

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XCII : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

Ephesians 4:15b —

and in all thynges growe in him which is the heed that ys to saye Christ (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

and in all things, grow vp into him, which is the head, that is, Christ. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (King James Version, 1769)

we may increase to Him in all things, who is the head – the Christ; (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ; (Revised Version, 1885)

we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; (American Standard Version, 1901)

we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – (New King James Version, 1982)

we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, (New American Standard Version, 1995)

we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (New International Version, 2011)

we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (English Standard Version, 2011)

αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ, Χριστός, (NA28 Greek New Testament)

v. 15b — **WE ARE TO GROW IN EVERY WAY** — *and in all things grow, and in all things grow up, may grow up in all things, we may increase in all things, we are to grow in every way, we are to grow in all aspects* — αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα [auxēsōmen eis auton ta panta] — *The sense of Paul's statement is that believers are to 'grow in all areas of spiritual life, in all the parts of our growth, may grow in every way into Him.'* [Hoehner, 566; Abbott, 124; Lincoln, 260]

“Believers are expected to grow in faith (2 Cor. 10:5; 2 Thess. 1:3) and in the knowledge of God (hence the apostle's prayer to this end, Col. 1:10). According to Colossians 2:19, which is akin to Ephesians 4:15, the whole body of Christ, which is totally dependent on the head to nourish and unify it, is said to ‘grow with the growth of God’. **Here the growth is to be comprehensive: God's people are to grow into Christ ‘in every way’, that is, in faith, knowledge, unity, and, especially in this context, in love.**” [O'Brien, 312] **“Living the truth in love is both the means of growth and the result of growth.** As we live in the truth and love encountered in Christ (3:19 and 4:21) and express these qualities, we become more closely attached to Christ and more like him.... Christians are attached to Christ by faith; as they grow, they are more closely brought into relation with him and into conformity with his character and his will.” [Snodgrass, 207] “[T]he work of grace upon the soul is a gradual work, and an increase of this in the exercise of faith, hope, love, and spiritual knowledge, is a growth; and this is a growth in all things, in all grace, as in those mentioned, so in others, as humility, patience, self-denial, resignation of the will to the will of God, and especially the knowledge of Christ; for it is a growing into him, from whom souls receive all their grace and increase of it; for he is the head of influence to supply them, as well as the head of eminence to protect them; and now the preaching of the Gospel, or the sincere speaking of the truth, is the instrumental means of such growth.” [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]

CHRIST IS BOTH THE SOURCE AND THE GOAL — *into Him who is the head – Christ, in Him which is the head that is to say Christ* — ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός [hos estin hē kephalē ho Christos] — ‘into Him, unto Him, towards Him’ denoting the end or aim of our growth: Christ; thus, ‘to the stature of a complete man in Him, we are to grow up to His stature,’ reflecting back on the metaphor of v. 13. **Conformity to Christ is both the source of our growth (v. 7) and the end to be attained (v. 15).** “This one to whom we are growing up is identified as the head, a description already given in 1:22. As discussed in that passage, **Christ's headship implies preeminence or prominence.** Although the term [head] does not necessarily inherently denote authority or source, the context may emphasize one of those aspects. **Certainly, the context of 1:22 portrays Christ as the head in the sense of ruler or one who has authority, because that passage speaks specifically about everything being subjected under his feet. In the present context the idea of authority or ruler is not prominent but the ideas of source (v. 7) and goal (v. 15) are. The present verse stresses that the goal or end of our growth is the standard of Christ's stature. Christ, then, is identified as the head and thus he is a model for the believer. Also, the idea of source is emphasized in the prepositional phrase [out from Whom] in the next verse (v 16).** This is similar to Col 2:19 where the head is not seen as directive but rather as the source of sustenance for the body. Hence, Christ as head is both the goal and source of our growth.” [Hoehner, 567f; see also Hodge, 172] **“So Christ's giving of gifts to the Church is to enable the Church to move toward its goals, and that movement**

is seen in terms of believers' growth toward Christ. ... In 1:22, 23 [Paul] had already spoken of Christ as head over all things for the Church, described as his body. Implicit was the idea that he was also head over the Church. Now this relationship is made explicit, as the one toward whom believers grow is identified as Christ, the head. The terminology of Col 2:19 is taken up so that ***Christ, the head, can be seen as both the goal and the source of the Church's growth.*** [Lincoln, 261]

'THE HEAD' IN ANCIENT PHYSIOLOGY — Peter O'Brien quotes C. E. Arnold's study of ancient medical writings to determine how the ancients viewed physiology. Arnold concludes: "Paul draws on the current physiological understandings of the head in relationship to the body as exhibited in the medical writers to enrich his notion of the church as a corporate body.... The medical writers describe the head not only as the ruling part of the body, but also as the supply center of the body." Philo, in particular, reflects this same concept of the head's functions, but develops the metaphorical usage of the imagery in relation to leadership and the head's provision of the animating energy and life." [O'Brien, 314; q.v. C. E. Arnold, *Jesus Christ*, 346-366]

THIS GROWTH IS IN QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY — As we have previously observed, Paul's emphasis here is upon quality rather than quantity. This is not to deny the importance of "quantity" (= outreach, evangelism) but Paul's emphasis here is "quality" (= sanctification of believers). ***This underlines that the Church's growth is not being thought of in terms of quantity, a numerical expansion of its membership, but in terms of quality, an increasing approximation of believers to Christ. In the face of the scheming of error, believers are not only to stand firm, as will be emphasized in 6:13, 14, but also to make progress. That proper growth and progress is to take place in every way, that is, in every aspect of the Church's life and particularly in those aspects singled out earlier, in unity, in knowledge, and in speaking the truth in love.*** [Lincoln, 261]

THIS GROWTH PRESUPPOSES LIFE — Inherent within this metaphor is the assumption of life; growth only occurs in the spiritually alive, not the dead. This is true of both of the implications of this verse: to the believers as individuals and to the corporate body of believers, the assembly of believers, our churches.

POSSIBLE PARALLEL THOUGHTS WITH (1) 2:20-22 THE CAPSTONE? GROWING INTO THAT WHICH IS ALREADY THERE? AND (2) 4:13 GROW INTO THE PERFECT MAN / INTO THE FULNESS OF THE STATURE OF CHRIST — ***"As believers speak the truth in love, they 'grow up to him'. The figure is organic, referring to the growth of human beings from childhood (cf. infants; v. 14) toward maturity. It therefore goes back to the picture of the church arriving eventually 'at a mature man' by growing to the size of Christ's full stature. Its use of the term [grow] is also reminiscent of the last use of that term in 2:21, where the 'building' of God's people, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, 'grows into a holy temple in the Lord.' This in turn is reminiscent of the use of the term [building] in 4:12 to speak of the purpose for which the victorious Christ has given gifts to all his people. He has done so for the 'building up' of his body. These connections help us to understand what Paul means when he says that when believers speak the truth in love, they grow 'up to' Christ with respect to all things: they are moving closer to the full union with Christ that is the church's eventual destiny.*** [Thielman, 285f] "The metaphor of growth suggests that here the head is regarded as the source of growth in so far as it is identified with Christ.... Christ, v. 16, supplies the body with what it requires to grow. But how can the body grow into Christ who is its head? The thought is probably parallel to that of 2.20-2; there the building grows into a temple even though the final coping-stone is regarded as already in position. Here the church both grows into Christ, which means more than that it becomes like Christ, and grows from what he supplies to it." [Best, 408] "This growth of the body has Christ as its goal: he is the one into whom we are to grow. The earlier reference to increase underscored his indispensable position as the foundation stone of the building which grows into a holy temple *in* him (2:21). In the following verse of this paragraph he is the source of the body's expansion (*from him*, 4:16). At v.15 the stress is on the readers' progress and maturity towards him as the goal. Together believers become more and more like their Lord, so that they are fully and completely incorporated into him." [O'Brien, 312]

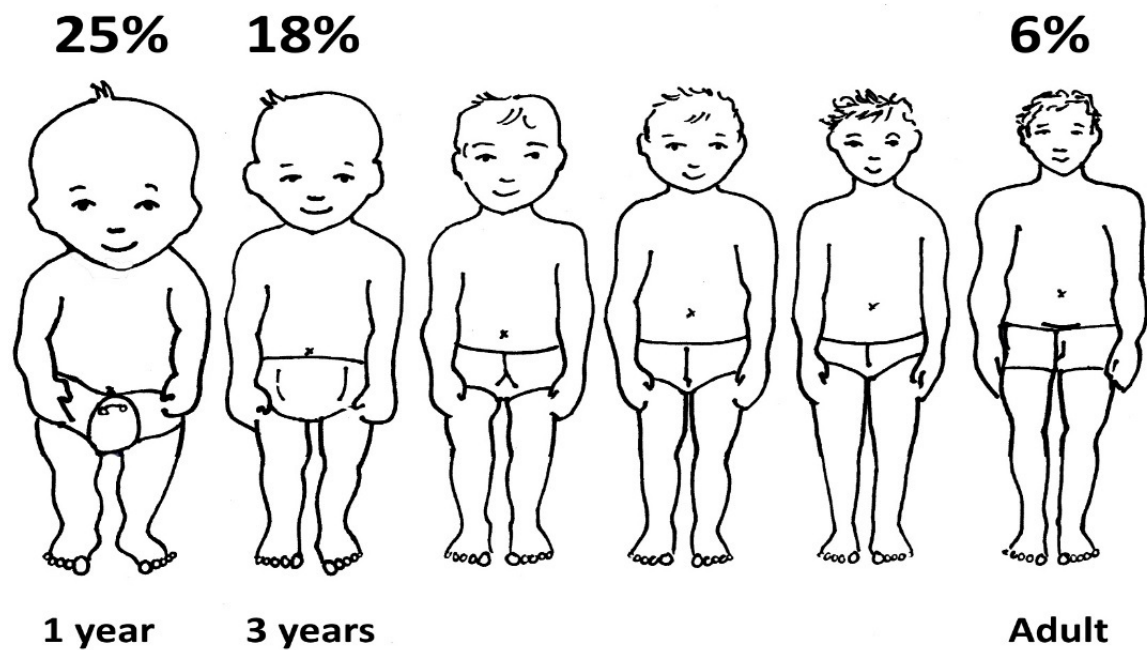
Ephesians 4:15,16

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (ESV)

THIS GROWTH OF THE BODY UNTIL IT MATCHES THE HEAD HAS BEEN COMPARED TO NEWBORNS — "In truth and love together, then, the readers are exhorted to grow up in all parts of their being so that the body of Christ may be properly proportioned in relation to the head. This idea of the growth of the body of Christ until it matches the head has been compared to the normal development of the human body: in infancy the body is small in comparison with the head, but it grows until it attains the proportions which the body bears to the head in a fully grown human being." [Bruce, 352]

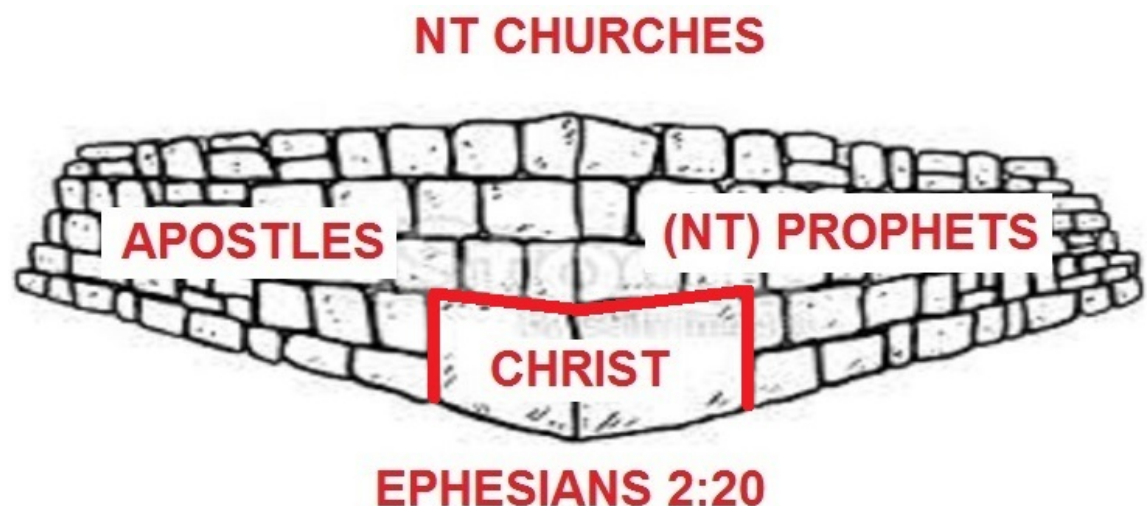


NO ONE MEMBER ABOVE THE OTHERS — “What aspect then does Popery present, but that of a crooked, deformed person? Is not the whole symmetry of the church destroyed, when one man, acting in opposition to the head, refuses to be reckoned one of the members? The Papists deny this, and allege that the Pope is nothing more than a ministerial head. But such cavils do them no service. The tyranny of their idol must be acknowledged to be altogether inconsistent with that order which Paul here recommends. *In a word, a healthful condition of the church requires that Christ alone ‘must increase,’ and all others ‘must decrease.’ (John 3:30.) Whatever increase we obtain must be regulated in such a manner, that we shall remain in our own place, and contribute to exalt the head.*” [Calvin, 286f] “And once more, by using the first person plural (lit. ‘in order that we might grow’) the apostle includes himself among those who are progressing and maturing into him.” [O’Brien, 312f]

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT WITH PAUL’S USE OF METAPHORS — It is important to realize Paul often uses metaphors to illustrate important spiritual truths and *it would be an error to demand conformity throughout the scriptures for each metaphor.* This was previously mentioned in our lessons on Eph 2. In that lesson we saw Paul make the following statement:

‘having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone’
(Eph 2:20 NKJV)

In this metaphor, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, the foundation is the teachings of the apostles and NT prophets, and what is being built are the NT churches:



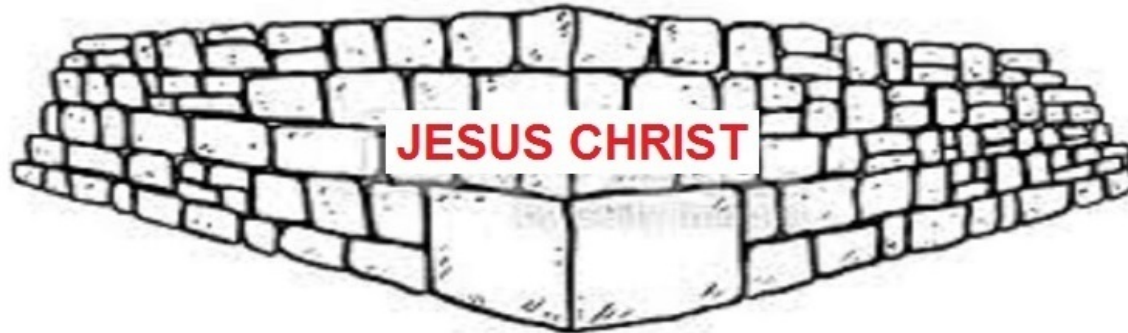
But Paul also uses the foundation metaphor in another passage:

‘According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is

laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.' (1 Cor 3:10-15 NKJV)

In this metaphor the foundation is the teachings of Jesus Christ and what is being built upon that foundation are the differing Christian ministries (specifically in 1 Cor 3 the work of Paul, Apollos and others):

CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES



1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15

A similar argument may be made from Paul's metaphor used here of the body and the head:

'And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.' (Eph 1:22,23 NKJV)

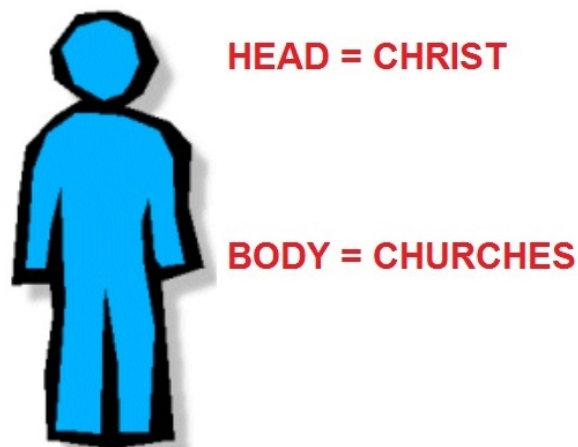
'but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.' (Eph 4:15,16 NKJV)

'For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.' (Eph 5:23 NKJV)

'And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.' (1 Cor 1:18 NKJV)

'and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.' (Col 2:19 NKJV)

In each of these metaphors Christ is the head and each church is His body:



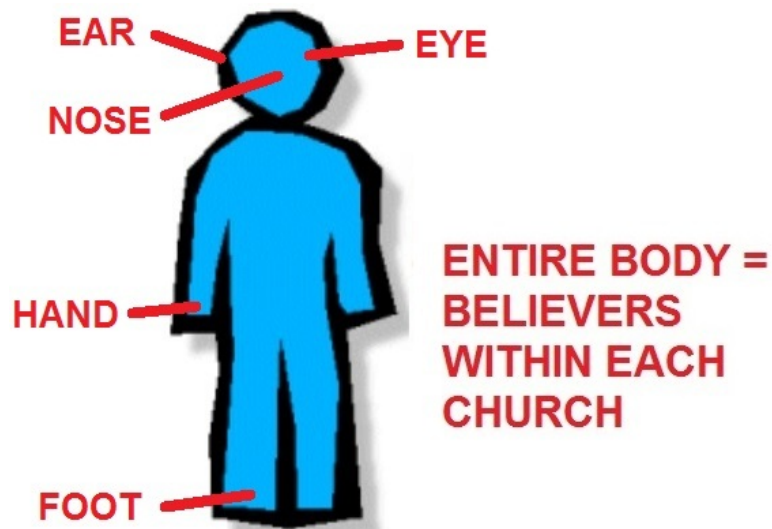
But we read elsewhere that Paul uses the body metaphor to illustrate different truths:

'For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and

individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.' (Rom 12:3-8)

'For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being 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 have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.' (1 Cor 12:12-27)

In these metaphors Paul is emphasizing the importance of each believer within his or her church body, and the importance of differing gifts of each of the members. The body (including the head in these metaphors) is a picture of an entire church body:



There are no conflicts here! As with the foundation metaphors, Paul is merely using similar metaphors to illustrate different truths. It would be an error to try to force the metaphor found in 1 Corinthians 3 with Ephesians 2, or 1 Corinthians 12 / Romans 12 with the various passages that speak of Christ as the Head and the churches as the body. As a modern example, suppose Pastor was speaking on the unity of the church and used the following metaphor:

"A church needs to be like a car, all of the parts working together and in cohesion in order for the car to run smoothly."

In this metaphor, the individual components of a car would be a picture of all the church members working together as one. But suppose a couple months later Pastor is speaking in Timothy of church leadership:

"A church needs leaders, as a car needs someone behind the wheel."

In this metaphor the church membership would be the car and the church leadership would be the driver seated in the car. But would any church member be so foolish to believe because Pastor spoke of a car in both illustrations, these metaphors had to be brought together and harmonized? "As mentioned in the discussion in 1:23, there has been development in the concept concerning the body of Christ. In 1 Cor 12:27-28 the church is the body of Christ, whereas in Ephesians and Colossians (Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1.18; 2:19) the body of believers is the church and Christ is the head of that body. Although in the illustration of the body in 1 Cor 12:21, the 'head' is used as one of the members of the body, it is not identified as being Christ, as it is in Ephesians and Colossians. In other words, in 1 Corinthians the church is the body and the body is Christ, whereas in Ephesians and Colossians the church is the body and Christ is the head, and furthermore, the body and the head is Christ. This metaphor is richer and more complex." [Hoehner, 568] "The body image has already appeared several times. In fact, Paul's comments here develop the ideas in 1:22-23. No other New Testament writer uses 'body' metaphorically, but for Paul it is a major term for explaining salvation, the church, and ethics (note: Of Paul's ninety-one uses of 'body,' only four appear outside Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthian, Ephesians, and Colossians. While 'head' is used of Christ in 1 Corinthians 11:3, only in Ephesians and

Colossians is a Christological understanding of 'head' brought into relation with 'body.'). Moreover, the language here is similar to the building language in 2:21-22. The building grows and the body is built up; in both people are joined together as a result of their connection to Christ (cf. also Col. 2:19). *The body image conveys several ideas:*

- (1) *An intimate relation exists between Christ and those who believe in him. They are bound to him and draw from him resources for life.*
- (2) *Union with Christ joins people to each other.*
- (3) *Each person has responsibility within the body to fulfill his or her calling.*
- (4) *The body grows and is built up by the activity of each part and the sustenance that comes from Christ.*
- (5) *Everything done in the body is done in the context of love.” [Snodgrass, 207]*

WE MUST BE BALANCED – GRACE IN ALL AREAS — *“To summarize, as it is preferable for a child to develop in all areas of life rather than just in one or two areas, so is the child of God to develop in all areas of spiritual life. For example, an increase in knowledge must be accompanied by an increase in love and development of proper attitudes, and at the same time God-given gifts must be continually exercised. Believers are to grow to Christ who is our standard. Christ is the embodiment of love (Eph 3:19; 5:2, 25; Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 5:14) and truth (Eph 4:21; John 14:6). Briefly, in verses 11-13 Christ gives gifts to all believers to prepare them to do the work of the ministry for the purpose of building the body of Christ in order to attain the unity of the faith, to a mature person, and to the full stature of Christ. In verse 15 the same idea is conveyed, as gifts enable growth to that standard, namely, Christ. This is not numerical but qualitative growth. The goal is to grow in Christ. It is not referring to an eschatological future but a present goal that can be achieved by the utilization of the gifts in his power.”*
[Hoehner, 567]