiritual maturity” (Wiersbe 1989:103). The benchmark of the ability to do this was in no uncertain ways the *koinōnia*, or those elements permanently shared in the fellowship of believers, elements brought about by the redemption plan and work of the Godhead. Turaki affirms that, “The believers unity is based on the Trinity”, and, “Ultimately, however, our unity and oneness are rooted in the sovereignty of God, who is the only creator of the entire universe and thus has absolute authority over all of creation” (Turaki 2010:1459). Minimally, though not exhaustively, Christians share these benefits of *Koinōnia*. Saucy instructs that the sanctification of the Church is positional, but that the sanctification is also a process in the life of the Church which is ongoing until the time when Christ presents his bride, “so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, having no

spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:26-27). The understanding, is in line with John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”, that sanctification is needed to approach this process of sanctification, but that this is the product of the washing in the word of God. Therefore, says Saucy, “The responsibility of the church is to allow the divine purification to work in its midst” (Saucy 1972:96-97).

In light of the stance of Turaki, and that held by Paul, it is arguable that there are certain intrinsic, spiritual elements of unity that are irrevocable due to the nature of God, and the work performed by Christ, and again, Paul affirms this in Romans 12:4-6, “One Spirit”, “One Lord”, and, “One God”. Fundamentally, Ngewa claims that, “God is the caller, the means of unity is faith in his son Jesus Christ” (Ngewa 2010:1457). Paul agrees with this thought in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, that the Body is one.⁶⁴

This unity has initially been described in the metaphor of the building up of the new Temple, and prophesied in Ezekiel 40-48, which was begun with Christ as the foundation ‘stone,’ and continues to be built up as a spiritual house until the consumption of history (Beale 2004:332). This unity Beale continues is in line with the unity of John 17, as the expressed unity in the invisible Temple, housing the presence of the Almighty, conveys witness to the world of that transformational power (Beale 2004:332).

This process is to be continued, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Russell notes that:

...the destination of unity, knowledge, maturity, and full stature is expressed in group rather than individual terms. This is because all of us Christians are

⁶⁴ “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13;NASB).

on this journey together! Both our destinies and growth are inextricably bound (Russell 2000:73).

4.5.5 1 Peter 2:4-5, 1 Corinthians 3:9-11,16; Ephesians 2:19-22 - “Constructive” Unity

The metaphor of a building is woven into several texts of Scripture, and across author lines. Both Paul and Peter weave a corporate picture of the Body of Christ in an edificial description. The foundation, superstructure, purpose and “contents” of the building are described, all in the context of unity of the Body. The Temple or Tabernacle had always been the dwelling place of the presence of God, and was constructed in such a way so as to demonstrate this (See Section 3.8). The Jerusalem Temple however was to see its demise in 70 A.D. at the hands of Titus. Christ however, had prophesied of this coming day and introduced the paradigm shift of the dwelling place of God. Initially introducing the fall of the Temple in John chapter 4, speaking to the woman at the well; “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be his worshipers’” (John 4:21-23). The Temple which Christ would construct was built upon the truth of Peter in Matthew 16:15-18.⁶⁵ Contrary to doctrines of other denominations, the Church will not be built upon Peter (*petros*), a rock, as he would be an insufficient foundation to support the superstructure of the edifice. The new Temple would be constructed upon the truth of Peter’s statement, the *petra*, a mass of rock, that Jesus was the Christ, having the nature of God, and fulfilling the messianic prophecies.

Peter introduces the components of the new Temple in 1 Peter 2:4-5:

⁶⁵ “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it’” (Matthew 16:15-18;NASB).

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The Temple is composed of *living* stones, such as the example of Christ, a building product far exceeding the components of the previous 2 temples (cf. Hebrews 3:3-6). These living stones are the followers of Christ themselves, being transformed into the image of Christ, also acting as the new priesthood, which affirms the priesthood of all believers- the purpose of which is to offer up sacrifices through Christ. Selwyn writes, “Believers are to grow up to salvation not in isolation, but as a community, where members are fastened to Christ as the stones of a temple to the cornerstone” (Selwyn 1958:153). The term translated as “living stones” in the Greek is the term *lithoi* (plural) and *lithos* (singular). Bornkamm holds this to be, in part, stones which are “precious” and of great value (Revelation 4:3; 17:4; 18:12,16; 21:11,19), though discounts the assumption that these must be worked stones (Bornkamm 1990:269). A more accepted exegesis is that, unlike natural stones (*petro*), these are stones which have been meticulously hewn, chiselled and crafted to exacting standards, fit together tightly, whether a “stone used in a building, or a precious stone” (Selwyn 1958:158); Ramsey Michaels holds that *lithos*, “refers not to a natural rock but to a dressed stone ready for use in construction” (Ramsey Michaels 1988:98), which is more in alignment with the flow of the logic of the grammar of the text, the understanding that the stones are worked in a fashion to *be able to be in very close proximity and intimacy with one another*. Blackwell, citing T.K. Cheyne, offers the stones to be of “enormous” size. The stone foundation for this building is subsequently identified as being Jesus the Christ himself (1 Peter 2:6-8), “the Cornerstone” which supports the superstructure of the Church. Paul confirms the foundation being the Christ in 1 Corinthians 3:9-11⁶⁶ and Ephesians

⁶⁶ For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-11; NASB).

2:19-22,⁶⁷ wherein the intimacy (unity) of these materials, the “living stones” is identified.

Initially Paul identifies, in 1 Corinthians, the building and the position of it, that it is placed upon the foundation of Christ, as none other will support it. Paul has, in essence, participated in this project as a contractor of sorts as the “master builder”. Ephesians clarifies the position of the saints as being part of the household of God, announces that the building is again, built upon the truth of Christ as the Messiah (cf. Matthew 16:18), and that it is an edifice “fitted together”. The wording here, *sunarmologeō*, in the Greek, implies the stones rendered closely together, a “tight fit”, so to speak, a vision which speaks to the intended demonstration of unity in the Body, which is in the progressive movement of being built up (Ephesians 2:22, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Corinthians 3:10), and a logical conclusion of usage to the *lithoi* stones announced in 1 Peter 2:5 as well.

The purpose is identified in 1 Peter 2 again, that of offering sacrifices (verse 2), and verse 9, “so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”. The building is called to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. This is only able to happen as the new Temple is indwelt by the very presence of God; “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). This unity of construction in this structure, between the foundation and the stones, and in meticulous precision and closeness of the stones to one another, is able to stand and present the truth of Jesus being the God-given Christ (John 17:21-23).

⁶⁷ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22;NASB).

4.5.6 Matthew 18:8-9; John 15; 1 Corinthians 5:6; Hebrews 12:15 -The Body Broken

The picture given in Scripture is that of a vibrant healthy Body which is the ideal. At times, through self-abasement or valid health concerns, those members are removed as in the process of discipline. As Matthew 18:8-9 points out, the Body is still broken with the absence of any individual under disciplinary procedure, as the gift with which they have been endowed by God is now deficient in the Body, and the Body must adapt in order to perform the same functions as when that member was present.

The visual examples cited are no more severe than in John 15:6, "If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned". Christ points to the lack of value a member of the Body exhibits if it is not performing as sovereignly designed and placed. John 15:2 says, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, he prunes it so that it may bear more fruit", which evidences the healthy church; those individuals which are healthy are pruned to bear more, and those are failing are picked up, off the ground, helped out so they can be healthy, out of the dirt, returned to the trellis, and begin to bear fruit again as they are restored to abiding in the vine (Derickson 1996:34-52); a metaphor of the process of church discipline. A once valid member of the vine, the branch is depleting valuable nutrients and causing harm to the greater structure. The just conclusion is the absence of that member from the Body. Matthew stresses the harm to be caused by maintaining a damaging member in the Body:

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell (Matthew 18:8-9;NASB).

The import is that sanctity may be sacrificed if tolerance of this "diseased" member is allowed to effect, and infect other members in the household, Body, unit or church. Also, implicit is the metaphor of the loaf of bread being tainted by sin, and

that sin having a growing, and devouring effect on the rest of the “loaf”, 1 Corinthians 5:6-7.⁶⁸

Hebrews 12:15 points out the threat from the angle of another metaphor, “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled”, thus describing the abundance of grace to act as a buffer to separation, against the genesis of something so small, that has the potential to powerfully divide and destroy close knit “living stones”, and as a result, defile or destroy many.

The connection between the passages is important; each one of these metaphors of unity is closely connected to the severance of any unproductive, or detrimental members or elements of the greater Body.

4.5.7 Philippians 1:27-2:11 -Sacrificial Unity

One of the greatest expressions of unity is given in Philippians 1:27-2:11.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6-7; NASB).

⁶⁹ 27 “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 in no way alarmed by *your* opponents — which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God. 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me. 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 1:27-2:11;NASB).

Paul is addressing a church which is fairly healthy, one certainly not in as severe shape as the church at Corinth. They are not engaged in any apparent doctrinal failure or moral decay. There are two women who are in disagreement who will be addressed later on in the book, but initially, Paul is seeking to address the relational factor of unity in the opening of this section. It appears as only a “coincidence” that Paul elects to draw upon the emptying out of Christ to communicate the level of sacrifice which attends to servitude. He begins with the exhortation that they be of *one* mind and *one* spirit in verse 27, followed in verse 29 with the very likely possibility that, in order to attain this level, there will be suffering, or self-denial, a surrendering of one’s rights. He continues using the highest certainty of the term *if* to communicate *since* in the first four verses of chapter 2. He states, “if there is any if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion” (v. 2:1). Paul makes it clear, that if there are any signs of these attributes existent in the heart of this church to act upon them (v. 2). Paul is not looking for an affirmation of principles or doctrines, but evidences of caring behavior, demonstrations of love which lead to unity in the Body, unity exhibited in the “same mind”, “same love”, and united in spirit and focused on “one purpose”. The focus should not be egocentric, but on the nurturing of the whole of the Body.

The example which Paul draws upon, is that of Christ, the ultimate expression of love and servitude, the premium bar of giving perfection ever evidenced by any person. Paul exhorts the example to be that which models the one set by Christ himself who, existed in the *morphe* of God, the essence of God, who did not choose to exercise his divine right to continue to grasp (*harpagmos*), cling, or continue to grip that essence. He was however, willing to surrender, relinquish or yield, something of the divine prerogatives, which he already possessed. Paul is asserting, that if anybody ever had the right to embrace his own essence and not “let go”, it was Jesus Christ himself. This kenotic theology is not necessarily within the scope this examination, but clearly, minimally evidences a sacrifice of prerogatives that rightly belonged to the second person of the Trinity, to take on a lessened glory,

the essence (*morphe*) of a slave in order to serve mankind, which ended in the most brutal of deaths reserved for the worst of criminals (Deuteronomy 21:23).

As a result, all of humanity is brought into total subjection to Christ. Verse 9 informs that the outcome of this faithfulness is great reward; Christ is receiving the answer to the prayer, which he prayed in John 17. It seems that Paul's intent was not to impart this intense amount of theology, as he was only using it as an example of the level of sacrifice that church should be willing to go to serve each other and seek unity. Yet, the Holy Spirit was offering up this incredible insight into the pre-incarnate, incarnate and eventual glorification of the God-man, all because of the obedience to serve.

Paul has communicated that the price of unity in the Body of Christ has come at the very expensive cost of the ultimate sacrifice of God.

4.5.8 *The Thread of Marriage as the Ultimate Symbol of Unity*

The theme of marriage in regards to relationship with God is once again furthered in the New Testament; Christ points to a very special meal reserved for a particular group of people. Luke 22:15-16 communicates, "And he said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'" Christ is prophetically announcing what is known as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb revealed in Revelation 19.⁷⁰

The marriage takes place in heaven, after the rapture, as the Bride is presented to Christ. She has "made herself" ready and is wearing the designated appropriate attire to receive her husband, evidencing a condition of purity and

⁷⁰ 7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God" (Revelation 19:7-9;NASB).

faithfulness (cf. Matthew 22:1-14). Most hold that the Bride consists of all believers from Pentecost to the rapture, which are the Bride of Christ; those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb are the other saints, which are outside the dispensation of the Church. This is the culmination of the process identified in Ephesians 5:25-27, 30-31.⁷¹

The process of the cleansing of the Church has been continuing since the redemption of the Church. Sanctification has been taking place experientially so that the Bride can be presented purified and without defect, to a holy Husband, and “consummation” is able to take place. The “oneness” from Genesis is once again drawn upon to communicate the unity in Christ, and the fact that marriage is an exclusive love, and the unity of one flesh is dependant upon the purity of the Bride; “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32). This mystery regarding unity is referred to by some as the *Unio Mystica* which seeks to identify and define the union described in Ephesians 5:32, John 14, and 17; this interpenetrational union, or communion with God is thought to be defined as a privilege to all believers, whether habitual or transient, as it is a “mysterious union of essence” (Martin 2001:1231).

Paul was guarding this process as he wrote to the Corinthians, “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2;NASB).

As such, the words of Christ in responding to the Pharisees in Mark 12:18-25 make clear, the reason there is no marriage in heaven is because the Bride is to be dedicated to one spouse- the Lord Jesus Christ, and the time now on earth is

⁷¹ 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless...30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh (Ephesians 5:25-27, 30-31;NASB).

dedicated to the anticipation by the Bride for her wedding day (Matthew 25:1-11) marked by purity and unity of mind.

4.6 Fellowship Meals and the Eucharistic Words of Christ

“This do in remembrance of me”. Those who have been around the Church for any amount of time have heard this command from Luke 22:19 many times. It is generally understood to be some of the last words of Christ to his apostles at the Last Supper; yet, little about the actual celebration is described in Scripture (Richardson 1958). In modern church practice these words usually are followed by a small cup of grape juice or wine, and a small piece of bread. As a response to this command for nearly 2000 years, Christians all over the world gather together on a regular basis to “celebrate” the Lord’s Supper as it has been called. Although it is celebrated in very much the same way across most denominations, in a worship service, in a time of observed silence, as plates filled with the elements are passed before the members, there is great debate as to what the words, “This do in remembrance of me” actually connote.

From Genesis 3:15 through the New Testament, the progressive revelation of Scripture yields an ever-clearer picture of redemption, that restoration of fallen man to God would come through sacrifice. The book of Exodus reveals that the Israelites are granted deliverance from Egypt because they are covered by the blood of a sacrificed lamb, an event so significant the Lord commanded that it be remembered regularly in the Passover celebration. The significance of the sacrificial system is expanded throughout the Old Testament to reveal the covering of sin would come at the expense of blood being shed. Leviticus identifies the specifics mandated by God for his holy presence to dwell among the Israelites. Isaiah 53 informs that a great sacrifice, the perfect sacrificial Lamb would be provided in the form of a man, the Messiah sent from heaven, and that all sins would be placed upon him. As a result, mankind would have the opportunity to be delivered from sin and restored to God.

As the time nears for Christ to be offered up as the supreme sacrifice, he chooses to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples. It is during this meal that Christ establishes the institution of the Lord’s Supper. It seems clear that early

church participants interpreted this initial Supper in light of the Old Testament Passover, or *Pesach* theology (Richardson 1958; Wallace 1960; Eckstein 1984; Thurian 1984; Berquist 2006), which had been the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7 (Rosen 2006), that the Messiah would be as a lamb led to slaughter. Paul clearly understands Christ to be our Passover Lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7, and 1 Peter 1:19 further identifies Christ as the Lamb without spot or blemish, and thus, qualifies to be such a perfect sacrifice (Rosen 2006). The New Testament identifies Jesus as being the Lamb of God more than 39 times (Rosen 2006), thus affirming that the ordinance is the “new practice built on ancient foundations” found in the Old Testament sacrificial directives (Berquist 2006).

Having been established for the nourishment of believers, the Lord’s Supper reflects the sacred union Christ has with his Bride, therefore, as it is written in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, “In the present world, the righteous and the wicked are mingled together in the common affairs of life, but not in the holy communion” (Bercot 1998:214 [7.401]). 1 Corinthians 10:16, “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the Body of Christ?” identifies in large measure the engagement with which a believer is able to share perichoretically in the event of this ordinance. This perichoretical language is more evidenced in the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions of the event, further reflecting and announcing the intimacy of the event, manifested in the theology of transubstantiation, the transformation of the elements into the actual Body of Christ, and consubstantiation, that Christ is evident in the elements “in, with and under” referencing the real presence of Christ.

To Zwingli the purpose of the Lord’s Supper was to reflect upon the benefits received according to the purchase of Christ’s death. Hodges affirms that the ordinances were to be entitled to those who were ‘judged’ to be regenerate (Hodge III 1986:571). Zwingli approached his doctrinal understanding and praxis founded upon strict and specific scriptural warrant (Noll 2001:1312). Childs elucidates that, “The material elements become in some unexplained way the instrument of a relationship with the living Christ which is at once individual and corporate” (Childs 1092:357). He continues:

Koinōnia was not a merely superficial or accidental attribute of the new Christian Society. It was something in which the life of the community revealed its innermost essence; and its fundamental importance was proclaimed every time Christian believers engaged together in the central act of their worship. They were a *koinōnia*, not in the sense of a voluntary association of like-minded individual, but by virtue of the creative influence of the Holy Spirit continuously at work, uniting them as persons to the living Christ and to one another in Him (Childs 1952:358).

Revelation 3:20 makes it clear the greater affirmation of communion is the position of fellowship, that one is walking in and with the Lord, and that presupposes that a person is in a salvific relationship with Christ. Jeremias suggests that the term *koinōnia* may be better translated as “table fellowship” in that it is a remembrance of the horizontal and vertical fellowship Christians have in Christ (Jeremias 1966:120). He states, “For every oriental table fellowship is a guarantee of peace, of trust, of brotherhood. Table fellowship is a fellowship of life. Table fellowship with Jesus is more” (Jeremias 1966:204).

As was pointed out in section 3:7, the idea of purity was communicated in the absence of the leaven in the bread. Christ has used wine the establishment of this remembrance in addition to the “yeastless” starch. One must see the purificatory agent in the wine, the alcohol, serves to symbolize the cleansing agent of the blood of Christ. Pauls words to the Corinthian church are, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing, which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the Body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:14-17). After the exhortation to be clean, and not enticed, lured or captive to any other gods, Paul expresses the unity, described in the “one loaf” comment, and in the need to be pure, again drawing from the 1 Corinthians 5:6 information. Jeremias adds to this argument stating that John 13:10, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all *of you*”, endorses the idea that the Last Supper was to be eaten in a state of Levitical purity. “Levitical purity was not required of the laity for their ordinary meals, but it was for partaking of the Passover lamb...” (Jeremias 1966:49). The eschatological focus of the purity of the unleavened bread, and the absence of any defilement in the wine due to the alcohol

assure purity in the fellowship and at the coming of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:26 Paul addresses the continuance of this event, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”, thus furthering the eschatological focus of the memorial.

4.6.1 One Loaf of Unleavened Bread

Two forces are indeed in consideration in the following passages, the illustration of the unity of the Body, and the failure to maintain purity in the context of that Body. The necessity for the purity is defined throughout Exodus 12, but specifically concluded in Exodus 12:20 and 34, “You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread”, and, “So the people took their dough before it was leavened, *with* their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders”. The need to govern impurities in this pure medium is expressed in several New Testament passages.

If the first piece *of dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too (Romans, 11:16).

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:6-7;NASB).

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion *did not come* from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. (Galatians 5:7-12;NASB).

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:16-17;NASB).

Grudem holds that a person who is excommunicated is forbidden to take of the Lords Supper, since that is a sign of “partaking in the unity of the church”

(Grudem 1994:898). The implication being, that person brings a measure of impurity to the table, thus compromising the others with impure fellowship (Mohler 1998:178-179). Paul is “exasperated with a congregation he has already warned” (Mohler 1998:178), and is pleading with them to reject the factious, person of leaven from their midst (Refer to section 4.7.3).

Yoder writes at length of the Corinthians text:

The church is the lump of dough, all of which will be caused to ferment by the presence of a few yeast cells within it. Paul thus says that there is a kind of moral solidarity linking all the members of the body, so that if individuals persist in disobedience within the fellowship, their guilt is no longer the moral responsibility of those individuals alone but becomes a kind of collective blame shared by the whole body. I should deal with my brother’s sin because he and I are members of one another; unless I am the agent of his sharing in restoration, he is the agent of my sharing guilt (Yoder 1985:220; cf. Ezekiel 33:6).

4.6.2 A Demonstration of Unity

If Christians truly believe that communion is a memorial, then this act is evidentiary of the spiritual *koinōnia*, both to the community of saints and to the entire culture at large. It primarily evidences the Christians identity in Christ, and the redemptive work on behalf of the elect, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Witherington also suggests that Luke sees the meal as, “a fellowship meal that has a horizontal dimension binding the disciples to one another and so should be partaken of with great regularity to reinforce that bond” (Witherington 2007:31).

4.7 Excommunication

The most extreme form of ecclesiastical discipline finds true definition in only a few texts of the New Testament, but that no less negates its validity; it is excommunication. Anderson defines it: “Excommunication, which comes from the Latin *excommunicatio*, which means to be away from communication, or, being separated from the fellowship with the community of believers due to some sin or

false teaching” (Anderson 2002:151). Laney holds that it means to come out from fellowship; “It refers to the cutting off of a person from church membership, fellowship, or communion” (Laney 1985:56). Grudem restricts excommunication to individuals in the case of extreme church discipline, never to be exercised against entire whole churches or groups of Christians (Grudem 1994:883).

4.7.1 Matthean Excommunication -Matthew 16:19; 18:18

Along with John 20:23, Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18 are strong examples of textual support for the action of excommunication, most notably in reference to the “binding and loosing” of individuals. As Bowe states, “These terms refer both to authoritative teaching and judgments about the inclusion or exclusion from the community”. She continues the thought as she claims that the power to loose and bind is indeed given to the entire community in Matthew 18:18, but only after repeated attempts to convince the offender to repent. She does maintain that this systematic procedure introduced in Matthew 18 is a three-fold endeavor of “punishment”, which “was not taken lightly nor exercised without extreme caution” (Collegeville 1996:281). Notable is the standing that excommunication is considered by her to be a punishment, rather than part of the overall picture of restoration. Horton argues against this, stating that the office of “key holder”, pertaining to Peter, is categorically extended to the apostolate in Matthew 18 as “ecclesiastical court for the settling of disputes” (Horton 2011: 894). Furthermore in a slight state of confusion, he stipulates that, “In any case, none of us has the right to excommunicate others or ourselves; this solemn responsibility is given to the elders” yet, contrary to the view of Bowe asserts that, “...we should come under the discipline of the church and allow its admonitions and censures to lead us to repentance” (Horton 2011:819). Mohler notes that as the entire church acts in this most extreme way, “the congregation now bears a corporate responsibility”, and “The congregation is not to consider the former brother as a part of the church”, and “We should note that the church should still bear witness to this man, but not as brother to brother, until and unless repentance and restoration are evident” (Mohler 1998:179).

4.7.2 Johannine Excommunication John 12:31, 20:23

In John 6:37, Jesus uses the term excommunicated (*ekballo*) to express a positive attribute, that of having acceptance in the fellowship of Christ, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”. The term however may be used at times in a less volatile way than excommunication. It may reflect “leading out”, or “sending out”, “leave out”, or “take forth”. Hence, as always the context will help identify the tone of the term being used (Hauck 1964:528).

John 20:23 says, “If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained”. Paralleling the passage in Matthew 18, this idea again communicates the understanding of the apostles as having authority to both cast out individuals in violation of the orthodox and behavioral standards of the church, as well as the authorization to, in some way, acknowledge salvation of any given repentant individual.

As noted in the doctrinal section of 4.2, an individual holding to aberrant doctrine was to be refused hospitality and publicly called out, and the understanding of 3 John 9-10 illustrates this position in the reference of just such a case involving a man named Diotrephes:

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church (3 John 9-10; NASB).

4.7.3 Pauline Excommunication -1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:4-11

Obviously one of Pauls major texts in the context of excommunication is 1 Corinthians 5:1-13,⁷² where his understanding of excommunication is clarified (Collegeville 1996:281), involving an individual who is involved in incest.

Paul begins his indictment against the entire church in Corinth for being so tolerant of sin, sin which would predictably offend even pagans, and they have done so in arrogance, tacitly endorsing an incestuous relationship. White says that Paul was communicating that the church in Corinth should “Mourn for an impure church”, that she has broken her fellowship with a righteous God and doesn’t seem to care (White 1985:103). Paul attempts to rally the Corinthians to action and endorses expulsion from the community that it would turn this man’s life around to obedience, not that the man would be thrown to the judgments of Satan, and that the fellowship would not be impurely affected.⁷³ The church thus bears the corporate responsibility of obedience. Strong holds that it is a “majority vote” which will determine the man’s

⁷² 1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; NASB).

⁷³ The Gages argue that, “The Corinthian believers were never told to follow the procedure outlined in Matthew [at least in earlier steps]. The man to be censured was not to be given an opportunity for private repentance for a public act of immorality...we believe we may safely assume that only one action should stop *the disciplinary process outlined in 1 Corinthians 5*- a public acknowledgement of repentance by the one to be censured. Once that is made, certainly the exclusion process would be interrupted” (Gage 1984:35-36).

outcome (Strong 1907:925). Paul could have exerted his apostolic authority alone but “he throws all the responsibility upon the whole body of believers” (Strong 1907:907) (cf. Numbers 15:35, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp’”). “Every Israelite”, says Strong, “was to have a part in the execution of the penalty” (Strong 1907:907).

Possibly drawing from Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7, 12; 21:21; or 22:21, Paul’s instruction is to expel the individual from the community “so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst”, “to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”. As the offender has removed himself out from “under the mighty hand of God” (cf. 1 Peter 5:6), he has exposed himself to the roaring lion that is seeking someone to devour. Indeed the expulsion is not to include a loss of the individual’s salvation, but rather, Bowe’s holds, it is to be handed over to the “non-Christian world where Satan reigns” (Collegeville 1996:281); the removed individual is not to even be able to participate in the simple act of eating a meal (1 Corinthians 5:11).⁷⁴

This “punishment”, or consequence is to be in effect until such time as the errant individual repents of this sin, and desires to return to doctrinal or behavioral compliance, and verse 12 communicates that fellow Christians do indeed have the right to judge those within the Church, meaning, to discern whether behavior is in accordance to the word of God.⁷⁵ The intent of expulsion is that the offender so misses the true *koinōnia* and longs to come back to the fold. Mohler states that, “The open sin in their midst is like a cancer that, left unchecked, will spread throughout the entire body” (Mohler 1998:179). The final command expresses the

⁷⁴ In a similar regard, Hymenaeus and Alexander are addressed in 1 Timothy 1:19-20: Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:19-20;NASB).

⁷⁵ Bargerhuff notes, “We must remember that the principle of “binding and loosing” teach us that when the church appropriately acts in matters of discipline and restoration, God is acting along with them and through them. Therefore, in this situation in Corinth, God is acting through the church’s discipline to reveal his claim on the man as a legitimate son (Heb 12:7-8 (Bargerhuff 2010:171).

general statement to purge all evil men from the assembly, verse 11 having made the severe command that meals are not even to be shared with such a person.

Paul addresses the forgiveness of this person in 2 Corinthians 2:4-11⁷⁶ after such point the exiled sinner is received back in to the community.⁷⁷ This action to which Paul is referring to is indeed condoning excommunication (Religious 1891:645 v.1), and the subsequent re-acceptance upon repentance. Bargerhuff claims, “the church that once acted resolutely in *discipline*, should now act with just as much urgency and swiftness in *forgiving* and *restoring* him (Bargerhuff 2010:170-171).

The individual is to be restored upon the repentance of his act, that he might not be pushed to the point of absolute depression and breakdown, or anything approaching abject emotional and relational bankruptcy; the sanction needs to be replaced by love and forgiveness (Coulibaly 2010:1427). What is presumed here is the act of sincere repentance on the part of the offender, to the point of changed behavior and heart. As White writes, “Repentance does not *earn* forgiveness. Christ paid for our forgiveness by his death” (White 1985:157). What repentance does is identify that the individual has changed, and can be loosed from the bonds of separation. What must also be noted here in verse 6, “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority”,⁷⁸ the plurality of members who

⁷⁶ “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you. But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree — in order not to say too much — to all of you. Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort *him*, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him. For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. But one whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:4-11;NASB).

⁷⁷ Garland argues that, “while a case can be made for the incestuous man as Paul’s nemesis, final certainty eludes us” (Garland 1999:123). Hays counters, “Even if 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 refers to a case different from that of the incestuous man, it demonstrates Paul’s belief that stern community discipline can lead to transformation and reintegration into the life of the community...likewise, the other major New Testament passages on community discipline envision forgiveness and reconciliation as the ultimate goal of the community action...it is clear that forgiveness *does not take the place of* discipline; rather it *follows* clear community discipline and authentic repentance” (Hays 1997:86; Bargerhuff 2010:170).

⁷⁸ The word *inflicted* is not in the Greek texts, but is inserted into the NIV and the NASB. Barrett argues, that the word *epitimia* which is translated as “punishment” would be best translated “reproof,”

are involved in the disciplinary, excommunicative process, are reinforcement of the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:18-20. Verses 8-9, “Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him. For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things”, affirm that the church in Corinth has passed the test issued by Paul of purity, and turning from their arrogance to desire righteousness among themselves once again. Finally, verse 11, reminds them that they have not fallen to the schemes of destruction of the devil and have refused the “roots of bitterness” which sever unity.⁷⁹

To a lesser degree Paul commands the withholding of food from certain individuals in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 in order to motivate individuals to perform work deserving of receiving work. “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either”. This is a well-commissioned strategy in the Qumran community as well as the exhortation by Paul (Collegeville 1996:281).

Finally, Paul counsels social ostracism in light of the doctrinal (heretical) and behavioral positions that prompt his advice in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 and Titus 3:10:

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

Reject a factious man after a first and second warning (Titus 3:10).

The element of forgiveness is crucial on both sides of the equation as 1 John 4:20 identifies, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (cf. 1 John 2:9,11, 3:15).

citing the verbal forms of it are found in the New Testament twenty-nine times, where the idea is more a rebuke or a reproof than a punishment” (Barrett 1973:90; Bargerhuff 2010:169).

⁷⁹ In comparing Matthew 18:15-20 to 1 Corinthians 5, Rosner writes, “In both passages, the whole church is involved in the process of excommunication (1 Cor 5:4; Matt 18:17). Secondly, in both cases, the Lord Jesus is the real agent in the judgment...in the third place, both 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18:15-20 share a concern for the welfare of the sinner” (Rosner 1992:89).

4.7.4 Reconciliation -Matthew 5:23-24

The urgency for reconciliation is so important that Christ exhorts those who are engaged in the act of worship to cease if they realize that there is ill will between them and their brother. Christ is referring to brothers as those with whom there is to be unity.

23 “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Matthew 5:23-24; NASB).

A major gleaning here is that the onus of initiation is upon the person who knows another has ill will towards him or her (Grudem 1994:897). Whether Christians have offended, or another has sinned, the end goal is one of restoration in the Body. Grudem finishes, “Jesus does not allow us to wait for the other person to come to us” (Grudem 1994:897). The exception would obviously be if that person who had a grudge was corporately banished as an act of church discipline.

Yoder communicates that when utilized in conjunction with Matthew 18:15-20, the urgency of reconciliation is seen; both parties, whether offended or not, are required to seek reconciliation (Yoder 1985:219). That individual who has offended in Matthew 18:15 is to initiate a meeting once he is aware of his own offense. Strong words it well: “These rules impose a duty upon both the offending and the offended party” (Strong 1907:924). In this sense then, “The *reconciliation* with one’s brother or sister is prerequisite to valid worship” (Yoder 1985:221).

4.7.5 Anathematization

Distinction needs to be drawn of the difference between the words “excommunication” and “anathematization”. Calvin points out that although excommunication is a viable tool to be used in the carrying out of church discipline, *anathema* rarely if ever is to be used (Calvin 2008:817-818). Anathemas appeared in response to all of the major doctrinal controversies in Church history as well as gross immorality (Anderson 2002:158-159,237). Anderson further describes that,

“Anathemas were pronounced against Arianism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism, Filioque Controversy, *Sola Fide* and other Protestant doctrines, modern Liberalism, and denial of Papal Infallibility” (Anderson 2002:159).

Bowe holds that that the concept of anathematization in the New Testament is the understanding of one being accused, more specifically, “one who is separated from the community” (Collegeville 1996:280). Paul supports this mindset in Romans 9:3, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 16:22, and Galatians 1:8,9; the idea being that the permanence of one who was accursed differed from one who was allowed to “return to the fold”, thus receiving a more temporary, or conditional acceptance back into the community. Those accused were to be separated from the community in order to preserve holiness (Collegeville 1996:280).

Specifically Paul pronounces a curse on any person who would preach a different gospel other than his own (Galatians 1:8-9), or upon any person who would fail to love the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:22), anathema as prescription against disloyalty to Christ (Anderson 2002:105). He does however fail to describe how these anathematizations are to be practiced among the community (Collegeville 1996:281). 1 Corinthians 12:3 assures that no one speaking by the Spirit could actually declare this curse upon Jesus.⁸⁰ And Paul reveals to what extent he is willing to go in order to secure the salvation of the Jews to Christ in Romans 9:3, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh”. Once again, as he does not describe what this looks like in practice, it is difficult to understand, but the tone and demeanor of the texts reveal that Paul holds anathematization to be of the strictest form of discipline leaning toward absolute punishment (judgment) of the given individual. Paul further endorses this action to Timothy in regards to individuals who have once embraced Christ, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and

⁸⁰ “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1Corinthians 12:3;NASB).

Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:18-20). As can be perceived, this extreme action of anathematization is deemed essential by the apostle at times, for the greater good of eternal benefit. It has long been an historical practice “to be a tool of the evangelical theologian against those who seduce the church by teaching a false gospel” (Anderson 2002:3).

Jews employed this sort of action toward those who were guilty of violating religious, or moral offences against the synagogue or the Jewish faith, once again a parallel understanding of both doctrinal and/or behavioral compliance. Those dubbed heretics or sectarians, of which Christians would be included, were dispelled from the community (Collegeville 1996:281). Hence, it is easy to see from which tradition the early Christians gleaned this custom.

Catholic theology would express this anathema both in the loss of salvation and in the subsequent expulsion from the Roman Catholic Church; both actions being inextricably linked to one another. Those sins for which one may find himself permanently ousted were those who renounced the Catholic faith or perhaps, committed those sins which were considered mortal by their confession. “Excommunication with anathematization went beyond the mere exclusion from the Eucharist and other sacraments” (Anderson 2002:154). Mere excommunication in the Catholic tradition would not forfeit the divine grace, “for that is forfeited only by mortal sin. Neither does he or she cease to be a Christian, since excommunication cannot remove the indelible character imprinted on the soul by baptism. He or she loses the rights of membership in the church but is not released from the obligations, acquired at baptism, of affiliation with it” (Piggin 2001 423).

In addition to the temporal excommunication from the Christian community, as an axiomatic rule, anathematization would be the pronouncement of an eschatological retribution (eternal damnation), of an individual (apostate) for the errant doctrine they hold and preach (Anderson 2002:5,167,193), *were they not to change* and come back into right understanding. At that point it seems clear that the individual, though perhaps incurring some residual temporal punishment, would be absolved of banishment from the Community. “Thus, the view that anathema was the most severe form of excommunication was widely held” (Anderson 2002:154),

yet even the end goal of anathema is restoration and purity of the Body (Anderson 2002:237-237). Anderson posits:

First, attempts must be made to establish an understanding of the boundaries of the evangelical church. Anathematization is for when a member chooses to step outside them. Boundaries are simply "enforced doctrinal statements" (Anderson 2002:251).

Citing Beinert, Anderson notes, "For the Christian, the anathema (curse) of delivering a brother to Satan is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end that accords with the one goal of saving every man" (Anderson 2002:239).

4.8 Sacred Space and the Purity of God

As noted earlier, the profane or unholy will not be granted an audience before the living and holy God (Revelation 21:27). One is only allowed to approach the throne covered, or washed in the blood of Christ, a model foreshadowed in the Tabernacle and Temple services, and described in the Book of John chapter 12. The Tabernacle is the place where heaven and earth meet, where God and Man commune with one another. Jesus Christ is the person in which God and man meet, as the hypostatic union of the theanthropic man. The anointing oil mentioned in Exodus 30:22-25 foreshadows the anointing of Christ in John 12:1-8.⁸¹

Examination of the Matthew 26, and Mark 14 will identify that Jesus' head was anointed as well. The highest of priests is anointed with very costly oil in preparation

⁸¹ 1 "Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. 3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me" (John 12:1-8, NASB).

of going before the altar of the Cross, and into the heavenly Holy of Holies. The Palm Sunday passage is announcing the importance of this act.

12 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and *began* to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD, even the King of Israel." 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "Fear not daughter of Zion; behold your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt" (John 12:12-14; NASB).

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD", is the final hymn that is sung at the end of the Passover meal. It is known as the Hallel, the 118th Psalm, and it is sung in anticipation of the coming messiah. Jesus Christ begins to make his way into Jerusalem. He is anointed in preparation to enter into the Holy of Holies, yet not one made with hands. And yet, he is only anointed with the oil, there is no blood on his lobe, there is no blood on his thumb, there is blood on his big toe; the sacrifice which is going to be offered for the sins of the people comes from his own veins. It is going to fall upon that altar of the Cross. He rides into Jerusalem and in the same way as the priest who stands before the veil prior to entering, so does the Son of Man.

The book of Romans presents a clear picture of the obedient nature demanded of God.⁸²

⁸²18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Romans chapter 1 demonstrates the desire of God to engage in a relationship with mankind, even though mankind is intrinsically sinful. God has made himself known internally, “because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them” (Romans 1:19). Though mankind suppresses the truth (Romans 1:18), and denies God his glory (v.23), honor (v.21), and even acknowledgement of his very existence (v.28), God has still demonstrated that he wanted a relationship. However, mankind was “foolish” in their “wise proclamations”, that they preferred their deviant morality (v. 24), degrading passions (v. 26, and their depraved thinking (v. 28) that God was willing to take away any hand of protection that may have been upon them.

The consequences identified specifically in verses 24, 26, and 28 are an abandonment of God’s presence in the lives of these individuals. The terminology of the NASB indicates that God “gave them over”. Of the various sorts of wrath presented in the Bible, eternal, eschatological, or consequential, one noted by Swindoll seems the most applicable in the understanding of these people. Swindoll terms this sort of wrath as abandonment of these individuals, due to their preferred style of living, and *their* rejection of God; the term is *judicial abandonment*. Judicial abandonment is a passive forsaking of humanity to the consequences of their evil intentions (Swindoll 2010:25). In effect, it is the willingness of God to allow errant man to exercise his freewill absent divine protection, resulting in a negative consequence. The picture here is not that of divine punishment being doled out, rather allowing the errant individuals to run their own course of destruction. Although this does not seem to be identifying eternal punishment in the assessment of wrath (v. 1:18), one must note that the end result of the abandonment of God is eternal separation from God, that is of course unless something is done that restores this lost relationship with God.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them” (Romans 1:1-32; NASB).

4.8.1 The Priestly Role of Christ

Jesus, having been anointed in Bethany for entry into the heavenly Holy of Holies, having been sacrificed upon the altar of the Cross, stands before the veil, fully prepared to be the sacrifice offered, and the one who offers the sacrifice in the blueprint of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. As Walton holds, “it is the position of the priest to maintain the equilibrium once disturbed in the Garden, and Christ is sent to re-establish this lost balance, and access to the holy, evidenced in the tearing of the veil” (Walton 2012: 297). Matthew 27:45 states, “Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour”. This verse communicates that the subsequent events taking place are going to happen in ultimate darkness. Darkness has come over the entire land, such as had preceded the Passover. The deliverance which was going to take place through the Christ is preceded under the veil of darkness, suggesting the severity of the events which were about to take place. The Christ would be rejected because of the mantle of sin placed upon him, such that separation was immanent, and is pronounced in verse 46. “About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” The consequences of Christ being made sin on the behalf of mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21) is demonstrated in the Christological separation expanded in section 5.6. The people standing around misunderstand that Christ is calling for the prophet Elijah, because he is calling in Aramaic, but it is a direct appeal to God. The people, as well as the Roman soldiers were unaware of the spiritual significance of what was occurring, understanding it to be just another execution.

Verse 48 says, “Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave him a drink”. The mocking of Christ is continued as the event of crucifixion turns to mere entertainment. As Jesus yielded up his spirit, which expresses the death of Jesus, he surrendered his breath (verse 49) in order to complete his work on the Cross, but the blood still needed to be offered in the heavenly Temple.

The affect upon the natural world was cataclysmic, and the veil in the Temple was torn in two, and rocks split, presumably still under the cover of darkness. As well, graves of saints departed are opened and surrender their lot, “And behold, the

veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:51-53). Licona, although mostly alone among conservative inerrantists, believes the individuals coming forth from the tombs, are nothing more than apocalyptic reference in the midst of an otherwise historical narrative of the rest of the passage, thus casting dispersion on the inerrancy of the text (Licona 2013). Quarles contrasts this view, and affirms that, “Matthew intended for readers to understand the words as descriptions of actual occurrences”, rather than a mere poetic device (Licona 2013).

Jesus communicates to his disciples in John 14, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him or know him, *but* you know him because he abides with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17). In pronouncing the location of the living God inhabiting the dwelling place of man, he is prophesying the consecratory element of his sacrifice. As the Temple, and its implements needed to be consecrated before the Lord would dwell in it, so the temples of humans needed to be cleansed by the work of the High Priest so that God could and would dwell in them. Like in the Old Testament, God was abiding with or upon individuals, but it wasn’t until Pentecost, that God would dwell inside mankind, and that was only subsequent to the purificatory work of Christ.

4.8.2 Romans 12:1-2 -Worshipping without Blemish

Saucy asserts that the, “primary sacrifice is of the believer himself”, and that, “the effect of this sacrifice is the gradual transformation of the entire person” (Saucy 1972:42).

2 Timothy 2:19 reads, “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’” The next two verses communicate in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, “Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some

to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work". The reason for this is inexorably linked to the service believers are to perform for the Lord, and exhorted in Romans 12:1, "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship". Christians are to be as holy and acceptable a sacrifice as those offered in the Temple.

4.8.3 "Saints" *Hagios* 2 Corinthians 6:16-17

Generally when the word "saints" is utilized, the inclination is to think of certain individuals in the Bible, or maybe even people who have been deemed saints by a church organization, but actually, it refers to anybody who is a true Christian; a true follower of Christ is a "saint" in the light of Scripture.

There are two terms used in the Old Testament to refer to something that is *holy*, the terms *qados* and *hasid*; something or someone which was by nature holy, or had been "admitted to the sphere of the sacred by divine rite"; that divine rite was the offering of sacrifices (Mounce 2006:609). Harrison communicates that the term *qados*, is the separation unto God" (Harrison 2001:1049). Thus, it was separated from, or set apart for something else, often a separation of the holy from the profane. In the religious sense, something "saintly", is something that has been set apart for God, or even God himself. The basis of separation was that of the objects "holiness". In other words, something or someone who was impure was not to be in proximity to a holy and righteous God, for example the implements used in the Temple if they were unclean. Something which was "holy", was to be consecrated or dedicated to the work of the Lord, like the priests for example, and therefore, were to keep themselves pure. The term *hasid* reflects "godliness grounded on the reception of God's mercy" (Harrison 2001:1049).

New Testament usage is more precise in using the word *saint* to identify *people* as holy, specifically people who have been made holy by the ultimate sacrifice, the shed blood of Christ (Mounce 2006:609). What that means is that Christians have been made holy for a purpose, for the purpose of serving the Lord and by implication are separated unto the Lord.

The predicament is that Christians live in an unholy world, where they are drawn at times to compromise. Paul reminds believers of God's words in 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, "'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean.'" The picture is that God wants to dwell with his people, yet in order to enjoy the continued, unrestrained nurturing presence (fellowship) of the Lord, there is a need to maintain a holy lifestyle. Grudem asserts:

Consistent with this New Testament emphasis on unity of believers is the fact that the direct commands to *separate* from other people are always commands to separate *from unbelievers* not from Christians with whom one disagrees...Of course there is a kind of church discipline that requires separation from an individual who is causing trouble within the church (Grudem 1994:877).

He even suggests that "there are no direct New Testament commands to separate from Christians with whom one has doctrinal differences (unless those differences involve such serious heresy that the Christian faith itself is denied)" (Grudem 1994:877).

Yet, how do Christians do that in a world in which they are to be engaged in the proclamation of the gospel? How are they to be in the world, and yet not of it? The answer is, that God doesn't say "*don't* go into the world", but rather, "do not be conformed to this world", (Romans 12:2). That means that believers are challenged to walk pure through the murky ungodliness of the culture.

In the Gospel of John as Jesus is washing the feet of the disciples, "Peter said to him, 'Never shall you wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean'" (John 13:8-10). Jesus is affirming that Peter is secure positionally in Christ, but needs to be cleansed, or re-consecrated, rededicated and prepared to go into the world to represent Christ.

Nelson notes that this sacred space of God is currently seen in the local church:

“If there is an appropriate use of sacred space language, then it would be a reference to the physical body of the believer or the physical body of believers gathered together in the local church context” as the local church is where the empty souls are filled with the presence of Christ (Nelson 2009:90).

Therefore, Williams adds, “The Bible’s focus is not on individual Christians, but on the transformation of a new kind of community, a new humanity that is indwelt by the Spirit”... Categorized by the mission to communicate the gospel to the ends of the earth, this diffusion of the sacred into what once was profane space increased exponentially as the gospel entered new cultures (Williams P 2007:117). “The local church”, Nelson affirms, “is the dwelling *people* and the dwelling *place* of God” (Nelson 2009:99).

4.8.4 Ephesians 2:13

Phillips says, “at the moment of conversion we are espoused to the Lord Jesus and receive the ‘engagement ring’, the earnest, of the Holy Spirit” (Phillips 1974:242; Boring 1989:193). In essence, both the picture of relationship and proximity, are communicated in this statement. Ephesians 2:13 communicates that, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”, in response to verse 12, which says, “you were at that time separate from Christ”. The nearness is only allowed as the purity is delivered through the blood of Christ. As 2 Peter 1:4 affirms, “For by these he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”.

4.9 Synthesis of Texts

One would definitely need to keep in mind the importance of the biblical translation of verse 15 of Matthew 18, as much rests on the mandated actions to be performed. If indeed an offense is to be addressed only by the offended party, many sins, at least in light of this passage, would not be able to be confronted at all, i.e.

murder, kidnapping, etc., crimes in which a third party would not be granted permission to correct, as they were not the offended party. Therefore, in light of the better manuscripts which seem to be more accurate, the onus of correction is not merely upon the individual who was offended, but upon any person who is aware of a sin in another believer's life. In light of this train of thought one conclusion is that the sin being referred to is not of a "personal" irritation, but rather an offence, which is clearly against the word or will of God. If one thing is clear in the context of scripture, it is the mandate that sin be dealt with. Matthew 18 does not leave as an option the prospect of *not* addressing the sin of the erring brother or sister. Leviticus 19:17-18 holds, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD". Simply stated, if the sin is ignored, sin is incurred upon the individual not correcting, and is an act of hate against the brother who is engaged in the act of sinning.

As Marshall observes:

The goal of every type of church discipline, whether it is admonition, public rebuke, or social ostracism, is not merely the maintenance of group boundaries, though this is essential for the survival and flourishing of any community committed to a distinctive way of life; the ultimate goal is always repentance and restoration of the offender to fellowship (Marshall 2001:161).

Morris' claims Matthew 18:17 does not indeed refer to the action of the church, but rather to the mere actions of the one offended which seems to be in error. One would have to pose the question why an individual would be able to shun, but not have the support of the entire church Body. Does not the erring party stand to contaminate the entirety of the flock, and further the inappropriate behavior to others in the flock? In summation on this point, France seems to indicate that the usage of "gentiles and tax-collector" "represents the traditional Jewish assumption of superiority as the people of God", and such terms would seem to stand for people who have no proper place among the holy people of God and are thus, to be shunned, and refused table fellowship (France 2007:694). This position seems to stand in stark contrast to that of only a personal shunning, but he himself confesses

this “personal” interpretation would make nonsense of the sequence of the immediate verses (France 2007:694). What this communicates in practical terms is that when an individual is released from local church fellowship, or placed under excommunication by the leadership and the plurality, he is to be considered excommunicated from the global church so as to enforce the act; he is not however, terminated from the Church universal (eternal). If an individual elects to attend a different church, then the logical procedure would be for the leadership to go to that church and communicate the action carried out in regards to the excommunicated individual, so that he would not affect the health of that flock.

What the text of Matthew 18:21-35 teaches in great part is that it is part of the responsibility of man to forgive those who have offended him, and more so God, if the offenders have truly repented of the transgressions. This forgiveness needs to be expressed in the dutiful restoration to the Body of Christ, and fellowship in the workings of the Church, and it must be, as the text says, from the heart, it cannot be merely a superficial, external demonstration lacking sincerity, as this would not suffice in God’s paradigm. Christians are however, at a loss to determine the timeframe of such reintroduction into employment of spiritual gifts, or in intimate, personal relationships; such benefits of relationship may need to be investigated and tested along the way. A cornerstone of understanding is that the more battles in which the Body of Christ is engaged, whether outside the Body or internally, those are resources which are not being directed toward the very commission to which the Church has been assigned (Matthew 28:18-20). As a result, whatever the cause for distraction, Satan’s work ensues while the work which Christians have been given to do at best has been delayed, and at worst denied altogether.

The very pattern of forgiveness to be extended to those who have offended is modelled after the nature of the Creator and Forgiver of all who seek him. It is this community of saints which are to strive to seek to live in unity, and extending mercy and grace to the penitent. One cannot expect that he is walking in the will of God, or in his commandments if he refuses to forgive a repentant brother. The members of the community are expected to treat their fellow members in the same fashion as God treats them (Hagnar 1995:541). What has been communicated in these

patterns of excommunication is that for purposes of doctrinal deviation or disobedience, excommunication as the extreme is in order.

One must keep in mind that up until the moment of excommunication from the Body, no fellowship division is implied; in fact just the opposite is true. Up until excommunication, the desired result is to bring the errant into a right position behaviorally, not separation from the flock. Again, it should be noted, Horton's assertion that this process is to take place under the direction of the eldership of the community, and it is to be for the purpose of restoration of that individual to the flock. Anderson agrees, "Only the evangelical theological community can anathematize rather than a single theologian or leader" (Anderson 2002:274). If the charges are, as yet, unclear, it is logical that the excommunicated be informed of the details for his dismissal, so that he fully knows in light of Scripture, his error.

One must also keep in mind that an errant person should not be considered as dead, only to be treated as a Gentile or a tax-collector. Cyprian states, "Let us not think of them as dead" because "subsequent repentance, may be strengthened into faith. If someone is harshly and cruelly separated from the church, he may turn himself to Gentile ways and to worldly works...or pass over to heretics and schismatics" (Bercot 1998:213 [W 5.331]). The difference between a Gentile or tax-gatherer, and a person, who is dead, is that a corpse has no ability or opportunity to repent, so the Jewish practice rending garments and considering one such individual as dead has no support in the action of excommunication. After all, the intent is to bring those errant to the fullness of life, *not* banish them from all prospect of full merit in Christ. One gains a greater appreciation for the Consistory of Calvin (ref. 2.5.2) in demonstrating the biblical mandate, that such authority for expulsion is alone in the leadership and council of the entire church. Anderson reminds that, "practicing anathematization provides protection for the saints and preservation of the purity of the church" (Anderson 2002:275).

When addressing anathematization, it is logical, along with the Catholic tradition, "Neither does he or she cease to be a Christian, since excommunication cannot remove the indelible character imprinted on the soul by baptism. He or she loses the rights of membership in the church but is not release from the obligations, acquired at baptism, of affiliation with it" (Piggin 2001:423), that salvation is not

surrendered as the indelible character of baptism is that which secures the Christian eternally. Though contrary to this Catholic tradition of that being water baptism, evangelical theology would embrace the baptism into Christ (Romans 6), is that which leaves the indelible character imprinted.

Any excommunication or division is terminated upon the repentance of the individual which has suffered separation from the community. The individual is to be received, albeit perhaps with some cautionary measures to assure true repentance, and continued safety of the flock. Failure to receive the repentant back reveals the “forgiver” to be worse than the offender (Dorani 2002:77).

As the holy or sacred space of God points out, one can get close to God on the other side of the veil, but that is only through a reconciled relationship with him through the work and person of Jesus Christ as the highest of priests. The intimacy which is afforded because of that work is of the utmost intimacy found in John 17, mutual indwelling into the Trinity, as manifested by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the presence of God is no longer to be found in a temple, but in every person who has believed “into Christ” (Mounce), and is made pure by his blood, deemed justified and acceptable before God. Christ is Immanuel, who dwells not in a temple but among man. As the Temple needed to be consecrated before the indwelling presence of God in Israel, so the temples of believers, their bodies need to be sanctified by the blood of Christ, immersion into the blood of Christ (Romans 6), before the presence of God the Spirit is able to occupy; hence, the need for the redemptive work of Christ before he is able to send forth the Holy Spirit to be in believers.

John, particularly John 17 reveals the intimate nature desired of Christ for the Church, the intimacy that would be a great tool in the evangelical witness of the Church. One must be careful to apply any essence of deity to those in the Body of Christ who are able to enjoy this mutual indwelling, or interpenetration into the Godhead; this is simply a phrase, which Christ pleads in John 17, in which he is praying for intimacy of relationship (Twombly LATC 2013).

Finally, Paul’s parallels to the Body reveal that there is to be no “practice of an individuals’ disassociating themselves from the ‘body,’ that is against enthusiastic

individualism” (Conzelmann 1975:213), and amounts to privatized spiritualization. From the New Testament passages, the instructions regarding division are as noted earlier, Paul is saying that there are not to be any divisions (schisms) within the Body of Christ due to varying spiritual giftings, inferiority or superiority complexes, or placement of individual members in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:15-16, 21).

Additionally, no divisions are to be pursued according to adherence to any one teacher; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 commands that there is to be faithfulness to the “one faith” identified in Ephesians 4:4, as all the teachers of orthodoxy are credited for being faithful for doing so, but not to be singled out as superior. As this chapter concludes, it has been the attempt to generate the critical apparatus, most notably employing the Matthean text, the very parochial conditions under which division is sovereignly granted in the Body of Christ.

Chapter 5

THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS REGARDING DIVISION

5.0 Introduction

The over-arching focus of this study is not to defend church discipline, as there are many who have meticulously, and brilliantly performed that task. The focus here has been to show that the *only* time division is permissible within the walls of the Church, and thus, in *koinōnia*, is within the context, and effecting of that rightly executed church discipline. Therefore, an accurate defining of theological concepts is in order.

5.1 Unity

As John 17 reveals, unity is not the endeavor of the Church, rather it is the presupposition, meaning that faithfully nurturing that which has already been given to the Church is a high calling (Ephesians 4:3). Christians were created for relational unity, and that unity, for believers, says Turaki, is “based on the Trinity”. He

continues to say that, “Ultimately, however, our unity and the oneness are rooted in the sovereignty of God, who is the only creator of the entire universe and thus, has absolute authority over all creation” (Turaki 2010:1459). That unity, or expression of that unity in the Spirit, is able to be damaged to some degree by the behavior and purity of the Church, whether by quarrels, sin, dissensions, factions, or by division that is deemed necessary in order to maintain the purity of the Body, and to identify God who is holy, and demands that from his witnesses as well. “The unity that God brings extends to all believers of all nations, denominations and times” (Kossé 2010:1314).

Nelson rightly notes that:

The purpose of Jesus’ salvation is not just to save individuals, but to form a new alternate society that is a sign that Jesus is Lord of the world and is going to redeem all of creation. Christian community is the comprehensive and distinct way to be human in deep relationship with other Christians who are all transformed by the Gospel (Nelson 2009:90).

Certainly, few would openly challenge the need for unity, or the desire for the Godhead to have his Church exhibit unity, nor would they be able to do so in the foundations of Scripture.

5.2 *Koinōnia*

A major question that needs to be addressed is, “Can *koinōnia* be severed?” If so, how can one practically extricate an essence or interpenetration from a unity? Perhaps the best answer is, “In the same way that at some point in time, as all the sins of the world were placed upon the Son of Man upon the cross, and as that all sufficient sacerdotal action of the world had transferred upon him the past, future and present sins of the corpus of mankind”. Something so extreme happened in the *perichoresis* of the Godhead that Christ, minimally in his humanity, yet still in his personhood was deserted, or abandoned by the father (Psalm 22; Matthew 27:46). It should not have been this way, but that was God’s plan of redemption from before the foundations of the world.

What Paul seems to be communicating in light of Ephesians 4:1-6, is that the *koinōnia* of the elect is irrevocable, though the physical expression of that unity in the Body needs to be guarded. This is affirmed in the command of verse 3; “strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit” is an implicit command, but still an elective; that command can be disobeyed resulting in a severed *koinōnia*. John 17:23 intimates as well the process of unity, “That they may be *perfected* in unity”. The understanding is that the unity, or the demonstration of it in the physical manifestation to the world be perfected, complete, or made mature in time. Therefore, one of the responsibilities of each believer, holds DeKoster, is the “active supervision of each member’s conduct” (DeKoster 2001:255).

5.3 Divisions

Paul makes it clear in Romans (Section 4.1.1) that believers are all individuals who have various viewpoints, and that in some measure, points to denominations. Romans 14:21 says, “It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles”, which speaks to individual convictions of some believers. However, Paul has prefaced that by the ultimate unifying factors in verse 17-19, “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another”. The implication is that variances in conviction are held and even embraceable within the Body of Christ, insofar as they are not divisive. At the point at which they become unwarranted in light of Scripture, they are to be discarded.

The ensuing divisions established around petty differences then, are not part of the plan of the unity of the Church, or of maintaining the purity of the Church, but are a strategy of the devil to destroy the witness of the Church. The problem with some divisions in the Body of Christ is that there are some who are indeed tares, who are not truly regenerate people in the kingdom. These are to be allowed to remain in the local church, as they will be revealed in the end times for who they are (Matthew 26:31-46). As Kossé notes:

There is no place for ideologies that consider one ethnic group or tribe superior to another. Similarly, individual churches belong to different denominations, but this division must not be allowed to be an obstacle to unity back [sic] and be defended on the basis of protecting church doctrine or by arguing that separation from others is the will of God (Kossé 2010:1314).

As noted in section 4.0, elements which are expressly denied any permissible value are sectarian pride, quarrels in regards to favoritism of human leaders, hypocrisy, lusts, disunity that arises from immaturity, jealousy, strife and cliques (Kregel 2005:563).

These divisions however, are at times compulsory, as Bargerhuff writes:

Due to the mandate given by Christ for the community to enact the process of discipline outlined in Matthew 18, and the command for the church to act by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, the church is obliged to enact church discipline when unrepentant sin is discovered in the body of Christ. When the church does indeed act, they are embodying God's reconciling love through the practice of the church. However, if the church should refuse to act or decides to turn the other way over blatant sin, then the body of Christ is being disobedient to God (Bargerhuff 2010:174).⁸³

5.4 The Purity (Holiness) of the Church

Unity of the Church is essential to demonstrate, but not at all costs, and surely, not at the expense of holiness or compromise. The purity of God's people should be demonstrated in the people of Israel as well as the New Testament elect. Mohler notes, "The holiness code is central to the understanding of the Old Testament. As God's chosen nation, Israel must live by God's Word and law, which will set the children of Israel visibly apart from their pagan neighbors" (Mohler

⁸³ Additionally, Bargerhuff states, "Apathy in the church on necessary disciplinary issues can be destructive for the unrepentant involved and may also result in forfeiture of specific blessings that were meant for the community as well. The church would then do well to choose the path of blessing that comes from obedient action that seeks to correct and embody forgiveness rather than subject themselves to the judgment of God" (Bargerhuff 2010:181).

1998:176). He continues, “Israel’s judicial system was largely designed to protect the purity of the nation. In the New Testament, the Church is likewise described as the people of God who are visible to the world by their purity of life and integrity of testimony” (Mohler 1998:176).

From the mandate to “purge” the Canaanite from the land (Deuteronomy 20:16-18), to the prerequisite for purity in the kingdom of heaven (Revelation 21:27), the members of the Body of Christ are cautioned to correct those who are in error, either doctrinally or behaviorally. A very stern warning is given in Ezekiel 33:7-9⁸⁴, that if Ezekiel is not obedient in correcting an errant member of his ways, the blood of that individual will be upon *his* (Ezekiel’s) hands.

Whether it is in the Garden of Eden, the Temple of the Lord on earth, or the Heavens, God cannot and will not dwell in the presence of the ungodly. God will see to it that one party will leave the presence of the other. One cannot help but acknowledge that, as Carvalho identifies, “the temple texts in the Old Testament call us to recognize sacred space as a grace and, not a right” for, “With Christ comes shame, the internalized self-knowledge that we have been gifted with a real divine presence beyond imagination” (Carvalho 2008:148-149).

As was seen in the sin of Achan (Joshua 7), God’s anger burned against the entire nation as he considered them collectively responsible, and he withholds blessing and presence from them unless this atrocity of sin is removed from the camp (Gangel 2002:118-119). Sin in the camp has the potential to infect the entire assembly if it is not eradicated. All too familiar is the parallel of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:6, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*?” The smallest of offenses, the seemingly most minimal of sins can grow to have an adverse affect on the entirety of the Body, and therefore needs to be handled

⁸⁴ “Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me. “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. “But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life (Ezekiel 33:7-9;NASB).

expeditiously. God had revealed his omniscience, and declared his sovereignty over the situation and now demanded severe discipline (Gangel 2002:122).

Unfortunately, such passages as John 8 have caused confusion about what sort of behaviors are permitted to be called into question; thus a “stand off” approach ensues toward the confrontation of any errant behavior. Christ does indeed affirm in Mark 12:31 that Christians are to love their neighbor as themselves, but this does not mean that there is to be an absence of discipline. In fact, the most “loving” act to a body that is deficient is to provide remedy, or removal of the infected or broken area. Christ is citing Leviticus 19:18 as he makes this declaration, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”. The fuller extension of that verse includes verse 17 of the same passage which states, “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD”. Both of these verses include behavior directed at a neighbor which includes reproving, as well as loving. The implication being that sometimes the expression of love to the neighbor, and thus, to the individual himself, can include the act of discipline, or assurance of purity. MacArthur rightly notes, “It is better to be divided by truth than united by error” (MacArthur 2013).

Hebrews 10:29 informs, “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” In essence, excommunication, and the broader realm of church discipline, is a major factor in maintaining the sanctification of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

In light of the purity of the Church, God has provided the word by which the Church is to be continuously cleansed, being made ready for her bridegroom. Ephesians 5:25-27 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her, so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless”. The concept is not one of positional holiness but the ongoing process of sanctification, or experiential holiness.

Beale holds that as those elect are regenerate, “then the Spirit of God comes into us and dwells in us, in a similar manner as God dwelt in the temple of Eden and Israel’s temple” (Beale 2004:395). The privilege and responsibility of the Church then, is to foster purity, and continue to secure the unimpeded full presence of the Holy God within each individual member. In order to assure growth in the experience of the divine presence, Christians, cites Beale, need to be engaged to, “keep peace in the spiritual sanctuary by learning and teaching God’s word, and by praying always, and by being vigilant in keeping out unclean moral and spiritual things”; it is in this way that we become spiritual sacrifices (Beale 2004:398); he cites:

God’s presence grows among his priestly people by their knowing his word, believing it and by obeying it, and then they spread that presence to others by living their lives faithfully and prayerfully in the world (Beale 2004:400).

Bargerhuff makes it clear, “Yet even in taking a stand for righteous living and purity in the church, we cannot forget that we are equally *concerned about the sinner*. To forget this would be to misunderstand the primary motive behind discipline” (Bargerhuff 2010:153).

5.4.1 Marriage as a Model of Unity

The greatest demonstration of unity and purity is indeed held in the *perichoretical* union of the Trinity. The human manifestation of that unity seems to be held in the biblically ordained institution of marriage which reflects the *imago dei*. Malachi affirms the unity (*echād*) of marriage, “Did he not make them one?” (Malachi 2:15;ESV). Any subsequent assault, or destruction of this institution, individually or by society is a poor reflection of the *imago dei*, which Christians represent. The nation of Israel is well understood to be the Bride of God (cf. Hosea), and the Bride of Christ is well understood to be the Church, those who are called out to be followers of Christ (cf. Ephesians 5:23-27; Romans 8:29-30).

One of the greatest deficiencies presently facing the 21st century Church is the absence or unwillingness to correct in light of biblical mandate.⁸⁵ Equal to that deficiency is the tainted viewpoint of biblical marriage tolerated by the Church. As stated earlier, the single most egregious infraction of the Church is the failure to rightly identify a proper biblical construct regarding marriage, and live that out to the witness of society. If the Church does not embrace and declare the biblical model of marriage, separating itself from the secular “ideal” of marriage and divorce, the Church will fail to carry out the commission of John 17, to be in unity that the world may know God and the Christ whom he has sent.

The intimacy which God wanted expressed within context, and accordingly used to identify the level of intimacy he desired with the nation of Israel, is communicated in the Hebrew word “*yada*”. Gresh promotes that this Hebrew word describes the most intimate level of knowing and being known by someone (Gresh 2011). Murray subscribes to this train of thought as well, “Many times in Scripture ‘know’ has a pregnant meaning which goes beyond that of mere cognition”. It is used in a sense practically synonymous with ‘love’, to set regard upon, to know with particular interest, delight, affection and action” (Murray 1979:317). Swindoll endorses this understanding as well, stating that this wording, both in the Hebrew and the Greek equivalent *ginosko*, “describe a scrutinizing knowledge that goes beyond mere awareness. The verb was a common euphemism for sexual intimacy shared between a married couple” (Swindoll 2010:176). The act of male-female relations is transcended by no greater human level of unity; it is communicated by no greater measure than intercourse. Though this sought unity is parallel to the unity which Christ desires with his Church, it is not to be misconstrued as an unhealthy

⁸⁵ Contrary to this divine command and privileged process of God, the church has manifested herself to not be committed to this process. Perhaps, the most egregious, severe and public demonstration of this is the blight of divorce. The Christian Church is at parity with the divorce rate of the secular culture communicating to the world of the inability of God’s people to be in unity with one another, contrary to the prayer, plan and purposes of the prayer in John 17. On a wider scale the church has exhibited similar dysfunction in the context of the general health of marriage, the unity that was meant to be promoted by this union. It is posited here that this will be the single most detrimental fault ushering in the demise of the witness of the Church.

sex act between deity and mankind, nor a perverted premarital breach of covenant.

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Grudem holds, “The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God’s revealed will for the church” (Grudem 1994:873). In light of this, the holiness or purity of the elect is to be guarded, as a pure bride, at great costs to insure the proper adherence to biblical standards.

5.5 Contextualization of Discipline (Permanency)

Church discipline has its “last and highest aim in the reconciliation of the offender” (Religious 1981:645 v. 1). This expresses the sentiments of Clement of Alexandria as he said, “God does not punish, for punishment is retaliation for evil. Rather, he chastises-for the purpose of good” (Bercot 1998:212 [2.553]). Blomberg affirms, “this drastic action remains rehabilitative rather than retributive in design” (Blomberg 1992:279).

These are merely affirmations of what God has deemed the purpose of any sort of divine discipline. Any division is meant to be temporary, any division is meant to protect the Body, and any division is carried out with ultimate restoration in mind. Whatever divisions may be allowed, it is certain they are only meant to be temporary until the sin, or egregious behavior is dealt with in the life of the offender.

⁸⁶ The culture, including the Christian community, has long demonstrated a disregard for this fundamental institution as revealed in sexual perversions and cohabitational proclivities, and unwarranted biblical divorce and thus, has begun to erode this fundamental foundation of society. Divorce throughout the Christian community is the single most detrimental factor to the witness of the Church today, which evidences hate or disregard. Johnson writes, “A man cannot hate his wife without being a recipient of that action” (Johnson 1989:14).

As seen in 2 Corinthians 2:4-11, it is clear that such division is to be over with, once the individual is repentant and seeking to be restored to fellowship. Matthew 18:21-35 affirms this posture of forgiveness as well.

5.6 Christological Separation- (Sin on Christ on the Cross)

Arguably the greatest account of division due to sin is the Christological separation that is experienced by Christ while he is upon the cross, separation of the Father from the Christ on the cross due to the sin placed upon him. In some mysterious way the mutual indwelling of the Trinity was affected, as it had never been before. From time eternal, the Trinity had enjoyed ultimate uninterrupted divine intimacy, the placement of sin upon the person of Christ had mandated a separation between the Father and the Son. Christ communicates this transition in both Matthew 27:46, "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" and in Mark 15:34, "At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Both communications are from the Davidic prophecy of the crucifixion presented in Psalm 22.

The impeccability of Christ is fully communicated in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him", where it is affirmed that Christ knew no sin, neither in his nature, nor in any actions, as Christ lived a sinless life in complete and perfect obedience to the Father. Therefore, the Christological separation upon the cross is that much more monumental. Blomberg Notes:

Throughout church history, Jesus' cry of dereliction has been identified as the moment of divine abandonment. Jesus who died to atone vicariously for the sins of humanity, recognized at this point in his suffering that he no longer was experiencing the communion with his heavenly father that had characterized his life. Understandably, theologians have debated all kinds of questions that arise from this affirmation, involving the relationship between Father and Son and between Christ's divine and human natures, but this is about as far as the text of Matthew by itself can take us...Jesus as the sin-bearing sacrifice, must endure the temporary abandonment of the Father.

Separation from God is horrible enough for any creature (Blomberg 2007:100).

The Trinity had been in eternal existence enjoying mutual indwelling, or *perichoresis* until that certain time on the cross when Christ perceives the very real abandonment of God. At some level during the crucifixion communion was severed between the Father and the Son, no doubt the greatest such division which has ever occurred. What this means to a Trinity which has existed eternally is difficult to say, but certainly it is the most dynamic and devastating up to that point, and subsequent to that occurrence. Of importance is the declaration by Christ that he has not abandoned faith in God, as he has doubly affirmed that God is “his” God, by the use of the personal pronoun. The essence of the plea is that he desires “to know once again the intimate presence of God” (Craigie 1983:199).

Hagner stresses the incomprehensibility of the concept of disunity within the Trinity, the abandonment of God:

When it concerns one who is uniquely the Son of God..., it is impossible to assess what this may have meant to Jesus. This is one of the most impenetrable mysteries of the entire Gospel narrative (Hagner 1995:844-845).

The question of divine abandonment asked by Christ seems to be initially addressed in Psalm 22. In verse 1 the Psalmist cries out this most drastic of interrogations, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning”. As Bloomberg notes above, Christ has the despairing realization that he is no longer experiencing the Trinitarian communion, which has been savored eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The worst element is not the emotional torture, it is not the physical suffering, but it is the abandonment of God’s presence. This essence of aloneness is upon the incarnate Christ, and the mystery of suffering (Craigie 1983:198) seems to rest in the nature, particularly the human nature of Jesus. He has cried out to God for deliverance but as yet, has received no response in verse 2, “O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest”. “Yet you are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel”, is the announcement from his

lips in verse 3, perhaps suggesting the reason for abandonment, which is, that since the sin of all the world of all eternity has been imputed to Jesus, the holy nature of the Godhead is not able to commune with him. The greatest desire of the Christ is fellowship within the Godhead; the greatest despair or tragedy, universally, is or should be the absence of such a relationship.

The explanation, or answer to this question of Christ, as to why the Father has abandoned him is better explained, approximately 100 years later (than Psalm 22), in Isaiah 53 where the doctrine of imputation of sin, and the doctrine of substitutionary, or vicarious atonement (2 Corinthians 5:21) are communicated. Isaiah 53:4-6 communicates these teachings:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

Verse 4 describes the emotional burden placed upon Jesus as he received the punishment, or consequences of the sin of mankind, whereas verse 5 focuses on the physical element of the perfect sacrifice. The scourging here, so often translated as, “by his stripes”, is actually in the singular and describes the entirety of the ordeal. The presentation of the imputation of this sin is made clear in verse 6 of the text, that Yahweh, “the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him”. Isaiah 53:7-8 expands on the process of the imputation of sin and the atoning element of the sacrificial animal (lamb) which is called for:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;

And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?

Verse 8 announces that the consequence of the imputation of sin upon the substitutionary vehicle, and the atonement factor were carried out by a person, or vehicle to whom the penalty was not due, and all for the purpose of removing the element of sin (transgression) from his people.

Revelation 21:22-27 seems to give a final picture as to the acceptability of sin in the presence of God, and thus rejection of Christ. Describing the celestial realm and the dwelling place of God, John writes:

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:22-27; NASB).

Verse 27 makes it clear that nothing unclean or unholy is permitted before the throne, or presence of God, as clearly evidence in the account of Nadab and Abihu. Thus, the lament here of the Christ upon the cross, bemoaning the loss of the divine presence, parallels the corporate lament of the same found in Lamentations (Longman 2007:332). However, the permanency of this Christological separation was only temporary.

If the consequences of sin could so affect the unity in the Trinity, that concept can clearly be assigned individuals of the Church as well.

5.7 The Eschatology of the Lord's Supper

Boring contends that the eschatological wedding party, to which the Lord's Supper is pointing in Matthew 26, is indeed the consummation of the ages (Boring 1989:193). Christ said in Luke 22:15-16, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God". He is referring to the marriage supper of the lamb, the "Messianic meal on a transformed earth", holds Jeremias (Jeremias 1966:217). Jeremias refers to this passage as well, affirming verse 18, "for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes", as referring to the eschatological prospect (Jeremias 1966:209), though he presents the standpoint of others that the drinking of the cup refers to his death. The event is a liturgical anticipation, the expectation is of the *parousia* of Christ, foretold in the Messianic expectation, the Hallel of Psalm 118:25-29, which is a constant expectation of his return and the subsequent antiphonal choir which would greet him (Jeremias 1996:261). Thus, Jeremias points out that from the beginning the Lord's Supper was anticipation, or more precisely, an 'antedonation' of the final consumption (Jeremias 1966:Preface). Jeremias encapsulates the essence of the theme of purity:

The Passover lamb is interpreted as the symbol of the Messiah who was sacrificed as the unblemished lamb. The leaven which is removed from all the houses during the night of Nissan 13/14 is the symbol of the evil and wickedness which characterizes the old world. The unleavened loaves are interpreted eschatologically in two ways: as pure dough they represent the purity and truth which characterize the new world (1 Corinthians 5:8), and as new dough they symbolize the redeemed community (1 Corinthians 5:7a) (Jeremias 1966:60).

It is in the practice of this memorial that Christians affirm the presence enjoyed in the sacred space of God due to the person and work of Christ.

5.8 Retrodution

As presented in Chapter 1, the hypotheses in this study were as follows:

- 1) The witness of the Church is greatly compromised as a result of the level of license of division exercised in the Body of Christ.
- 2) The scope of biblically acceptable tolerances is more parochial than the historical practice of the Church would suggest.
- 3) Justifiable division in the Body of Christ is only allowable according to the strict mandates of Matthew 18:15-20; if an offense is not egregious enough to fall into the realm of discipline and excommunication, it is not enough to validate a permissible division in *koinōnia*.

It is posited that the witness of the modern Church is deficient in its demonstration of the transformational power of God to affect change in the members of the Church. It is also asserted that the majority of given reasons for “justifying” division are indeed erroneously multiplied, yet, valid reasons are Scriptural; it is apparent that a systematic theological examination of permissible division is difficult, as the passages and references are numerous and pervade the entirety of Scripture. Suffice to communicate, that it should be an area of constant concern and warning to the Body of Christ.

The scope of tolerances in the following “list”, though not exhaustive, identifies Biblically expressed areas of permissible areas of division within the Body regarding major doctrinal deviation, and immoral and errant fellow-believers. Though it is expansive, it does not come close to the improper, innumerable and immeasurable indictments which those in the Body of Christ use to justify division:

1 Corinthians 5:11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7 offer direct expressed mandates for separation in the context of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. “But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one (1 Corinthians 5:11), and “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an

undisciplined manner among you” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-7). Add to this the list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God”. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us”. 2 Thessalonians 3:14, “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”. A more difficult anathematization to enforce is 1 Corinthians 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed”. To this list Grudem adds divisiveness (Romans 16:17; Titus), incest (1 Corinthians 5:1), laziness and refusing to work (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10), disobeying what Paul writes (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15), blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:20), and teaching heretical doctrine (2 John 10-11) (Grudem 1994:896).

The mandate to maintain a holy Body is primary in the Church; the passages are given as a mere justification of separation. This list cannot be considered exhaustive, yet, the corpus of validating circumstances is limited to *gross moral and major doctrinal failures* and not those of a petty nature (quarrels); it also encompasses a resistance by those sinners to modify those deficiencies. Yet, Matthew 18:15-20 still provides dogmatic cautionary margins to division.

Notably this research has revealed (yielded) three major benefits:

~The offences which allow for any sort of division are only those which can be categorized as “sins”, meaning identification of sins against God, doctrinally or practically, as stipulated in verse 15, not anything of merely an interpersonal nature, or conflict of opinions.

~As noted in 4.4.2, excommunication, or even severe discipline is not to be exercised individually, but rather by the corporate communal movement of the assembly (the covenant community), and subsequent affirmation of the Church, initiated and overseen by its leadership (1 Timothy 5:20; Matthew 18:17; 1

Corinthians 5:4). As Anderson says, “Only the evangelical theological community can anathematize rather than a single theologian or leader” (Anderson 2002:274); as this is true, certainly this restriction applies to each individual congregant as well. The authority, or licensure to excommunicate is not vested in one individual but in the decision of many; it is *that* decision which is backed in Heaven. A timeframe is not defined in Scripture, but one of expedition may be logically assumed due to the urgency to limit damage of the “leaven” to the Body.

~Division within the Body is to come *only* in the due process of the execution of Matthew 18:15-20, as the *culmination* to the sinful resistance of the offender. As a result of this corporate decision, the banishment is to be universal within the Church; no individual in part, should break an excommunication in place, nor establish one selectively, independent of the Body. This action, wherein agreed upon by two or more has the authority of God. The individual is not being “cast out” of eternal life, but from the earthly *koinōnia* of the Church, which is a physical demonstration of his already evidenced lack of *koinōnia* with God (See Simons Section 2.5.1).

Discipline naturally emanates out of a covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity, therefore it is simply a part of the relational stature a believer shares, or doesn’t share with Christ, and “can have a cleansing and restorative effect and serves as a deterrent from sin” (Bargerhuff 2010:76-77). Proper church discipline is not punishment, as it is commonly misperceived, rather instructional, restorative and reconciliatory; this is not a punitive process as the “the punitive elements of discipline are fully satisfied in the retributive wrath that was poured out on Christ” (Bargerhuff 2010:136,187). As 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15⁸⁷ points out, the offender is to be banished from the fellowship, but not considered an enemy. The ultimate goal of any element of church discipline is not the extrication of an individual from the Body but a restoration of purity, health and obedience, by that individual eliminating those areas which are offensive to God from his life; a heart of turning away from that sin which is unpleasant to God. If the purity of the Church is

⁸⁷ “If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15;NASB).

important, and if indeed, as Grudem defines rightly, “The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God’s revealed will for the church”, then it would follow that church discipline, and on rare occasions, excommunication would serve well to aid in the measure of that goal. The Church hence is commissioned to be a sentinel agent of this purity through discipline. The hope is that the Holy Spirit would soften and convict the heart of that individual, and as soon as the excommunicated evidences repentance, he is to be welcomed back into the fellowship.

In this chapter the intent was to build a systematic biblical theology and practical architecture regarding the permissibility of division in the Body of Christ. The principle is unity in purity, affected through the practice of the Church, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and with the aid of the Holy Scriptures for the benefit of the entire Body to the glory of God (Bargerhuff 2010:166). As Bargerhuff notes, “Thus when the church acts it is not only seeking to restore the unrepentant sinner, but it also is in essence restoring itself, since sin does damage to a community as well as an individual” (Bargerhuff 2010:166).

What this research has shown is that there is no biblical example wherein *koinōnia* is being, or has been permissibly broken for any other reason other than disciplinary excommunication, and even then, it has very strict conditions, most notably that the covenant of purity in doctrine or morals has been compromised. The purpose of divinely sanctioned division is to cleanse the individual and the Church of doctrinal and moral impurities. Therefore, the suspension of *concordia* (see *Koinōnia* 2.2), or external witness of *koinōnia*, is indeed permitted.

In light of this retroduction it is hoped that a person would understand that no division is permitted or granted, absent of plurality of excommunication, and would pause, if at odds with a fellow brother or sister, and examine if such behaviors and disagreement would merit the disciplinary process of Matthew 18:15-20, the very methodical and deliberate 4-step process, wherein the offender has every freedom to repent of his sin and return to fellowship at any point along the way. In this capacity and purity, the manifest presence of the Lord could be realized to the fullest.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

6.1 Theological Significance

The effort of this study has been to systematically examine the biblical theme of division within the Body of Christ, and adequately articulate truth in regard to sacredness and holiness as it appears across the biblical landscape, thereby producing both doctrinal and practical benefits. “Lest the church be indistinguishable from the world, moral and doctrinal boundaries were essential in keeping with the truth of Scripture, the nature and mission of the church, and its witness to the gospel” (Bargerhuff 2010:184). The attempt of this study has additionally been to address the topic of discipline within the framework of confessional evangelicalism, while engaging with relevant literature, commentaries, and materials (Beale 2004:9), and to understand that this is part of a covenant relationship with God. As the Church is presently deficient in the execution of such a practice of discipline, let alone the ultimate form of excommunication, the Church has complacently complied with the cultural pressure of the times, in effect, embracing the “theology” of the world rather than that of Scripture.

The Lord executes his purifying judgment, and in the end a purified remnant will result. As Hebrew 12:6 points out, “For those whom the LORD loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives”; the discipline in the Body of Christ is two-fold in dimension, and begins with divine intervention leading the way

followed by the church to act as steward, as it is “to exercise discipline as an integral part of its moral and theological responsibility” (Mohler 1998:177). The process is one of refinement.

Zechariah 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, ‘They are My people,’
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

Applying this to the theological realm, one needs to ask the question, “If *koinōnia* is severed among the brethren here on earth, is there a separation in the eternal realm as well?” Again, the true nature of *koinōnia* needs to be understood as something that transcends the physical realm. As has been postulated, it does indeed extend far beyond the physical into the spiritual domain. Paul has expressed it well in Corinthians when he identifies that such excommunication will cause the erring brother physical harm, but the benefit is that he will be saved in the spiritual realm. The implication is that he will lose current physical benefits, but the desired effect is that those losses would turn him to once again be in an orthodox behavior acceptable before the Lord.

Chapter 3 identified an Old Testament warrant for separation of that which is defiled, from that which is holy. In Chapter 4 this concept was further developed in light of New Testament teaching proving that at times, for the benefit of the Body and to the glory of God, division is at times necessary. This *concordia* division in the Body of Christ mirrors the division of fellowship, which has already occurred in the spiritual realm of fellowship (*vera unitas*).

An individual wrapped in sin is void of the full presence and promises of God already; he has broken the covenant of purity. For the Arminian, the implication of excommunication is that his eternal salvation is in question; for the more reformed it indicates that a loss of fellowship between God and the individual has occurred.

6.2 Eschatological Focus

The great Day of the Lord will come as judgment and will fall upon all evil, a day when all that is vile and unclean before the Lord will be “cut off” or excommunicated (Hosel 1995:345). As Beale has proposed, and is embraced in the context of this study as well, the future focus of man is eternity in the presence of God in his domain, the dwelling place of God (Beale 2004:365-372). As such is the case, the people of God who are to dwell with him there, will be a holy people sanctified and dedicated to the Lord. Ephesians affirms that place will be where the Bride of Christ will be received being without blemish or wrinkle having been washed in the Word. Revelation 21:27 affirms, “and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”.

Revelation 11:1 describes the eschatological holy priesthood, which is the “covenantal community forming a spiritual temple in which the presence of God dwells”, in the eschatological sacred space of the heavenly temple (Beale 2004:316). Christians then, “will all be high priests, dwelling eternally in the new creational holy of holies and in the midst of God’s full latter day presence” (Beale 2004:397). The implication is that such a demonstration begins in these earthen vessels looking forward to that day of ultimate realization and expression of holiness.

Revelation 2:5 previously issued a warning to the church which refuses to modify the improper behavior. “Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent”. The statement is clear that the “permission” will be stricken for that Body to represent the light of the risen Christ anymore, until at least, it repents.

Revelation 19 reveals the greatest eschatological benefit awaiting the Body of Christ, and that is that is shall be the Bride of Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb, as described in Revelation 19:7-8; “‘Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write, “Blessed are

those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.””” The Bride is invited not only to attend but also to be part of the ceremony, which Christ prophesied at the Last Supper wherein he pronounced, “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). Nelson notes that Revelation 21:2 describes the Bride as *adorned*, and cites Clegg as to what that meant in light of the cultural reality (Nelson 2990:160); “In preparation for the marriage and the arrival of the groom, the bride was bathed and oiled, perfumed, her hair fixed, and was adorned with her wedding garment” (Rienecker 1982:859). This is the long expected climax of the Bride being presented without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). The import of purity is demonstrated in Matthew 22:12, as a “guest” attempts to make it into a wedding feast absent the proper attire of cleanliness and is inhospitably removed.

Schaff rightly observes that, “The Eucharist was celebrated daily in connection with a simple meal of brother love (agape), in which the Christian, in communion with their common Redeemer, forgot all distinction of rank, wealth, and culture and felt themselves to be members of one family of God” (Schaff 2006:473). Hence, this eschatological act of fellowship is the culmination of this model practiced on earth.

Bargerhuff notes that the, “Fruit of submission to divine discipline is that it brings life today and eternal life tomorrow” (Bargerhuff 2010:108). Thus, the benefit of rightful division in the Body of Christ, foreshadows Revelation 21:2-4, where the presence of the Lord is among men who are pure.

6.3 Practical Significance

The purpose of division is to eventually provide a restorative effect. The practical significance of the failure of the Church to implement the sort of discipline and excommunication, demonstrated in the passages examined, means there is a reduced level of purity in the Church. As Mohler asserts, “Children are treated as moral sovereigns in many households, and the social breakdown of the family has diminished its moral credibility” (Mohler 1998:178). The Church itself has fallen into a state of corporate sin by the tolerance given to those engaged in wilful, and

uncorrected behavior. Believers invoking the cry of Matthew 7:3-5, and Luke 6:41-42 desire to push away any allowance of authority in their lives, justifying that action by declaring that nobody is able to accuse them or correct them.

As some have rightly observed, the Church has a very marked line between itself and the detrimental influences of the world, but fail to address the detrimental influences of those ailing factors within the Church.

Following this course of action, errant believers would cite John 8, the woman caught in prostitution, as a defence against any action intended to reprove their behavior. Invoking Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged”, a resistant offender would resist any perceived authority of the one correcting. Bargerhuff states that this passage is one of the most common objections to church discipline, and also one of the most misused (Bargerhuff 2010:153). The passage has been errantly used as a shield, which an individual uses to sanction, or protect his or her poor behavior.

As they isolate themselves within the walls of improperly cited Scripture; they are not open to the process of refinement, correction, teaching or discipline and would likely not submit themselves to the process of excommunication as they are standing on a delusional or misinformed foundation.

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel” (Proverbs 12:15;NASB).

People of this nature will “invariably” invoke grace, and a resistance to correction, as they will declare nobody to be worthy to “cast a stone” in their direction, hence, making impotent any attempts to justify accountability.

One of the obvious cautionary elements to extricating an individual from the Body is that if a person is severed, or cut off from the Body, and they indeed were a “healthy” part of that Body, then an unlawful amputation was performed.⁸⁸ If the

⁸⁸ The Apostolic Confessions state that one will still receive eternal grace, even if falsely, or unjustly amputated from the Body. See quote from (Bercot 1998:215 [7.406]), page 51.

individual was indeed a malignant growth and allowed to stay he would no doubt be detrimental to the overall health of the Body. Either action erroneously applied would be dystopian in nature.

A loss of shame, of humility, a loss of sensitivity to the holiness of God, and to the holiness of which he calls Christians to exhibit, leaves them lacking in awe and reverence of the Creator, and his mandate to be holy. As a result, the Church acclimates to the culture around it, being impacted more by the world, conformed to the image of this world, than conversely having any transformational value of God evidenced in their lives.

Not much referred to in the main body of this work is the dilemma of divorce, which pervades the Christian Church today and is likely, the singularly most unsanctioned division in the Church. Present numbers reveal that the rate of divorce among Christians is similar if not greater than that of the universal population. To look at this failure in light of John 17 is to cast shame and judgment upon the Bride due to the lack of a glorifying witness. The Church is evidencing that it is no way more committed and empowered by the presence of God in their lives (and marriages) than the general population. As a husband and wife are one, and are in many ways considered to be so in the eyes of the world, the fact that believers employ separation and divorce upon minimal or non-existent biblical grounds, bears a poor witness; though the Lord continues to draw new believers into the Body of Christ, it is in spite of the witness of the Church, and only due to the authoritative Word of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Practically, in the life of the individual as well as the corporate Church, diminishing concentric circles of ecumenism are likely in order, a reduction in the “comfort zones”, environments and associations that are apposite circles of engagement. If the Church were to abide closer to the biblical principles of division, it would witness less divisions, enhancing its witness.

Clearly, the Church of Christ is fragmented, and was seen in the Reformation when Protestants were seen as defecting from the one “true church”, but the question needs to be asked, “Was it a justifiable separation to allow?” In light of the fact that orthodoxy was waning and orthopraxy was dubious, it was not only right and

permissible, but also essential in order to maintain the integrity and purity of the Church, though the purificatory event comes at the cost of severe pain to the individual, and to the congregation, or corporate Church Body.

6.4 Excommunication in 21st Century Paradigm

People refuse to put themselves under accountability and leadership and are hesitant to place any persons under disciplinary actions due to fear they will lose their support. That is compounded by the fact that there is no one organizational Church structure which is able to mandate, and govern solely as the Church, because it is fractured along so many denominational lines. As a result, except in the most rural of cases, an individual, or individuals targeted for discipline would find little difficulty in finding another church Body with which to worship, and offer their talents. The teeth of excommunication, and thus, the desired effect, have been eroded.

Another present deficiency is the interference of another church or Body in the discipline process that ultimately undermines the intention of the procedure. The issue at hand was not the ability of any given person to exercise a gift; the question at hand is whether this person was abiding by Scripture. At times other churches offering respite can impede or cancel the disciplinary process.⁸⁹

When it comes to the subject of accountability, how should the Church deal with church discipline and excommunication involving other denominations? The Church was established to be a unified organism rather than separated members,

⁸⁹ Mohler writes, “The mandate of the church is to maintain true gospel doctrine and order. A church lacking these essential qualities is, biblically defined, not a true church. That is a hard thing to say, for it clearly indicts thousands of American congregations who long ago abandoned this essential mark and have accommodated themselves to the spirit of the age. Fearing lawsuits and lacking courage, these churches allow sin to go unchallenged, and heresy to grow unchecked. Inevitably, the false unity they seek to preserve gives way to the factions that inevitably follow the gradual abandonment of biblical Christianity. They do not taste the true unity of a church grounded on the truth and exercising the ministry of the keys” (Mohler 1998:186).

and the prescription of proper disciplinary procedure in Matthew 18:15-20 is designed for that unified Body. As a remedy to the multi-denominational culture in which the Church now exists, it is practical to utilize the elders and leaders of the particular church in which the offender is a member in regards to verse 16, regardless of the person's church, who is doing the initial intervention of verse 15 of Matthew 18.

DeKoster writes:

In a time when the universal church is dispersed into churches, the administration of discipline seems to be complicated by the probability that the disciplinee will flee to –and be welcomed by–another congregation. This likelihood, combined with the rage for “church growth,” tends to give discipline a flabby and indecisive character...What the disciplined member does becomes his responsibility; what the leaders fail to do is eradicably theirs (DeKoster 2001:256).

In light of the uncertainty of the Church's orthodoxy and orthopraxy, and the unwillingness to accept the need for correction (accountability), it is difficult to embrace an optimistic prognosis of a trajectory of purity. Matthew 18:15-20 has seemingly been lost to the ages of time, and is viewed as antiquated philosophy, rather than practical prescriptive wisdom from the lips of Christ, for the benefit of his Bride.

6.5 Present Deficiencies of Divisions, and Accountability

At the heart of the correction process is that of accountability to one another; accountability of the Church to God; and accountability of the errant individual to the church leadership. Some may take the stance that they are accountable only to God, but Scripture asserts, that Christians are to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21). Even Paul demonstrates tacit approval when the Bereans desire to test his teachings in light of Scripture (Acts 17:11).

Beale identifies the task of the “covenant community, the church is to be God's Temple, so filled with his glorious presence that we expand and fill the earth with that presence until God finally accomplishes the goal completely at the end of

time” (Beale 2004:402). The concern at hand is the inefficacy with which the resistant church is demonstrating that, to its detriment, which Bargerhuff writes is a matter of “Corporate obedience to the will of God” (Bargerhuff 2010:173).⁹⁰ The Church is failing at its task of initiating church discipline, and the members are failing to be accountable to those whom God has placed in authority. When this is the posture of both parties, “we fail to understand the nature and character of our Triune God and how he chooses to work his redemptive plan and purposes out in the world today” (Bargerhuff 2010:190).

Of all the heresies accepted by the Church, perhaps among the worst is belief that Christians can be in discord and disunity with one another, and still believe they are perfectly in accordance with God’s will. Can unity be displayed in a Body that is disjointed and mangled, where schism is the order of the day? The world continues to see the Church at odds within itself, a testimony which is surely tarnished.

On one hand believers have become altogether comfortable with multiple improper divisions within the Body, on the other they have become tolerant of sin in the camp, even when it involves those in leadership, who apparently employ the “no accountability” clause.

Mohler writes, “As the new people of God, the church is to see itself as an alien community in the midst of spiritual darkness—strangers to the world who must abstain from the lusts and enticements of the world” (Mohler 1998:176). A great deficiency in the Church is the misunderstanding that a brother or sister needs to have established a relationship with the errant individual before he or she can approach another person in order for correction to take place. This stands against any biblical warrant. What *is* prescribed, is that the person must be a fellow sibling in the Lord. Another errant understanding is that a congregant cannot approach an

⁹⁰ Bargerhuff writes, “I am convinced that this is why so much of the church in America is weak, because even the very idea of church discipline is reproachable to those who have completely misunderstood its nature, purpose, and connection with the actions of a loving heavenly Father. God will not bring spiritual blessing to a congregation that refuses to obey his explicit commands, especially concerning sin...Therefore, we may emphatically say that the exercise of biblical church discipline in the church is a matter of corporate obedience to the will of God. The consequences of disobedience may altogether destroy a church and cause God to act to protect to honor of his name” (Bargerhuff 2010:173).

individual in leadership such as a pastor or an elder; this is not supported in the confines of scripture either. The only qualifications are that it is to be done according to the Word of God, and it must be communicated in love toward the individual. In any case sin, whether within the walls of the Church, or without, needs to be identified for what it is, and eradicated from the Church in order to maintain the purity of the Bride. The truth stands, that without the infraction of sin which was imputed to mankind, the Bible would be a very short book encompassing the first 2 chapters of Genesis and several verses in Revelation, wherein the community of faith, the holy and pure community of faith is engaged in eternal, untainted relationship with its Creator and with each other.

Church discipline is certainly a tool designed to foster maturity and purity within the Church; as well, it is a tool seldom used. Consequently the Church suffers, overburdened with moral infidelity and false instruction. Anderson notes, “where their distinctions between orthodoxy and heresy no longer remain important, anathematization is rendered irrelevant to the church's broader concerns” (Anderson 2002:248). “Anathematization is dismissed as religious persecution” (Anderson 2002:248), and perhaps, along with church discipline is avoided altogether for fear of legal retaliation, as noted above.

Accountability and authority are two sides of the same coin. Hebrews 13:17 cautions, “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you”. For the system to work which the Lord has established, Christians need to be accountable to those in positions of authority which have been divinely placed to protect them.

Cox writes of the necessity to precede this need for corrective discipline by the reinstitution of formative discipline in which a culture of accountability to God and to each other is embraced.⁹¹ Certainly, the Church needs to elevate formative education in addition to corrective discipline (1 Timothy 4:7-8). A church which is

⁹¹ Cox writes, “As a matter of observation, I believe that most churches will have to begin by reinstating formative discipline before they can begin again to utilize corrective discipline” (Cox 1996:57, n.37).

committed to the principles of formative, and corrective discipline will assure itself a purer environment, which enjoys the presence of God, and a true witness to the glory of God, and healthy disciples.

6.6 Division, Delusional Imbalance and Lack of Accountability

One may query as to the response to a brother who is absent fellowship in any Body, or remiss of any source of accountability in his life. The response would be that that person has already brought himself to the point of “excommunication” from the Body due to his own actions, and therefore, cannot even be brought to account for his actions. Biblically speaking this is the case between Saul and David, and the prospect for restored fellowship is unlikely, and certainly potentially dangerous to both individuals, yet still is a factor of division in the relationship. It is conceivable that the process of discipline be carried out in the absence of the offender, as part of the process is to protect the Body from improper doctrine or behavior, therefore the Body should publicly be informed. If the Body is not made aware of the errant individuals’ shortcomings and lack of repentance, other people or churches could be compromised by the presence of that individual. Effort should be made however, to “restore” this wayward individual to whatever extent possible.

6.7 Implications of the Conclusions

The fact that the true Church of Christ has multiplied into so many denominations has in effect made impotent the value, and even the ability to implement and sustain the true act, and benefit of excommunication. The profit of excommunication therefore, is seldom realized, as there is no lack of fellowship experienced on the part of the excommunicated. As a result the effectiveness of church discipline has been eroded to a lesser stature and significance; as a consequence, church discipline has been compromised. The responsibility of discipline and excommunication has taken on that of a secondary doctrine, and even more times than not, been exhibited as an antiquated or obsolete practice.

For the most part, as a result, Christians live in a world of permissibility. People are “tolerant” of others’ positions, as long as that assures that their own personal positions and beliefs will be tolerated as well. The final result is a world where “everyone does what is right in his own eyes”, even churches in their own hermeneutically skewed eyes of interpretation. Thus, many people live in his or her personal worlds of deadly delusional “truth”.

The resultant effect is that many do not want to go to church because it is filled with “hypocrites”. The perceived truth is that the Bride of Christ is no better than the harlot Bride of God in the Old Testament. Christians are seen as a community of whores, drunkards and thieves but we are not to remain that way; though at times, that view is merited. Even a secular world that embraces an illogical attitude of tolerance sees the error. The problem is, as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* stated regarding *The Law of Noncontradiction* explains, two opposing statements, (or thoughts) couldn't be true at the same time. "The most certain of all basic principles is that contradictory propositions are not true simultaneously". It states that something cannot be both true, and not true at the same time when dealing with the same context. The majority, if not all of the philosophers, even the pagan ones embrace this logic.

For example, a person cannot be considered dead by one person and proclaimed alive by another and both statements true. One is false. Yet, the problem is that Christians are willing to allow contrary beliefs to be “true”, as long as they are assured of not being hassled. Again, people do not want to hear anything contrary to their position.

Sometimes this delusion is asserted in regards to obeying God. People assert that they are obeying God, or living a godly life-style, when they clearly are not. When people live in a delusion of sin, they are acting contrary to God's will. The problem with living in tolerance of sin is that the end result is chaos, guilt, or death, most notably a decisive death in the relationship with God. A life cannot be lived according to, and contrary to the Law of God simultaneously; both positions cannot be right.

The words of Isaiah 30:9-10 are frightfully familiar to the culture. “For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD; Who say to the seers, ‘You must not see *visions*’; and to the prophets, ‘You must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions.’” The people are demanding to not hear anything unpleasant even if it’s true; they want delusions and lies! Anything- But not the Word of the Lord!

In sum, God makes the decision whether it’s right or wrong, not humans, not mankind, nor any political system. Christians can neither condemn that which God has forgiven, nor can they forgive that which God has condemned, they do not have that authority. And, no amount of legislation or rationalization can sanctify the unholy. But Christians can affirm what God has said in his Word, they do have *that* authority.

All Christian beliefs and behavior need to be accurately grounded in light of God’s Word, and lived out. James 1:22-23 says, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror”. The mandate to be a theologically educated people is no more stressed, than a real world application in holiness and purity.

Church discipline will ever continue to become less and less effective in maintaining Church purity and unity as long as those in the elect community refrain from placing themselves under the umbrella of authority. Excommunication will continue to erode in usage as the “elected” continue to be deceived (Matthew 24:24), and as a result the Church will continue to yield to a greater degree toward secularism. As long as the Church continues in its bleak decline, absent of theological proficiency, absent a manifestation to be consecrated, and absent a willingness to submit to authority, both scriptural and ecclesiastical, the future of the Church will have minimal impact upon the world, and evidence minimal unity along the way. As a result, the world will not easily see that Jesus has been sent from the Father (John 17:21). However, excommunication remains the only justifiable division for one believer to sever *koinōnia* with another, and the greater concern of Scripture is to maintain a healthy Church Body.

In light of the foregoing examination, it seems clear that severing fellowship for any other reason other than extreme discipline, which includes excommunication, is not supported anywhere in the confines of Scripture. To elect to break a fellowship relationship with a member in the community of Christ without such merit is to be disobedient to the will of God.⁹²

In light of this examination, restoring a brother or sister to rightness before the Lord is not an option. Ezekiel 33 makes it clear the option to invoke the curse of “Mizpah”, and go on one’s way is not an option (Section 3.5.2.1).

Obviously the conclusions of this study leave much to be desired. Of great concern on every level, theologically, practically and eschatologically is the failure of the Church to adequately and responsibly define who it is to be, and actually be seen as holy, “as our father in heaven is holy”. Therefore, separation, even division is undeniably permitted and even demanded in the paradigm of the Church. Yet, as has been seen, at times there is a fine line between a severance of *koinōnia* for the purpose of refinement and purity, and mere annoyance between the brethren, or churches.

As has been argued here, if the offense is not an offense to God in regards to doctrine or to practice, it does not constitute grounds for separation from the Body of Christ, or on an individual level. In light of this, as a great consequence to this truth, if the Church wishes to be in alignment with this understanding, leaders and the corporate Church must find themselves immersed in the difficult task of church discipline; leaders and laypeople alike are called to be a part of this very essential process, which will become much more “messy” in the short term, yet, as the very words of the Lord communicate in Matthew 18, a healthier outcome of a healthier

⁹² Holloman summarizes the tolerances of unity within the Body, “Within such an emphasis on oneness, Christians are called to avoid sin that causes disunity, including sectarian pride (Mark 9:38-40), quarrels over favorite human leaders, (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), hypocrisy Galatians 2:11-14;cf. 1 Peter 2:1), favoritism (James 2:1-4), and various lusts (James 4:1-2). Disunity stems from immaturity, jealousy, strife, and cliques (1 Corinthians 3:1-3;cf. 1:10-13).”

Positively, believers can express unity by unselfishly sharing (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32). The one bread and the one cup of the Lord’s Supper emphasize the unity of believers...” (Kregel 2005:563).

Church. If indeed the Church would hold to the stringent guideline of Matthew 18, and would not sever over petty differences, the exhibited unity would be a testament to the world in which it lives.

The Church needs to be resigned in its biblical stand on divorce, homosexuality, abortion, modesty, and be willing to separate from those who obstinately and wilfully stand in opposition to purity, even if those who are errant are professing Christians. What this mandates is that, no matter how messy it is, the Church and its leaders need to be more engaged in the process of discipline, a process that has all but gone by the wayside. It is suggested that only as the Church once again claims its rightful place in this process, and allows those within the Body with grievances toward one another to be guided biblically, that unity can gradually be restored and restoration can take place. This mandates church leadership being actively involved in the process of reconciliation, tedious and demanding as it may be.⁹³

An unaccounted for quote states, “The truth of the gospel announced without the demonstration of the power of the gospel in transformed and loving lives is sterile”. Meaning, if the Church cannot demonstrate unity and purity in alignment with God’s Word, the witness is muted.

Perhaps, one of the greatest implications of this truth is that if a person does not have biblical grounds for separation, he or she may be compelled to seek out restoration with the other member, or go through due course of biblical discipline. If the minor, personal excommunications were diminished, forgiveness could abound, and unity could flourish. Despite the awkwardness in holding someone accountable to “a life of discipleship”, the blessing of such actions will have profound affects upon the individual, the church, and the world at large (Bargerhuff 2010:191), at times even transforming an entire community as was seen in Calvin’s Consistory.

⁹³ Blomberg advises, “In today’s hyperlitigious society with confidentiality laws run amuck, churches who actually intend to implement church discipline need to have language in their by-laws and in agreements that members sign, approved by legal counsel, waiving the right to sue the church in such instances” (Blomberg 2014).

Anderson poses the question, “If anathematization can be considered normative for today and the main objections to it can be overcome, this concluding section must seek to answer the question, ‘How should evangelical theologians anathematize?’” (Anderson 2002:251). The greater question to ask is, “If church discipline is normative and is to have the desired effect, ‘How should evangelical theologians practice discipline?’” The point is that it needs to be utilized again if the Church is once again to be healthy, according to Matthew 18:15-20.

6.8 Can There Truly Be a Unified Church?

The high calling of the Church has been to maintain the unity afforded it by the work of Christ, but that is not to come at the expense of an unholy Body. The means to rightly care for that Body is correction of the infected member. Whatever else may be true in light of this study, it is clear through scripture that whether by removal of his divine presence, or extraction of the unclean person, or persons from his presence, that there is no place for the profane to dwell in the presence of the holy. The dilemma which faces a Church that needs to be unified, is the problem of this profanity which is embedded in the human nature, that which refuses to be brought into alignment with the word and will of God. What this means in light of the question of whether the Church can ever be unified is monumental. The initial conclusion is that there will likely never be a truly unified Body this side of eternity in the Church as long as there is sin which will continue to separate.

However, as pertains to the question, “Can there truly be a united Church?” the answer is, “there already is”, yet that is in the spiritual realm. The more specific question is, “Can there be an earthly expression of the Church in a truly unified form?” The answer to that lies in the behavior of the Church. Paul indicates that the Church is to be diligent to maintain that unity of the Spirit, however, that implies surrender and effort, which is unlikely to reach fruition by the Church in this dispensation, as different groups and faiths express varying degrees of import upon various doctrines. As Calvin states, “It is true, therefore, that the church has been sanctified by Christ, but only the beginning of its sanctification is visible here [on earth]” (Manetsch 2013:189).

What are the denominational allowances? What are the true essences of orthodoxy? Orthopraxy? These questions will continue to be asked by fallen minds, in a fallen world, in a self-absorbed, yet seeking Christian culture.

Childs holds that,

“It is possible that some of our difficulties today originate in the fact that the balance between *ekklesia* and *koinōnia* has been too heavily weighted on the side of *ekklesia*, and that what we need now is recovery of emphasis upon the *koinōnia* as a Spirit –guided community exercising its prescriptive freedom in all things under the Living Christ as its Head...Its distinctive character lay in its being a *koinōnia* of believers united in Christ, and charged by Him with the duty of living as His witnesses in the spirit of obedience and brotherly love” (Childs 1952:360).

It is likely that Childs is pointing out the futility of such union until the focus is again placed upon the common *unity* of the Church, rather than on the Church itself. It is doubtful that the request of Christ in John 17 can be considered to have been answered in the affirmative (Kossé 2010:1314). Rather, until the *Communio Santorum* is accountable to the authority of Scripture, and is willing to place itself under that authority, it is believed by this researcher that the prayer of Christ, though positionally true, will remain experientially unanswered, at least until the restoration of all things. At that point in time the Church, the true and glorious Bride of Christ will be reunited mercurially coming together to form one homogenous factor, without “spot or blemish”, and without any scars of any previous dissention or division. This is described in Revelation 7:9, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands”.

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me” (John 17:20-23).

This work is offered not only for the academic community but for the benefit of the Church as well, that it would rightly understand the biblical parameters for division, and would seek to abide by those guidelines given in Matthew 18:15-20, the anchor text of this dissertation. A church committed to unity and purity, will understand the need for unity to witness to the transformational power of Christ, and simultaneously the need for purity in that witness. Therefore, it is the hope of the researcher that this endeavor would help answer the question, “To what degree are Christians in accordance with Scripture in tolerating separations in the Body of Christ?” in a proper understanding, with faithful implementation of any doctrines of division within the Body of Christ.

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