

Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology - CAJET -

ISSN Pending



Number: 02

Issue: 1

Date: August 2024

Editors:

Prof. Dieudonné Djoubairou. Dr. Felix Niba
Dr. Sap Jacques Duclaire, Dr. Roch Ntankeh, Dr. Deugoué Tite, Dr. Fubang
Emmanuel, Dr. Elias Ngomediage, Dr. Longa Augustine, Chongsi Godswill,
Wankagué Gaston, Fai Ebenezer.

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Emmanuel Oumarou.

©2023 Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology
Yaoundé, Cameroon
www.cajet.org

Scientific Committee

Prof. Mbacham Wilfred Fon (PhD. Public Health Biotechnology; M. Div., Discipleship).
FCAS, FAAS, FTWAS/ Adjunct Faculty, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du Cameroun*
(FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON.

Prof. Fohle Lygunda li-M (D. Min, Ph.D.), Professor of missiology and contextual theology.
Head of department of theological studies for francophone, anglophone, and
lusophone Africa at *Tearfund*.

Prof. Elie Sikamosi, (PhD. Biblical Studies, NT), *Université Chrétienne de Kinshasa* (UCKIN,
RDC) /Directeur Général de *l'Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Sonabata*, RDC.

Prof. David E. Bjork (MA, DEA, M. Div., PhD). Director of the Doctoral Program of
the *Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology* (FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON /
Member of *World Partners* in collaboration with *Cooperative Studies* (CS), USA.

Prof. Ghislain Afolabi Agbèdè (PhD, Systematic Theology and Holistic Development).
Fondateur de *ADONAI Yireeh House* et promoteur de la *Faculté de Théologie Holistique et*
de Misiologie Appliquée (FATHMA), BENIN.

Prof. Herbert Rostand Ngouo (PhD, Linguistics), Université de Maroua, CAMEROON.

Prof. Patrick Nkolo Fanga (Practical Theology), Head of Department of Practical
Theology, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui* (FATEB), CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC.

Prof. Abel Njerareou (PhD., Biblical Studies, OT). *Faculté de Théologie Evangelique*
Shalom, Ndjamena, CHAD.

Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbo (PhD, Linguistics), Distinguished Professor at *ICT*
University, USA, Cameroon Campus and Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the
University of Yaoundé 1, CAMEROON.

Prof. Dieudonné Djoubairou, (PhD, Systematic Theology), *Faculté Autonome de Théologie*
Évangélique du Cameroun (FATECAM), Ngaoundéré, CAMEROON.

Prof. Joseph Mavinga (PhD., Biblical Studies, OT), Head of Department of OT Studies,
Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Prof. Paul. Mpindi (PhD, Biblical Studies, OT), Founder and president of *Faculté de*
Théologie Evangélique du Congo (FATEC), Kinshasa, DRC.

Prof. Wilfred T. W. Fon (PhD. Theology). Adviser for Bible Translation and Applied
Linguistics, *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Dr. Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, (PhD, Missions and Intercultural Studies), Founder and CEO,
Charis Institute for Intercultural Studies, Seoul, SOUTH KOREA.

Dr. Mbam Stéphane, (D.Min, Practical Theology), *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du*
Cameroun (FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON.

Dr. Mbukulu William, (PhD, Biblical Studies, NT), Head of Department of NT Studies,
Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Dr. Nditemeh Charlemagne (D. Min., Practical Theology; Th.D. Systematic Theology).
Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui (FATEB), CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC / Executive President of the *Cameroon Baptist Convention*, CAMEROON.

Dr. Julius Ndishua (PhD. Biblical Studies, OT). *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Dr. Nseimboh Johnson Nyiangoh (D. Min., Pastoral Care and Counselling) from *Sioux Falls Seminary*, USA. Provost of the *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Dr. Clifford Yiwong Fanfon (Ph.D., Pastoral Care and Counselling) from the *Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ogbomoso, NIGERIA. Deputy Provost in charge of Academics, *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Dr. Jiofack Kana Jésus (PhD. Missiology with minor in Christian philosophy; Maîtrise in Linguistics and African Language; Masters of Arts in Applied Linguistics). Translation consultant and researcher in African missiology / Lecturer in the Department of World Missions and Intercultural Studies at the *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Articles published in the *Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology* mirror the opinions of their authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the editors, reviewers or publisher.

**An Examination of Ecclesiastical Unity in Ephesians 4:1-6 as Paradigm for the
Universal Unity of the Body of Christ**

*Examen de l'unité ecclésiastique dans Éphésiens 4 :1-6 en tant que paradigme de
l'unité universelle du Corps du Christ*

Victor Umaru¹

Abstract

This paper analyses Ephesians 4:1-6 as a foundational text for ecclesiastical unity within the context of the Church in Africa. It examines how the principles articulated in Ephesians 4:1-6 serve as a model for unity among diverse denominations across the continent, especially Nigeria. It calls believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling, with humility, gentleness, patience, and love, striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The paper then discusses the theological significance of ecclesiastical unity, as well as ecumenical and missional perspectives within the global Church's diverse understanding and unity approaches. The paper examines the implications of Ephesians 4:1-6 for the Church in Africa on denominational proliferation, leadership development, reconciliation, and mission with practical strategies and initiatives for ecclesiastical unity at local, regional, and continental levels. It concludes by affirming the centrality of Christ and the gospel as the foundation for the unity, calling for a renewed commitment to embodying the principles of Ephesians 4:1-6 in the life and witness of the Church in Africa, as it seeks to fulfil its mission of proclaiming the gospel and serving humanity in the Spirit of unity and love.

Résumé

Cet article analyse Ephésiens 4 :1-6 en tant que texte fondamental pour l'unité ecclésiastique dans le contexte de l'Église d'Afrique. Il examine comment les principes énoncés dans Ephésiens 4 :1-6 servent de modèle pour l'unité entre les diverses dénominations sur le continent, en particulier au Nigéria. Il appelle les croyants à marcher d'une manière digne de leur vocation, avec humilité, douceur, patience et amour, en s'efforçant de maintenir l'unité de l'Esprit par le lien de la paix. L'article aborde ensuite la signification théologique de l'unité ecclésiastique, ainsi que les perspectives œcuméniques et missionnaires dans le cadre des diverses approches de l'Église mondiale en matière de compréhension et d'unité. Il examine les implications d'Éphésiens 4 :1-6 pour l'Église en Afrique en ce qui concerne la prolifération confessionnelle, le développement du leadership, la réconciliation et la mission, avec des stratégies et des initiatives pratiques pour l'unité ecclésiastique aux niveaux local, régional et continental. Il conclut en affirmant la centralité du Christ et de l'Évangile comme fondement de l'unité, appelant à un engagement renouvelé pour incarner les principes d'Éphésiens 4 :1-6 dans la vie et le témoignage de l'Église en Afrique, alors qu'elle cherche à remplir sa mission de proclamation de l'Évangile et de service de l'humanité dans l'Esprit d'unité et d'amour.

Introduction

Unity represents a foundational concept within Christian theology and practice, embodying the ideal of oneness and harmony among believers and churches. At its core, unity in the Church refers to the spiritual and relational bond that unites Christians across denominational boundaries for a sense of belonging to the larger body of Christ. It denotes the unity of the

¹Victor Umaru lectures at the *Baptist College of Theology*, Obinze, Owerri, Nigeria. Currently, he is a PhD student in the Department of Biblical Studies at the *Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ogbomoso, and the *Bowen University*, Iwo, Osun State also in Nigeria.

Church, encompassing the universal Church, which includes all believers regardless of denomination and local expressions of the Christian community. This unity is grounded in the belief that all who profess faith in Jesus Christ are members of His body and the Church and are called to live in communion with one another (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Thus, the Church's unity transcends theological differences, ecclesiastical structures, and cultural contexts, given that all believers share identity and purpose in Christ.

Significantly, church unity finds its theological basis in the biblical concept of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul vividly portrays the Church as the body of Christ, with Christ as its head and believers as its members (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). This imagery underscores the interconnectedness and interdependence of believers within the Christian community for the need for unity amidst diversity. As members of the body, Christians are called to love and support one another, recognising that each member contributes to the health and functioning of the whole (Ephesians 4:16). Central to the conceptual framework of ecclesiastical unity is the understanding of the Church as the visible manifestation of God's redemptive plan. According to Christian belief, the Church is not merely a human institution but a divine reality ordained by God to proclaim the gospel and reconcile humanity to Himself (Matthew 16:18; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). As such, ecclesiastical unity is integral to fulfilling God's purposes for the Church, serving as a witness to God's love and reconciliation in Christ. Unity in the body of Christ is crucial for Christian life and ministry, as it is a mark of authentic discipleship and a prerequisite for effective witness and mission. Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, declaring that their unity would testify to the world of His divine mission. However, unity in the body of Christ is often elusive in practice, marred by division, discord, and sectarianism within the Church.

The history of Christianity is replete with examples of schisms, conflicts, and doctrinal disputes that have fractured the unity of the Church. Cultural, political, and socio-economic factors have also contributed to division and disunity among believers, hindering the realisation of God's vision for His Church. Ephesians 4:1-6, written by the apostle Paul, emphasises unity as central to the identity and mission of the Church. This paper explores the concept of unity in Ephesians 4:1-6 as a model for unity within the Church in Nigeria and, by extension, Africa. The article is structured into five main sections: introduction, conceptual clarification of ἐκκλησία, exegesis and exposition of Ephesians 4:1-7, inferences and application for the Church in Nigeria, and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification of ἐκκλησία

Unity in the Church has been a contentious issue for many decades, with the Church characterised by disunity.² Apart from the numerous denominations, there are also countless different theological traditions such as the Anglican/Episcopalian tradition, the Arminian, Wesleyan and Methodist tradition, the Baptist tradition, the Dispensational tradition, the Lutheran tradition, the Reformed or Presbyterian tradition, and the Renewal/Charismatic/Pentecostal tradition.³

In the New Testament, the word church is the favourite word used to describe the people of God. It is a translation of the Greek word ἐκκλησία, which means "those called out." In biblical times, it was a favourite word used to describe a meeting or gathering of people, such as "the

²V. Kärkkäinen, *Hope and community: A constructive Christian theology for the pluralistic world*, vol. 5, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 309.

³ W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 6.

called out people,” “the assembly,” or “the congregation.”⁴ Applied to Christians, the term means “the gathering of Christians” or “those called out of the world to follow Jesus Christ.” The term is never used in the Bible to refer to a building; what one would think of as church buildings did not even appear until hundreds of years after the Bible was written. The word ἐκκλησία was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer to Israel as the people of God. So, the term nicely ties together the New Testament teaching that everyone who is part of God’s promise to Abraham is included in “the church” or “the people of God.”⁵ In this sense, the New Testament church is a renewal and expansion movement among the people of Israel.⁶ The Church was established just after Jesus Christ ascended to heaven in 29 or 30 CE (Acts 1:11) on a day known as the day of Pentecost, a Jewish celebration, and this day witnessed for the first time the proclamation of salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ. The people who responded with faith in Christ formed the first New Testament church. Today’s affiliation with the Church is based upon the same response to God’s grace through faith.

The unity of the Church is a prominent theme in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles. Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17 expresses His desire for the unity of His followers, praying “that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me” (John 17:21, ESV).⁷ In his letters to the early Christian communities, the apostle Paul repeatedly emphasises the importance of unity, urging believers to maintain the bond of peace and be of the same mind and judgment (Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10).⁸

Historical Development of Ecclesial Unity

The historical development of the Church has witnessed various expressions and challenges related to ecclesial unity. From the early Christian period, characterised by diverse communities and theological emphases, to the subsequent emergence of institutionalised Christianity under the Roman Empire, the quest for unity has been both a unifying and divisive force within the Church. The early ecumenical councils, such as the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Chalcedon (451), grappled with doctrinal controversies and sought to articulate the core tenets of Christian faith that would serve as a basis for unity among the diverse Christian communities.⁹ According to Mark S. Smith,

Nicaea was afforded a place of special honour at the church councils of the mid-fifth century. At Ephesus (431), at Constantinople (448), at Ephesus again (449), and at Chalcedon (451), the assembled bishops repeatedly affirmed the unique authority and sufficiency of the Nicene Creed and praised the ‘fathers’ of Nicaea for their unimpeachable faith.¹⁰

The formulation of creeds and confessions, such as the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian Definition, aimed to provide doctrinal parameters for the unity of belief and practice within the

⁴L. Coenen, “Church,” in *The New International Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975), 1: 291–307.

⁵Stanley Grenz, *Theology for The Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 605.

⁶Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972) and Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God In Prophecy* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983).

⁷Gert J. Malan, “Does John 17:11b, 21–23 refer to church unity?” *HTS Theologische Studies/Theological Studies* 67, 1 (2011): 1-10.

⁸Everett Ferguson, “Theological Foundations of Unity,” *Mission* 6 (1972): 140-43.

⁹William G Rusch, “The Creed of the Synod of Nicaea,” in *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 49.

¹⁰Mark S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431–451* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2018), 1.

Church. However, the historical reality of schisms, such as the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, revealed deep-seated theological, ecclesiological, and political tensions that fractured the visible unity of the Church. Anna M. Cox asserts that the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, was banished from the Rome, Italy-based Christian Church on July 16, 1054. Long-rising tensions between the Byzantine Church in Constantinople (now Istanbul) and the Roman Church in Rome reached a breaking point with Cerularius's excommunication. The Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church are the two main divisions of the European Christian Church that emerged from the ensuing separation. The Great Schism, also known as the "East-West Schism" or the "Schism of 1054," is the name given to this division.¹¹ The subsequent proliferation of denominationalism and the rise of independent and non-denominational expressions of Christianity further complicated the landscape of ecclesial unity.

The modern ecumenical movement, beginning in the 20th century with the *World Missionary Conference* in Edinburgh (1910) and the establishment of the *World Council of Churches* (1948),¹² has sought to promote dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation among diverse Christian traditions, visible unity and common witness in a world marked by division and strife. The historical trajectory of the Church's quest for unity reflects the aspirations and challenges inherent in pursuing ecclesial communion.

Theological Significance of Unity

At the heart of the theological understanding of unity is the Trinitarian nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose perfect unity serves as the ultimate model for the unity of the Church.¹³ The doctrine of the Church, or ecclesiology, explores the nature, purpose, and mission of the Church as the people of God called to embody and proclaim the kingdom of God. Central to this ecclesiological vision is *κοινωνία*, which emphasises the relational, participatory, and communal aspects of the Church's life and witness. The unity of the Church is grounded in the shared participation in the life of the triune God and the mutual fellowship of believers in Christ.¹⁴

Furthermore, Leon Siwecki believes that the theological concept of Catholicity - understood not merely in terms of institutional universality but more fundamentally as the Church's wholeness, fullness, and integrity in its diverse expressions, underscores ecclesial unity's inclusive and expansive nature.¹⁵ The unity of the Church is not a uniformity that suppresses diversity but a unity in diversity that reflects the manifold wisdom of God and the riches of the body of Christ. The missional dimension of ecclesial unity and the Church's vocation to witness God's reconciliation and transforming work in Christ, both in its internal life and engagement with the world. The unity of the Church is not an end in itself but a means to the end of God's redemptive mission, as the Church's unity testifies to the truth and power of the gospel before a divided and skeptical world.

¹¹ Anna M. Cox, "THE GREAT SCHISM: The Great Divide of the West, the East and Christianity," *International Journal of Social Science Studies* Vol. 6, No. 3; (2018): 55-62.

¹² "World Council of Churches," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecumenism>. accessed on 26/4/2024.

¹³ Ryan K. McAleer, "Qualifying Religious Truth and Ecclesial Unity: The Soteriological Significance of Difference," *Religions* 15, 346 (2024): 1-11.

¹⁴ Lieven Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads of University, Church and Society: Dialogue, Difference and Catholic Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

¹⁵ Leon Siwecki, "Relationship Between The Universal Church And The Local Churches," *Roczniki Teologiczne Tom XLV*, 2 (2018): 101-117.

Contemporary Challenges to Unity

The contemporary context presents a myriad of challenges to the unity of the Church, ranging from theological and doctrinal differences to ethical and social issues that engender division and discord among Christians.¹⁶ The proliferation of denominationalism, sectarianism, and independent congregationalism reflects the enduring reality of ecclesial fragmentation and disunity within the broader landscape of global Christianity.¹⁷ The divergent theological perspectives on ecclesiology, sacraments, worship, and ministry, as well as the differing ethical stances on issues such as human sexuality, gender roles, and social justice, have contributed to intra-Christian tensions and conflicts that hinder the Church's visible unity.¹⁸ The rise of individualism, consumerism, and secularism in contemporary culture has also impacted the ethos and unity of Christian communities, as the values of self-interest, preference-driven spirituality, and relativism pose challenges to the communal identity and solidarity of the Church.¹⁹ Kärkkäinen discusses the theological concept of unity amidst diversity, emphasising the Church's role as a reconciled and reconciling community.²⁰ The globalised and pluralistic nature of the 21st-century world demands a renewed commitment to the pursuit of unity amidst diversity as the Church seeks to embody its calling as a reconciled and reconciling community in manifold challenges and opportunities.²¹

Exegesis and Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-7.

Ephesians is a letter that addresses various theological topics with clarity and precision.²² It addresses tensions between Jews and Gentiles in the Church, urging Gentile readers to grow in their faith by ceasing sinful practices and living out the virtues commended by Christ. Clinton E. Arnold states that Paul's tone is upbeat but never compromising. He addresses topics such as assimilation ministry, divine sovereignty, spiritual warfare, worship, gender roles in marriage, racial reconciliation, God's design for the Church, ecumenical unity, the gospel in an animistic context, the contextualisation of theology, living in a context of religious pluralism, the gift of being an apostle, the role of the Jewish law, local Church and missions, intercessory prayer, spiritual power, and the work of Satan and demons.²³

Introduction of the Book of Ephesians

The destination of the letter to the Church at Ephesus has mainly been unquestioned throughout the history of the Church. The designation Προς Εφεσσιους "To the Ephesians" was the superscript heading to every copy of the letter, and the first verse designated the recipients as "the saints who are in Ephesus." However, in the mid-1800s, five Greek manuscripts were found missing the placename in the text of Eph 1:1. Three of these manuscripts are generally considered the earliest and most reliable witnesses of the Greek New Testament that were

¹⁶ G. T. Kurian, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

¹⁷ A. F. Walls, "The Ecclesial Context of Christian Mission: Theological Foundations and Implications," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 32, 3 (2008): 122-127.

¹⁸ K. Tanner, "Theological Diversity and the Unity of the Church," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 17, 1 (2015): 46-64. See also, T. F. Johnson, *Global Christianity: Contested Claims* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

¹⁹ C. Taylor, "A Secular Age," *The Hedgehog Review*, 9, 2 (2007): 7-24.

²⁰ V. M. Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010).

²¹ K. Tanner, "Unity in the Church and the World: A Reformed Perspective," *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology*, 20,1 (2011): 5-20.

²² I. H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 396.

²³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010).

found as it is today.²⁴ British scholars B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort published their critical edition of the Greek New Testament in 1881, with Ephesians 1:1 as “in Ephesus” in bold print and enclosed in brackets to indicate their opinion that it was a questionable reading. They dismissed the viability of “in Ephesus” because of the combined testimony of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. The discovery of a third-century papyrus manuscript (46) of Ephesians in the early 1930s solidified the opinion of many biblical scholars inclined to follow Westcott and Hort’s conclusion that the placename was a later addition.²⁵ Some critical scholars argue that there is an absence of futurist eschatology in Ephesians and that the author jettisons Paul’s “eschatological reserve.” Another hypothesis is that the author of Ephesians used Colossians as a literary source, although, according to Ernest Best, this is not persuasive.²⁶

The Situation of the Author and the Date of the Letter

Although the authorship of Ephesians is a contentious issue in Christian scholarship, most evangelical scholars believe it to be Pauline. The autobiographical material in the letter contains significant first-person addresses from the apostle, and it has been used and quoted as a Pauline letter by many Apostolic Fathers.²⁷ Some Nag Hammadi documents quote Ephesians as the apostle Paul’s own words, making it significant that Ephesians was recognised as a Pauline letter without any uncertainty or debate. Theological emphases in Ephesians are appropriate for a life setting in first-century Ephesus and western Asia Minor.²⁸

Paul ended his three-year Ephesian ministry (AD 52-55) after a tense episode in the theatre of Ephesus, which led to a sudden departure. Some scholars suggest that Paul may have been imprisoned in Ephesus immediately after this event and wrote the Ephesian letter during this time, putting the date of the letter at AD 55. According to John Calvin, the Roman origin of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians remains the best option, indicating that it was composed between AD 60-62.²⁹ It is more likely that Paul encountered and ministered to Onesimus and received communication from the churches at Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi, making AD 61 or 62 the most viable option.³⁰

Setting

Paul began his three-year ministry in Ephesus, known as the “mother city” of Asia, after a stay in Corinth. Ephesus was the headquarters of the Roman proconsul and the seat of the Greek “Confederacy.”³¹ It was the major port city for the west coast of Asia during the New Testament era, with roads from the north, south, and east converging in the city. The population of Ephesus at the time of Paul’s visit is difficult to determine, but it is likely to have been around 200,000 or 250,000, as suggested by Paul Trebilco.³² Ephesus was the leading city of the wealthiest region of the Roman Empire, with only Rome and Alexandria being more significant at the time. The city was cosmopolitan and multiethnic, with settlers from Greece, Egypt, and Rome.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 123–24.

²⁶ Ernest Best, “Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 72–96.

²⁷ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 13

²⁸ Markus Barth, “Traditions in Ephesians,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 3–25.

²⁹ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 121.

³⁰ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 341.

³¹ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 105.

³² Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 17,

The city was unique due to the extraordinary prominence of the goddess Artemis, also known as Diana. Her relationship with the city could best be described as a covenant bond, and thus, she was often called “Artemis of the Ephesians.”³³ Her temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens, and her cult permeated every area of life. Ephesus was also known for its magical practices, with the discovery of nearly 250 magical papyri in Egypt and the “Ephesian Letters” in antiquity.³⁴

Purpose

The purpose of Paul’s writing of Ephesians has been a topic of debate among scholars, with no consensus emerging on the specific reasons he wrote this letter. Interpreters like P.T. O’Brien advise not to specify a concrete situation or problem to which a letter is sent, as evidence is otherwise.³⁵ John Muddiman suggests that Ephesians has no setting and little apparent purpose.³⁶ By examining the text in light of its setting in Ephesus and western Asia Minor, it is possible to discern what may have motivated Paul to write this letter, which has to do with the spiritual struggles of believers in the Church on the superior power of God and the power he imparts to his people.

Text and Translation

1 Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε,
2 μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ,

3 σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης ·

4 ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν ·

5 εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα ·

6 εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.

1 Therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, appeal to you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called

2 With all humility and gentleness, with patience by putting up with one another in love

3 By making every effort to keep 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 the one hope of your calling

5 (There is) one Lord, one faith, one baptism

6 (There is) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all

Background of the text

Paul begins the second section of his letter with a succinct two-part prologue. According to Frank Thielman, Paul starts by telling his readers (4:1-3) that he writes as a friend who is so committed to what he is about to say that he is prepared to face imprisonment to make it. In particular, he wants his readers to cultivate four qualities: humility that translates into gentleness (even toward difficult people), persistence in their commitment (even when this is difficult), willingness to put up with annoying people (even to love them), and zeal to preserve

³³ Richard E. Oster, “Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate; I. Paganism before Constantine,” *ANRW* 2.18.3 (1990): 1700–1706.

³⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. 1. Text* (2nd ed.; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁵ Peter T. O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 51.

³⁶ John Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (BNTC; New York: Continuum, 2001), 12.

the Spirit-given unity of the Church. He wants his readers to live as their conversion and their hope imply they should live.³⁷

Second, Paul outlines the theoretical foundation upon which this lifestyle must be constructed (4:4–6). Christ gave his life to unite the diverse ethnic groups that make up his Church, and the Spirit continues to work inside the Church to maintain this unity. Christ likewise gave his life to provide hope to people who had none because they lacked God. All of Paul's readers acknowledge that there is only one Lord. Paul's readers hold the same truth regarding this Lord and his significance.³⁸ Every reader of Paul's letter has had the experience of only immersion in the Spirit upon conversion (represented by water baptism). Paul's readers are called to worship the one God who created everything and is encapsulating it all in Christ. Paul's readers should be prepared to participate in the practical attitudes and deeds that promote the unity of the Church for which Christ died if they are united with one another in their willingness to confess these truths.³⁹

Paul encourages unity within the newly formed body of believers, urging them to adopt social virtues that quell tensions in human relationships. He also composes a confession of faith, utilising elements from the oral tradition of the faith. Paul's admonitions include stewardship of the mystery, a second prayer of intercession, a request for power and love, an increasing awareness of God's power and love, and doxology. He addresses the Christian community as the context for growth to maturity for Christ's grace to every member and gifted leader, equipping the entire body for mutual ministry.

Structure Analysis

- A. Unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3)
- B. The Basis for Unity (4:4–5)
- C. The Triune God as the Source of Unity (Ephesians 4:6)

Syntactical Analysis

This section examines the passage's structure and arrangement of words and phrases to understand its meaning and implications. In these verses, Paul uses imperative verbs to instruct the Ephesian believers on how to live in unity. The syntactical structure points to virtues like humility, gentleness, and patience for maintaining unity. The passage builds a theological foundation for unity by enumerating key elements (one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father) and linking these to the divine nature and presence – this call for practical application of unity in the Church, grounded in theological truth.

Unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3)

1 Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε,
2 μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ,

3 σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης ·

1 Therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, appeal to you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called

2 With all humility and gentleness, with patience by putting up with one another in love

³⁷Frank Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2010), 260.

³⁸ Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 261.

³⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 261.

3 By making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

In this chapter, Paul shifts the focus from theology to ethics, focusing on how they should live due to God's blessings. He uses the phrase παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς; *therefore, I encourage you* to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling God has given them. This movement from theology to ethics is a common feature of the Pauline letters, and the movement from one to the other is often signalled with οὖν, therefore. Paul appeals to his readers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. God's calling is closely related to the idea of his predestination and election. Lincoln correctly observes that it is "God's activity in making believers' predestination effective."⁴⁰ He last used the term περιπατέω in 2:1-10 to bracket his description of how God has brought his readers from existence under the power of the world, the devil, and the flesh to an existence as God's graciously restored creatures. Although they once "walked" in transgressions and sins (2:2), they now must "walk" in the good works God has intended for them from the first (2:10). In the second half of the letter, Paul shows in concrete terms how his readers' new way of "walking" should look (4:17; 5:2, 8, 15).

The phrase ἀξίως... τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε *worthily... of the calling with which you were called*, Paul refers to his readers' conversion, the point at which they heard and believed the gospel. Here in Eph. 4:1, Paul has the same idea in mind. God has called his readers to be part of His people not because of anything they have done (cf. 2:8-9) or because of the social group to which they belong (cf. 2:11-13) but as a gift. The Greek can be construed in various ways. However, the element of symmetry in the four expressions and the lack of any main verb for the two participles hints that it is best to see 4:2-3 all four phrases as adverbial qualifiers of the infinitive περιπατῆσαι to walk; v. 1. The first two expressions are prepositional phrases beginning with μετά with, and the last two expressions begin with nominative participles ἀνεχόμενοι, bearing with; σπουδάζοντες, being eager.

The meaning of the term here in Eph. 4:2 is perhaps best understood from its association with πραύτης, which is "the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance." Πραύτης stands opposite to "selfish ambition" ἐριθεία and "conceit" κενοδοξία and is aligned with "considering others better than yourselves." Paul urges his readers to walk μετὰ μακροθυμίας *with patience*, which refers to persistence in one's convictions, even when circumstances make this difficult (2 Cor. 6:6; 2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2; James 5:10). It is linked with faithfulness in the Pauline corpus (Gal. 5:22; 2 Tim. 3:10; cf. Heb. 6:12). Sandwiched as it is here between references to humility and gentleness on one hand and bearing with others on the other hand, it connotes "being able to bear up under provocation."

Paul says that his readers should walk in a way worthy of their calling ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ, bearing with each other in love. The verb ἀνέχω means to put up with something annoying or harmful (2 Thess. 1:4; 1 Cor. 4:12). The idea is similar to Col. 3:13: they should bear with and forgive each other "even if one has a just complaint against another." Fourth, Paul's readers should walk σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος *being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit*. This final adverbial phrase is climactic and serves as a bridge to the next paragraph. Humility, gentleness, and patience alert Paul's readers that his concern lies with their relationships with others. In addition, Paul's emphasis on ἐνότης "oneness" points ahead to his main concern in the following three verses, where the term "one" will appear six times within the space of thirty-four words. It serves as a transition to the next significant section (vv. 7-16), where the unity of the Church in a diversity of gifts is the main subject. Paul seems to envision the unity of the Church as something complex. At one level, the Church already possesses unity because God's Spirit had already accomplished it when, in concert with

⁴⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42(Dallas: Word, 1990), 235.

Christ, he tore down the barriers that divided various social groups, giving them peace with each other and peace with God (2:18, 22).

At another level, however, the Church needs to maintain τηρεῖν unity, and it must live in a zealous way to do so σπουδάζοντες. At this level, unity is kept “by the συνδέσμῳ of peace.” The term σύνδεσμος means a “fastener,” such as something that holds clothing together, a conjunction that attaches clauses, or a ligament that binds bone to muscle. It could also be used metaphorically to refer, for example, to the bond that unites the city or, in Stoicism and Middle Platonism, to the bonds that hold the cosmic body of the universe together. For Paul, the metaphor was alive (Col. 2:19), so he probably has in mind the imagery of something that fastens things together: peace is the “fastener” that preserves the Church’s unity. It must be energetically worked out in practical ways, such as lovingly putting up with each other’s foibles, being polite and gentle under provocation, and being humble.

The Basis for Unity (4:4–5)

4 ἓν σῶμα καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν ·

5 εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα ·

4 *(There is) one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in the one hope of your calling*

5 *(There is) one Lord, one faith, one baptism*

In Ephesians 4:4–5, Paul presents a series of short statements that begin with the number “one” and focus on the church body, the Spirit, the Christian hope, the Lord, God the Father, the faith, and baptism. The theological importance of these subjects, the skilful repetition of the three genders for “one” in 4:5, the lack of any main verb, and the lack of any conjunction linking 4:4–6 to the previous paragraph—these features have led many interpreters to see an early Christian creedal formulation here. However, if these features are evidence of an early Christian creed, Paul has likely used it with a free hand. He has probably added the phrase καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν · *just as you were called with one hope of your calling*. There is “one body” and “one Spirit” in the same way that (καθὼς) Paul’s readers “have been called” ἐκλήθητε, in one hope of their “calling” κλήσεως. Ernest Best thus rightly notes, “The effect of the repeated use of ‘one’ is to drive home his central theme, unity.”⁴¹ The repetition of the concept of “calling” from 4:1 and using both the noun and the verb that express this concept lends particular emphasis. Here, Paul makes the future element of God’s call explicit: his readers were called ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι in one hope.

Since his prayer, Paul has described this hope more specifically in 2:12, in which he said that before their conversion, his readers had no “hope” and were “without God in the world.” They were powerless before Satan’s dominion, their fallen flesh and mind, and the wrath of God, whom they had disobeyed (2:1–3). Nevertheless, because of Christ’s blood on the cross, God has rescued them from this desperate situation by making them part of his people and reconciling them to himself (2:13–18). They now have hope, the same kind that characterised Abraham, who believed that the God who could call things into existence out of nothing could also create a people for himself against all appearances to the contrary (Rom. 4:17–18).

Paul says that his readers were called ἐν this hope. This means that hope accompanied God’s call and was integral to it. Like Abraham, their trust in the good news that God has included them in his people and reconciled them to himself is a trust in something they cannot see. It is the conviction that one day, what they can now see only with the eyes of their hearts will be concrete. They will experience for all time “the surpassing wealth of his grace by kindness...

⁴¹ Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 372.

in Christ Jesus” (2:7). Paul then picks up the pace of his discourse, dropping all conjunctions and qualifying phrases and skillfully varying the terms to which he refers to allow himself to repeat the number “one” in all three genders: εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα one Lord, one faith, one baptism.⁴² The repetition shows that his emphasis lies on the numeral itself and not on the three terms to which it is attached. This should caution us against finding a subtle significance in the order of the terms or theological reasons why precisely these three terms and not others were chosen.

The Triune God as the Source of Unity (Ephesians 4:6)

ὁ εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.

6 (There is) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all

The seventh and final affirmation of unity in the series focuses on God’s sovereign fatherhood over “all.” πάντων “all” can be masculine or neuter, referring to people or things. Some interpreters believe that the terms are masculine and refer to all believers, which aligns with the idea that God is the adoptive Father of believers and has free access to their Father through the “one” Spirit.⁴³ However, those who see the occurrences of πάντων “all” as neuter argue that Paul uses similar affirmations elsewhere in his letters, referring to everything. The notion that the one God and Father ties everything together expresses an essential theme throughout the letter. Paul’s reference to “over” all is in the sense that God created everything, named all the tribes of the universe, and subjected everything to Christ. He is “through” and “in” all in the sense that he is summing up all things in Christ and working all things to accomplish his will.

This understanding of the phrase is consistent with Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism, where the term πάντων “all” refers to everything that exists. In both texts, the term πάντων “all” refers to everything that exists, making it likely that when Paul speaks in a similar idiom, he uses πάντων “all” in the same way.⁴⁴ Paul brings his preface to the second central part of his letter to a climax, affirming that the one God is the Father of and sovereign over all things. He has created everything and works intentionally through and in all things to accomplish his intended goal for the universe he created. The Church is critical in this divine plan and must be unified. The uniqueness of God and his plan for the unity of the universe should be reflected in practical ways in the unity of believers with one another.

Inferences and Application for the Church in Nigeria

The unity of the Church was a priority for Jesus, who prayed for his disciples to be “one” in his high priestly prayer before his death and resurrection. This unity is essential because it extends Jesus’ unity with the Father. Jesus prayed for the protection of his disciples by their name, for those who believe in him through their message, and for them to be one. He also gave them the glory the Father gave him, urging them to be one. Paul urges believers in Ephesus and Western Asia Minor to pursue unity, an essential factor equally crucial for believers today. This unity reflects Jesus’ passion for unity and the importance of unity in the Nigerian Church, which can be actualised through:

⁴² Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 369.

⁴³ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 519–20.; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary* (Translated by H. Heron. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 167.; John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 276.

⁴⁴ Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 vols. AB 34–34A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 1:470–71.; J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*. 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1907), 93–94, 179.

Developing Virtues to Enhance Unity

Paul emphasises the importance of developing Christlike virtues such as humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love, and peace to maintain unity within the Church. These virtues are crucial for maintaining unity and avoiding negative characteristics that can hurt or create tension within the community. Idowu examines the challenges to unity within the Nigerian Church context, including pride, intolerance, and doctrinal disputes. He advocates for a renewed focus on Christlike virtues and spiritual maturity as essential for promoting unity and harmony among believers in Nigeria.⁴⁵ To practice these virtues, individuals should examine their lives and identify areas for improvement. For example, they should focus on patience if they get angry quickly. If they tend to be proud, arrogant, or boastful, they should focus on humility. If they are insensitive, bullish, or rough, they should concentrate on gentleness. If they struggle with intolerantness, they should focus on loving one another. If unity among local churches is not a priority, it should also be prioritised. Carnality often drives dissension and church splits, as egos and immaturity can inflame and worsen conflicts. Focusing on these virtues can help maintain unity within the Nigerian Church and promote unity among believers.

Sharing a Commitment to a Common Faith

Unity in the Nigerian Church begins with a commitment to a common faith, which Paul places as central to his appeal to unity. The core truths of the creedal statements were the core truths that all believers on the west coast of Asia Minor agreed upon, which informed their worship, teaching, and celebrations. The non-Christian community in Ephesus would have viewed these statements as myopic, intolerant, and scandalous. Paul intended to eliminate those who still worshipped Artemis, trafficked in spirits, or visited local shamans for spiritual help. The unity Paul envisions for the new humanity transcends the unity achieved in other human networks united around a common cause, which Barclay views as the unique nature of Christian unity rooted in a common faith.⁴⁶ People in Ephesus experienced a certain level of unity in their relationships with trade guilds, civic pride, or participation in the Roman military. Paul is casting a vision for something more profound that comes from God and is created by His Spirit. Today, people in the Nigerian Church risk diluting this vision by diminishing the importance of the common faith as the foundation for unity. Paul needs to be more comprehensive in specifying that theology constitutes the essential basis for unity. However, he reveals the elements of Trinitarian theology, which is explicitly affirmed in his confession as Lord. The expression “one faith” points to additional elements that comprise the core and essential beliefs of the early Church.

A Common Calling from God

Unity among believers is rooted in a common calling by God, which is a bond with the one true God. In his appeal, Paul uses the word “call” four times, referring to God’s invitation to each person to respond in faith to His offer of salvation and become part of the people He is gathering. This calling allows the Church to experience God’s grace, mercy, and love as He has redeemed believers, forgiven their sins and united them with Christ in his resurrection and exaltation. This new identity, shared with others, creates a powerful bond of unity, leading to worship of the great God and Savior. Recognising their calling diminishes their sense of self-importance and enables them to cultivate humility. God chose His Church not because it is incredible but because of His initiative and unmerited grace. Peter O’Brien notes that we are a society of pardoned rebels on whom God has shown his favour.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ A. B. Idowu, “Challenges to Church Unity in Nigeria: A Reflection,” *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 5, 1 (2019): 45-60.

⁴⁶ J. M. G. Barclay, “Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: A Biblical and Theological Vocabulary,” *Ex Auditu: An International Journal for the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 24, (2008): 39-53.

⁴⁷ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 282.

Promotion of Commonness/Oneness

Unity within the Church is a crucial aspect of the Christian community, encompassing communal, relational, and missional dimensions. It promotes spiritual unity through shared worship, prayer, and fellowship, transcending social, cultural, and denominational boundaries. The Church's practice of mutual accountability, reconciliation, and peacemaking reflects its commitment to the ministry of reconciliation, embodying virtues of humility, patience, and love. The pursuit of justice, mercy, and compassion in its engagement with societal issues and global concerns reflects ecclesial unity's transformative impact in the public square. The Nigerian Church seeks to witness God's reconciling love in Christ in a world marked by division and brokenness.⁴⁸In the complexities and diversities of the contemporary context, the Church is called to embody unity in the triune God, expressed in the communion of the body of Christ and extended to the whole creation.

Conclusion

The concept of unity is involved, reflecting diverse theological perspectives and practical implications within Christianity. From a missional perspective, ecclesiastical unity is viewed as essential for the Church's mission of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples, as divisions within the Church hinder its ability to bear witness to the transformative power of the gospel and engage effectively in God's redemptive work in the world. Despite theological differences, church unity is grounded in the shared faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the shared commitment to the Great Commission, and the recognition of the Church as the body of Christ, united in the Spirit. By embracing biblical foundations, historical lessons, theological significance, contemporary challenges, and practical implications of unity, the Church would strive towards fulfilling Jesus' prayer for God's glory and the world's flourishing.

Bibliography

⁴⁸A. Ademola, "Christianity and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience," *Journal of Church and State*, 60, 3 (2018): 449-471.

- Ademola, A. "Christianity and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience." *Journal of Church and State*. 60, 3 (2018): 449-471.
- Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.
- Barclay, J. M. G. "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: A Biblical and Theological Vocabulary." *Ex Auditu: An International Journal for the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. 24, (2008): 39-53.
- Barth, Markus. "Traditions in Ephesians," *NTS* 30 (1984): 3–25.
- Barth, Markus. *Ephesians*, 2 vols. AB 34–34A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.
- Best, Ernest. "Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians," *NTS* 43 (1997): 72–96.
- Best, Ernest. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians ICC*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.
- Betz, Hans Dieter, ed. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. 1. Text*. 2nd ed.; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Boeve, Lieven. *Theology at the Crossroads of University, Church and Society: Dialogue, Difference and Catholic Identity*. London: T&T Clark, 2016.
- Calvin, John. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*. Trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.
- Carson, D. A. and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Coenen, L. "Church." in *The New International Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975.
- Cox, Anna M. "THE GREAT SCHISM: The Great Divide of the West, the East and Christianity," *International Journal of Social Science Studies* Vol. 6, No. 3; (2018): 55-62.
- Dunn, J. D. G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Eadie, John. *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979.
- Ferguson, Everett. "Theological Foundations of Unity," *Mission* 6 (1972): 140-43.
- Grenz, Stanley. *Theology for The Community of God*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

- Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Idowu, A. B. "Challenges to Church Unity in Nigeria: A Reflection." *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 5, 1 (2019): 45-60.
- Jervell, Jacob. *Luke and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.
- Johnson, T. F. *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
- Kärkkäinen, V. *Hope and community: A constructive Christian theology for the pluralistic world*, vol. 5. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017.
- Kärkkäinen, V. M. *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010.
- Kurian, G. T. ed. *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016.
- LaRondelle, Hans K. *The Israel of God In Prophecy*. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983.
- Lincoln, Andrew T. *Ephesians, WBC 42*. Dallas: Word, 1990.
- Malan, Gert J. "Does John 17:11b, 21–23 refer to church unity?" *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67, 1 (2011): 1-10.
- Marshall, I. H. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004.
- McAleer, Ryan K. "Qualifying Religious Truth and Ecclesial Unity: The Soteriological Significance of Difference," *Religions* 15, 346 (2024): 1-11.
- Muddiman, John. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* BNTC. New York: Continuum, 2001.
- Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
- Oster, Richard E. "Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate; I. Paganism before Constantine," *ANRW* 2.18.3 (1990): 1700–1706.
- Robinson, J. Armitage. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1907.
- Rusch, William G. "The Creed of the Synod of Nicaea," in *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary*. Translated by H. Heron. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- Siwecki, Leon. "Relationship Between The Universal Church And The Local Churches," *RocznikiTeologiczne Tom XLV, 2* (2018): 101-117.
- Smith, Mark S. *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431–451*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2018.
- Tanner, K. "Theological Diversity and the Unity of the Church." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 17, 1 (2015): 46-64.
- Tanner, K. "Unity in the Church and the World: A Reformed Perspective." *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology*, 20,1 (2011): 5-20.
- Taylor, C. "A Secular Age." *The Hedgehog Review*, 9, 2 (2007): 7-24.
- Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Trebilco, Paul. *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*. WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.
- Walls, A. F. "The Ecclesial Context of Christian Mission: Theological Foundations and Implications." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 32, 3 (2008): 122-127.
- Westcott, B. F. and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. London: Macmillan, 1896.
- "World Council of Churches," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecumenism>. Accessed on 26/4/2024.