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# "The Kingdom of God is at hand": an eschatological orientation to ethics in male-female relations

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# "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND":

# AN ESCHATOLOGICAL ORIENTATION TO ETHICS IN MALE-FEMALE RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that God calls the church to approach ecclesial ethics with an eschatological orientation. Jesus' inauguration of the reign of God and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit places a responsibility on the church to embody God's renewal of creation. This responsibility is carried out fundamentally through transformed relationships that reflect God's reign rather than the corrupted hierarchies of the old order. Five principles outline how an eschatological orientation to ethics can function practically: proclamation of hope, affirmation of unconditional personhood, response to injustice through service, reconciliation for the sake of unity, and exemplification of the new social order. When we apply these principles to male-female relations, the transformed relationships between men and women in the church entail mutual partnership, service, and love.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction and Thesis

The kingdom of God is at hand, Jesus declared. All four versions of the gospel story repeat the same truth: The gospel, the good news, which Jesus preached and commissioned his disciples to proclaim, announces that God's sovereign reign will come, is coming, and—most radically—has already arrived.[1] While the people of God continue to affirm this truth today, the ethical implications of the presence of God's kingdom have been lost in much church teaching and practice.

Throughout the history of the church, eschatology has alternatively been relegated to the periphery of concern, placed at the center, or neglected altogether. Theologians who address eschatology often focus on such end-time events as the return of Christ and judgment, assuming that the primary relevance of eschatology to present Christian life is its reminder of the coming eradication of evil and judgment against evil-doers.[2] In this approach, the already-present reign of God[3] possesses no relevance to the substance of ethics. It presupposes that Christians can derive a holistic ethical framework exclusively from biblical teachings and natural law, and that vivid eschatological images function only to motivate people to live according to this traditional

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[1] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 54.

[2] For more on the pertinence of end-time judgment to ethics, see Ladd, *A Theology*, 193-211; Robin Lovin, "Becoming Responsible in Christian Ethics," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22.4 (2009): 393.

[3] Like Mortimer Arias, I diverge from the typical translation of "kingdom of God" in favor of "reign of God" for clarity of meaning. Besides the patriarchal and authoritarian undertones of "kingdom," which distract from the substance of the term, *kingdom* in English connotes something fundamentally different than its Aramaic and Greek equivalents. However, because "kingdom" is more widely used in scholarship and is a more common translation in scripture, I use both terms interchangeable, depending on which offers more clarity in context. See Ladd, *A Theology*, 43-44; Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Lima: Academic Renewal Press, 1984), xvi; Martinus C. De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 31, 35; George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 39, 42; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Ethics*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 9.

ethical pattern.[4] Contemporary theology, too, often dichotomizes eschatology and ethics: Theologians develop eschatologies independently of ethics, and ethicists explore ethics with little consideration of eschatology.

I aim to bridge this gap by showing the relevance of eschatology to the substance of ethics. I argue that Jesus' teaching about the coming reign of God, the event of Jesus' bodily resurrection, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, and the Pauline doctrine of new creation in Christ speak of eschatological events as happening in the present. God's judgment, lordship, and renewal of creation are at work in these gospel events, even if they are yet to be fulfilled. The resurrection of Jesus brought the future into the present; it is present in the activity of Jesus and the Spirit and in the church community they create. I argue that the vision of renewed creation in the reign of God and a perfected community united to Christ demand realization in the present as far as possible and that the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit on the church makes possible what the vision of redemption makes imperative. To develop a well-rounded approach to the interaction of eschatology and ethics, I bring diverse scholars into dialogue to form an eschatological framework through which the church can consider ethical questions. I argue that the church's responsibility to embody an eschatological orientation to ethics should motivate the church to prioritize spiritual giftedness and the transformative power of the resurrection in its consideration of male-female relations in the faith community. By announcing hope, affirming unconditional personhood, responding to injustice with service, reconciling for the sake of unity, and exemplifying the new social order, the church is freed to embody the reign of God in male-female relations as a paradigm for all other ecclesial relationships.

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[4] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, "The Promise of the New and the Tyranny of the Same," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, eds. Neal DeRoo and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 72.

## Key Definitions

Because this thesis navigates a broad range of theological concepts, I assume some definitions and implications. However, I address here the two key terms of this thesis, *eschatology* and *ethics*, for the sake of clarity.

*Eschatology* is a term used throughout scholarship to refer to a huge range of theological concepts. Most broadly, it refers to the study of the end or the final resolution of history. Put another way, it refers to God's *telos* for creation.[5] The term *eschatology* can thus be used to refer to the signs of the end, the Second Coming of Christ, and the nature of judgment, among other things. Though these would be interesting points of exploration, I focus on the new creation, or kingdom, aspect of eschatology, including the nature of new creation and the relationship resurrected humans will have with each other and with God after Christ's return and how this reality has been initiated in the present through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The term *ethics* needs to be carefully defined since it has two primary connotations, a more practical meaning that refers to rules for right behavior and action, and a more philosophical meaning that refers to the definition of the good and how to achieve it. Some scholars argue that theologians should avoid the term *ethics*, since its Western definition is highly Hellenistic and would have been largely foreign to the biblical authors.[6] The New Testament (NT) in particular does not think about moral action as based on rules, but more from the perspective of narrative, social identity and norms, and virtues, all of which help inform

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[5] Jerry L. Walls, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4-5.
[6] David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005), 104.

ethical living rather than dictate it.[7] If Paul reads the Hebrew Bible (HB) as a narrative that points to Jesus Christ—whose life, death, resurrection, and Holy Spirit redefine what it means to live according to God's will—then it follows that we should read the NT in view of its grand narrative and the virtues, social identity, and norms it defines. Despite the limitations of the term *ethics*, I continue to use the word as shorthand to refer to moral and godly Christian living.

## Method

The second chapter explores the connection between eschatology and ethics from the perspective of the NT, especially the Gospels and the Pauline writings. Jesus' life, ministry, proclamation of the reign of God, death, resurrection, and outpouring of the Spirit together form the foundation of an eschatological orientation to ethics. What Jesus initiated is elaborated in Paul's epistles, which address the church's hope for the future and its present experience of that future, and which empower the church to be transformed into Christ-likeness through the eschatological power of the Spirit.

Based on this theological foundation, the third chapter proposes ways the church can embody new creation in the present by outlining some characteristics of the new-creation community. Specifically, the chapter explores the church's role as an eschatological community that functions "in Christ" as the "body of Christ" to reflect, however imperfectly, the ideal community of the reign of God. The chapter identifies five characteristics of an eschatological community that embodies God's renewal of creation: proclaimer of hope, affirmer of personhood, servant for justice, reconciler for unity, and exemplar of the new social order. These characteristics are the identifying marks of the theological foundation of chapter two and provide

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[7] P. F. Esler, "Social Identity, the Virtues, and the Good Life: A New Approach to Romans 12:1-15:13," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33.2 (2003): 52-53, 55, 61.

a structure for considering male-female relations from an eschatological perspective in chapter four.

The fourth chapter offers a specific, practical application of an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics by considering male-female relations within this framework. First, the chapter explores giftedness through the Spirit as characteristic of the reign of God and the pervasive transformative effects of baptism. It then examines how male-female relations in the church can announce hope, affirm personhood, serve justice, unify through reconciliation, and exemplify the new social order of the reign of God.

The final chapter identifies areas of potential future research pertaining to an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics. It then offers a brief summary of the conclusions of this thesis.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Relevance of Eschatology to Ethics

The close relationship between eschatology and ethics comes to light in an examination of the Gospels and Paul. Though an exhaustive study of this relationship goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I argue that the Gospels and Paul teach that in Jesus Christ the reign of God is already present and that the renewal of creation has begun. This new situation calls for an immediate and active response from those who claim to follow the risen Lord.[8] This chapter thus focuses on the Gospels to understand how Jesus embodied the reign of God and the undisputed Pauline epistles to understand the early church's interpretation of the Christ event.

### Jesus' Life and Ministry

Though many contemporary studies of eschatology assume a connection between Christology and eschatology they do not explore the intimate connections between the two topics.[9] They deal with how Jesus' life, work, and teachings *influenced* eschatology, but do not explore the ways in which Jesus *embodied* eschatology.[10] In response to this omission, this section examines how Jesus' ministry embodied what the later resurrection event confirmed, that is, that the kingdom of God is at hand.[11] As a first step toward this goal, I examine some key eschatological themes in the four Gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.[12]

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[8] Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, "The Relevance of Eschatology for Social Ethics," *The Ecumenical Review* 5.4 (1953): 368.

[9] Gerhard Sauter, *What Dare We Hope? Reconsidering Eschatology* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 5.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Arias, *Announcing*, 2; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 65.

[12] This order for the Gospels, though not reflected in the traditional ordering of the New Testament, makes more sense for our purposes. See the ordering of the Gospels in Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 104-260.

*The Gospels*

The Gospels testify that eschatological expectation surrounded Jesus life, from the preaching of John the Baptist, to the life and work of Jesus, to the death and resurrection of Christ.[13] Mark presents an intense eschatological expectation through prophecies, prophetic fulfillments, and the motif of the messianic secret.[14] Richard B. Hays argues that Mark's eschatology shapes his vision of Christian morality in three ways: (1) The imminence of the eschaton demands full, radical, unwavering discipleship to Jesus Christ; (2) The revolutionary presence of the reign of God makes the old social order and the old ethical norms sterile at best and obsolete at worst; and (3) As Christians await the return of Jesus, God calls them to embody suffering discipleship with the help of the Holy Spirit.[15]

Mark's narrative is influenced by his assumption that his community is living in the short interval of time during which the reign of evil and the reign of God overlap.[16] While evil has been disrupted by Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection, the reign of God will culminate in the *parousia*, which is yet to occur.[17] Mark reminds his readers that baptism simultaneously points backward to the events of Jesus' time on earth and forward to the culmination of God's reign at the *parousia* (Mark 2, 16).[18] Baptism in the name of Jesus is bound to the reign of God: In the act

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[13] Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 65; Amos N. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus*, rev. ed. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1939), 145.
[14] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation – A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 85.
[15] Ibid., 87-88.
[16] Joel Marcus, "'The Time Has Been Fulfilled!' (Mark 1.15)," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 60.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.; Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 115.

of baptism, Christians commit themselves to God's sovereign reign over creation, even though evil remains in the world.[19]

Matthew and Luke do not press the imminence of the *parousia* quite like Mark, but they maintain that eschatological expectation is at the heart of Christ-like behavior.[20] Matthew and Luke place more emphasis on eschatological judgment as a motivation for repentance and morality than Mark.[21] However, they offer other ways in which the presence of the reign of God demands a fundamental change in followers of Christ.

Matthew presents Jesus as a teacher and his followers as students, making discipleship a key theme of the text.[22] Matthew aims to form a community of disciples who are shaped by the instructions and teachings of Jesus.[23] Pairing the theme of discipleship with the highest concentration of parables about the kingdom of God suggests a fundamental connection between ethics and the presence of God's reign on earth. Furthermore, the Lord's prayer, as Matthew records it, is one of the key eschatological texts in the Gospels.[24] The text reads:

> Our Father in heaven,
> hallowed be your name.
> Your kingdom come.
> Your will be done,
> on earth as it is in heaven.
> Give us this day our daily bread.
> And forgive us our debts,
> as we also have forgiven our debtors.
> And do not bring us to the time of trial,
> but rescue us from the evil one. (Matt 6:9-13, NRSV)

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[19] Marcus, "The Time," 60.
[20] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 129.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 96-97; Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 142, 151.
[23] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 96-97.
[24] Wendland, "The Relevance," 365.

Heinz-Dietrich Wendland argues that Jesus' petition for God's kingdom to come to earth "implies the recognition of the coming end of this world and of all its social patterns and relationships.... The expectation of the Kingdom of God dethrones the false political and social gods of this world."[25] Because the language of the Lord's prayer is in the present tense, it signifies faith that God's promises manifest in the present.

Luke highlights a highly messianic christology and the eschatological role of the Spirit of God in the community of disciples.[26] Luke focuses on the role of the disciples to be witnesses to Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and message of the kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).[27] Some scholars argue that Luke's minimization of the eschatological timetable also supports how much the reign of God is vital to the life of the disciples in the present.[28]

John stands apart from the Synoptics in its eschatological declarations. John suggests that we are not awaiting a future consummation of eschatological judgment through the *parousia* or the general resurrection; instead, John claims that the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus have ushered in God's reign.[29] The eschatological event of Jesus' resurrection makes eternal life available through the baptismal transformation of the Christ-follower.[30] The defining characteristic of this transformation into Christ-likeness is the command to love one another (John 13:34), which is the only direct command Jesus gives in John.[31] The love command's

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 177; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 129.
[27] Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 178; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 130. See Acts 1:7-8.
[28] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 130. The extent to which Luke minimizes the eschatological timetable, if at all, is a disputed point.
[29] Ibid., 149. See John 3:17-19.
[30] Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 211-212; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 150. See John 5:24.
[31] D. Moody Smith, "The Love Command: John and Paul?" in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 209. See John 13:34; 15:12.

special prominence in John brings it to the fore of humanity's theological understanding of who God is, how God loves humanity, and what God expects of humans in response to this love.[32]

*The Kingdom of God*

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus' preaching and teaching are distinctly eschatological, revolving around the proclamation of the kingdom of God.[33] As Amos N. Wilder puts it, "Jesus identifies himself closely with the coming Kingdom so that its meaning is represented in his person."[34] The phrase, "kingdom of God," is the pillar of Jesus' message, and while it seems to refer to a future age in which God is fully known to humanity, Jesus also clarifies that it makes an immediate claim on his listeners.[35] However, in contrast to John the Baptist's eschatological message of repentance and judgment, Jesus' message is primarily one of joy and hope in God's grace, mercy, and love.[36] Furthermore, Jesus embodied the reign of God through mercy to the poor, liberation of the oppressed, invitation to sinners to enter into the kingdom, and proclamation of God's compassion.[37] While Jesus' followers expected a messianic warrior, Jesus instead died, rose from the dead, left behind the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and then ascended to God in heaven. Though these were unquestionably eschatological events, they did not quite look like the kingdom coming in all its glory as Jesus' followers expected. Thus, the church had to

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[32] Smith, "The Love Command," 207; Victor P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 132-158, esp. 138. See also Holladay, *A Critical Introduction*, 215.
[33] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 166; Arias, *Announcing*, 20.
[34] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 164. See also Ladd, *A Theology*, 65; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 14.
[35] Ladd, *A Theology*, 54, 368; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11; Christopher Rowland, "The Eschatology of the New Testament Church," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 103.
[36] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 37; 39-40; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 15; Arias, *Announcing*, 17; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 64; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 65, 69-70.
[37] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 70-71; Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 51; Ladd, *A Theology*, 42; Arias, *Announcing*, 41.

reinterpret Jesus' declaration that "the kingdom of God is at hand" to mean that it is simultaneously, future, coming, and present.[38]

This paradoxical nature of God's reign is a theme that drives much of the NT.[39] Though reason might assume that there is a clear distinction between two time periods, especially ages ruled by opposing forces like God and evil, the central claim of Christianity is that God's reign has infiltrated the reign of evil through the person, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[40] This assertion not only alters our conception of what the *telos* of humanity is, but also makes it possible to realize, in one's life and choices, the renewal of creation that Christ's resurrection assures.[41] Wilder explains Jesus' annunciation of God's reign in the following way:

> Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom was not a fantasy projection or the portrayal of an escapist's paradise. It was a prophetic forecast of human destiny resting on the whole of Israel's best experience and her witness to the agelong purpose and work of God the creator. This forecast had to do with ultimates; and it rested on ultimates. It had to do with last things, and it rested on first things. But it was directed to the present moment and to the actual scene and was lived out in the concrete process of history, and it bore on that concrete process in its future aspects. It conveyed an intimation of the ineffable fruition of life, and from some real fulfillment of that hope our present existence is by no means excluded.[42]

The hope of Christians is looking forward to the consummation of the reign of God even as we dwell in the reign of God in the present.[43] For now, we do not see clearly and have to make

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[38] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 64; George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 5.
[39] Ladd, *The Gospel*, 18; Wendland, "The Relevance," 367; Max L. Stackhouse, "Ethics and Eschatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 555.
[40] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 14; Stackhouse, "Ethics and Eschatology," 553.
[41] Stackhouse, "Ethics and Eschatology," 553; Ladd, *The Gospel*, 21.
[42] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 70.
[43] Ladd, *A Theology*, 126; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 15; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 53-54.

ethical decisions while lacking full understanding; however, at the consummation of God's reign, we will clearly see God's will.[44]

Scholars identify various ways in which the reign of God is relevant to ethics. For example, Rudolf Bultmann argues that Jesus' ethical teachings are the conditions by which one enters the future kingdom, and while this may be partly true, it assumes that eschatology is solely future and neglects the imminence—indeed, the good news—of the kingdom that Jesus makes clear.[45] T. W. Manson articulates Jesus' ethics as an exposition of kingdom ethics, in other words, the way Christians are compelled to behave simply by accepting and entering into the reign of God in the present.[46] Martin Dibelius views Jesus' ethical teaching through the lens of his eschatological teaching, insisting that an "eschatological orientation" should guide Christians' ethical perspective.[47]

Diverse interpretations of Jesus' ethical teachings can best be summarized by saying that the present and future nature of God's reign demands a two-part ethical response. The first relates to repentance so far as God's future reign implies God's judgment of humanity.[48] The second is that God's present reign warrants recognition that there are new conditions and new commands for a godly and moral life.[49] Jesus' ethics revolved around the reign of God, meaning his evaluations of actions were based on their conformity to the reign of God.[50] Indeed, many of

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[44] Ladd, *A Theology*, 78; Markus Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Eschatology*, trans. Jennifer Adams-Maßmann and David Andrew Gilland (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 144.
[45] Ladd, *The Presence*, 283; Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 85, 145.
[46] Ladd, *The Presence*, 280; T.W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus, Studies of Its Form and Content* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945).
[47] Ladd, *The Presence*, 286; Martin Dibelius, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Virginia: University of Virginia, 1960), 60.
[48] Jesus saw this judgment as imminent in the Synoptics and as already happening in John. See Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 11.
[49] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 73; Ladd, *A Theology*, 126, 128; Arias, *Announcing*, 20; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 53.
[50] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 102.

Jesus' commands are so extraordinary in their eschatological orientation it is difficult to see how Jesus could have realistically placed them on individuals; yet considering the extraordinary nature of God's reign, the accompanying demands of that reality are quite reasonable.[51]

The Beatitudes are one example of this extraordinary eschatological and ethical nature of Jesus' ministry:

> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
> "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
> "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt 5:3-12)

The Beatitudes appear to prescribe how to enter into the reign of God (e.g., by being merciful and pure in heart), but they also promise God's deliverance by echoing the psalms.[52] Jesus simultaneously uses the Beatitudes, each of which begin with joy and conclude with the coming kingdom of God, to express the blessings of *experiencing* God's reign in the present, and to show how much more fully we *will experience* God's reign in the future.[53]

Glen Stassen understands the list of characteristics in the Beatitudes to be a description of Jesus' virtue ethics for participating in God's reign, specifically God's grace, deliverance,

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[51] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 11; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 102.
[52] Glen Stassen, "The Beatitudes as Eschatological Peacemaking Virtues," in *Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 247. For an alternative interpretation of the Beatitudes not as ethics but as encouragement, see Susan Annette Muto, *Blessings that Make Us Be: A Formative Approach to Living the Beatitudes* (Petersham: St Bede's Publications, 1991); Cameron Lee, *Unexpected Blessing: Living the Countercultural Reality of the Beatitudes* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
[53] Ibid.

justice, righteousness, and peace in the present.[54] Virtue ethics may be the most helpful way of thinking about how Jesus' eschatological declaration and anticipation impact behavior. While some scholars argue that Jesus' ethics were based in the law, it seems more likely that Jesus' teachings indicate that the presence of God's reign imposes a different ethic that permanently alters humans' relationships to each other and to God.[55] Instead of calling them virtue ethics, Wilder refers to these ethics as "new covenant" or "discipleship" ethics,[56] while George Eldon Ladd calls them "Kingdom ethics."[57] As Nancy J. Duff argues, it is impossible to draw universal ethical mandates from Jesus' teachings in such a way that would be helpful to all aspects of contemporary life.[58] Being Christ-like does not mean following a rigid law or regulating human behavior, as many Pharisees of Jesus' time argued, but learning to embrace and embody the values that motivate the living God in Christ.[59] The ethical teachings of Jesus are distinct from the Pharisaic ethics of his time, not because Jesus emphasized the imminence of judgment, but because Jesus emphasized the presence of salvation in the form of God's kingdom. Jesus' deeper experience of God allowed him better to understand, interpret, and mediate the redemptive action of God in the present.[60]

Certainly, the Gospels portray Jesus as living by the law, but Jesus applied the law in such a way that principles preceded prescriptions in importance.[61] Eschatology is the foundation

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 147. See scriptures about new covenant: Mark 14:24, 1 Cor. 11:25, Luke 22:29-30.
[56] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 16, 183.
[57] Ladd, *A Theology*, 126.
[58] Nancy J. Duff, "The Significance of Pauline Apocalyptic for Theological Ethics," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 291-292.
[59] Ibid., 291.
[60] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 176.
[61] Ibid., 11, 151, 159, 163; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 64; Ladd, *The Gospel*, 14; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 96; James D. G. Dunn, "'The Law of Faith,' 'the Law of the Spirit' and 'the Law of Christ,'" in *Theology and Ethics*

of the virtues that dictate Jesus' ethics, because the reign of God is the highest good for all of humanity in the present and the future.[62] The centrality of eschatology is necessary, because the time of overlap between the resurrection and the *parousia* is one of intense conflict between the reign of evil and the reign of God; this conflict is why Jesus calls Christians to witness to God's reign by embodying the kingdom through Christ-likeness.[63]

The question then arises about which virtues, values, or principles characterize an eschatological orientation. Since the eschatological community of God's people is the best discerner of right ethical action, this question would be best addressed in chapter three. What should be acknowledged for now is that Jesus' proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God accompanied a radical reversal of the status quo of power and prestige in Jesus' time.[64] According to Jesus, the kingdom does not belong to the religious or political elite, but to the poor, the weak, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner, in other words, the outcast and marginalized of society.[65] As Mortimer Arias puts it, "The kingdom is reversal and, as such, the permanent subverter of human orders."[66] Jesus emphasized this reversal throughout his ministry, showing how the reign of God is in the continual process of reversing the old orders as it arrives on earth. When the church embraces conventional forms and values of authority and hierarchy it has lost sight of the radical reversal that Jesus proclaimed and initiated.[67] Jesus and the kingdom

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*in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 82.

[62] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 163; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 111.

[63] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 163, 183; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11, 96.

[64] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 167; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 9-10.

[65] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 167.

[66] Arias, *Announcing*, 43.

[67] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 167.

are so inseparable that if the church fails to proclaim and embody the kingdom, it also fails to proclaim and embody Jesus.[68]

## Jesus' Death and Resurrection

As significant as Jesus' life was to the proclamation and embodiment of the reign of God, it would have been meaningless had it not been for the resurrection.[69] Like Jesus' life and death, Jesus' resurrection is revelatory for the Christian faith, but it is also the foundation upon which Christians can claim that God is at work redeeming and reconciling humanity to God's self.[70] In *Cruciform: Living the Cross-Shaped Life*, Jimmy Davis argues that the Christian life should be shaped by and into the cross.[71] Davis argues that the cross is the central message of the gospel and that God's purpose for humanity is to shape us with the power of the cross.[72] This message is not wrong. Scripture encourages us to pick up our crosses and to become self-sacrificial servants (Matt 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-24). However, the message of the cross is certainly incomplete. The good news is not merely that Jesus died but that Jesus died and rose again. Thus, we do not carry just the legacy of the cross, with a responsibility to bear the image of a crucified Jesus. We also carry the legacy of the resurrection, with a responsibility to bear the image of a resurrected Christ. The resurrection not only validates the Christian hope for future reconciliation to Christ, but it also compels Christians to critique the church when it maintains a status quo that models the world's alienation from God.[73]

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[68] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 16; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11, 96.
[69] Ladd, *A Theology*, 353; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 135.
[70] Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 61; Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 83; Ladd, *A Theology*, 363.
[71] Jimmy Davis, *Cruciform: Living the Cross-Shaped Life* (Hudson: Cruciform Press, 2011).
[72] Ibid., 8-9.
[73] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 166.

Wolfhart Pannenberg argues for the importance of Jesus' resurrection in his pivotal book *Jesus—God and Man.*[74] Pannenberg contends that the retroactive effect of the resurrection on the life of Jesus confirms Jesus' claims about himself as the incarnation of God.[75] The retroactive power of the resurrection on Jesus' life is a microcosm of the retroactive power of God's reign on Christian life. In *The Church*, Pannenberg says that in Jesus, the reign of God "erupted into human history."[76] The reign of God will not be consummated until the *parousia*, just as Jesus' ministry was not consummated until the resurrection. However, though the resurrection happened at the end of Jesus' life, its impact can be traced throughout Jesus' ministry, partially because he had faith that the resurrection would happen, but also because it was already the reality for Jesus' life. Similarly, the reign of God will not be consummated until the end of human history, but it has an immediate impact on Christian life, partially because of the faith we have in that consummation, but also because it is already the reality for the church's life. This is possible because Jesus' resurrection is the event that both divides the reign of evil and the reign of God and causes them to collide.[77]

Frank J. Matera explores the implication of the resurrection for humanity's present and future.[78] Matera acknowledges that God's reign has not been fully implemented, but he insists that Jesus' life, work, and ministry demonstrate that Jesus understood his presence as the

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[74] Pannenberg, *Jesus*. Pannenberg, as a theologian who is deeply concerned with the Christian tradition and the Christian community, is central to this discussion. See Richard John Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian," in *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 38.

[75] Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 72, 135-136.

[76] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Church and the Eschatological Kingdom," in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, eds. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 110.

[77] Ladd, *A Theology*, 368; Duff, "The Significance," 285; Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1994), 12.

[78] Frank J. Matera, *Resurrection: The Origin and Goal of the Christian Life* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 10, 12.

inauguration of God's renewal of creation.[79] Matera also affirms that Jesus' resurrection confirmed that "the kingdom of God is at hand," which Jesus proclaimed through his incarnation, life, ministry, and even death.[80] Through Jesus' resurrection, God condemned death and empowered the renewal of creation, demonstrating that the resurrected Christ defines humanity's *telos* in terms of this renewal, even as we await the fulfillment of God's promise to consummate that renewal.[81] The Gospels and Paul's epistles testify to the profound implications of the resurrection on Christians, not only because Jesus' resurrection promises our resurrection, but because it indicates that the end has begun and our lives are already being resurrected.[82] The resurrection also indicates the presence of Jesus in the relationships that humans share with God and with each other; therefore, it has consequences in the present even if it will not be fully consummated until the *parousia*.[83]

Matera argues that baptism joins Jesus' disciples to the body of Christ and, by extension, to the resurrection, making God's renewal of creation a reality in their lives as the Spirit transforms them.[84] As Matera puts it, "The Spirit's presence in the life of the justified is the assurance of their resurrection from the dead; it is the first taste of the resurrection life that those who have faith in Christ already experience."[85] Because Christ-followers do not yet enjoy the mysterious "spiritual body" of which the NT speaks, and because the reign of God is not yet

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[79] Ibid., 4, 136.
[80] Ibid., 4
[81] Ibid., 4, 136.
[82] Ibid., 10, 107; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 66. See Rom. 6:4; John 6:54.
[83] Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 274.
[84] Matera, *Resurrection*, 12. See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God," in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, eds. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 23.
[85] Matera, *Resurrection*, 97.

consummated, we still experience change, decay, sin, and death.[86] Still, we can proclaim: The Christ has risen, we will rise, and this promise allows us to enjoy eternal, renewed life in the present, because the only future that truly affects us is the reality of the reign of God.[87]

*The Outpouring of the Spirit*

After the resurrection, Jesus leaves behind the Holy Spirit to his disciples, intimately connecting resurrection life with the gift of the Spirit.[88] While the Spirit moves throughout the HB, it is at Jesus' baptism that the fulfillment of the messianic promise of the Spirit being poured out on all flesh begins.[89] However, at Jesus' ascension, the Spirit expands beyond Jesus (John 7:39), and all who are baptized receive the Spirit.[90] Baptism is key to the bestowal and receipt of the Spirit. By acknowledging the gift of the Spirit in baptism, the individual experiences salvation, or liberation from the reign of evil, and enters into the dynamic new life of God's reign.[91] Baptism also helps establish the faith community, the formation of which is a central theme of the NT after the resurrection.[92]

The Gospels describe the reception of the Spirit eschatologically, as a personal experience in the present through baptism and as a communal experience of the future through the church.[93] Peter confirms and expounds upon this pneumatology at Pentecost in Acts 2, when

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[86] Ibid., 96-97, 107; Pannenberg, "The Working," 23-24.
[87] Matera, *Resurrection*, 107, 136; Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 85, 88-89.
[88] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 87.
[89] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 66.
[90] Ibid., 122.
[91] Lars Hartman, "Baptism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 588, 590.
[92] Thomas Wieser, "Community—Its Unity, Diversity and Universality," *Semeia* 33 (January 1985): 87-88.
[93] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 89; Donald Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis: The Use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43.4 (October 1981): 545.

Peter explicitly links the outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples gathered with Joel's messianic prophecy in Joel 2:28-32:[94]

> In the last days it will be, God declares,
> that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
> and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
> and your young men shall see visions,
> and your old men shall dream dreams.
> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
> in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
> and they shall prophesy.
> And I will show portents in the heaven above
> and signs on the earth below,
> blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
> The sun shall be turned to darkness
> and the moon to blood,
> before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:17-21)

The passage makes clear that the eschatological sign of the outpouring of the Spirit is happening in the present.[95] For Luke, Pentecost is the central event of the apostles' life after Jesus' ascension, because, "Without the coming of the Spirit there would be no prophecy, no preaching, no mission, no conversions, and no worldwide Christian movement."[96] After Pentecost, the Spirit makes it possible for us to dwell in Christ and for Christ to dwell in us, making the Christian

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[94] Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis," 543-544; Ladd, *A Theology*, 382; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 46, 75, 128-130, 142; Pieter W. Van der Horst and Ross S. Kraemer, "Prophesying Daughters and Female Slaves," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 457; Hubertus Waltherus Maria Van de Sandt, "The Fate of the Gentiles in Joel and Acts 2: An Intertextual Study," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 66.1 (January 1990): 56, 75; Scott Bartchy, "Can You Imagine Paul Telling Priscilla *Not* to Teach?" *Leaven* 4.2 (2012): 20; David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 89-91; Gregory J. Leeper, "The Nature of the Pentecostal Gift with Special Reference to Numbers 11 and Acts 2," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6.1 (January 2003): 31; Karl Allen Kuhn, *The Kingdom according to Luke and Acts: A Social, Literary, and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 170-171.

[95] Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 20; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 46, 75, 128-130, 142; Van de Sandt, "The Fate of the Gentiles," 56, 75; Tiede, *Prophecy and History*, 89-91; Leeper, "The Nature," 31; Juel, "Social Dimensions of Exegesis," 543-544; Kuhn, *The Kingdom*, 170-171; Van der Horst and Kraemer, "Prophesying Daughters," 457; Ladd, *A Theology*, 382.

[96] Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 130. See also N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 380.

experience distinctly eschatological.[97] The Spirit is also the sole enabler of ethical living in the life of the Christ-follower.[98] Radically, everyone has access to the Spirit through baptism: Jews, Gentiles, men, women, old, young, slave, free, educated, uneducated, privileged, and powerless.[99]

## Paul's Writings

We have established that Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and outpouring of the Spirit were eschatological events that inaugurated the reign of God. We now can examine how Paul understands the extent to which this new reality shapes the lives of Jesus' followers.[100] Though Paul does not use the same language regarding the kingdom of God as the Gospels, his language about the renewal of creation can be examined from a kingdom perspective.[101] To understand Paul's perspective, we look at how he expresses his theology in eschatological, soteriological, christological, and ecclesiological terms in the undisputed epistles.[102]

It is important to bring Paul into the conversation for three reasons: Paul is a prominent author of the NT, he is one of the authorities on the early church's interpretation of Jesus Christ, and he has one of the best developed and most influential eschatologies in the NT.[103] Paul's eschatology, soteriology, christology, and ecclesiology are inextricable from each other, and together they are at the crux of Paul's writings.[104] Paul's eschatological discourse revolves

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[97] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 104; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 135.
[98] Nijay Gupta, "The Theo-Logic of Paul's Ethics in Recent Research: Crosscurrents and Future Directions in Scholarship in the Last Forty Years," *Faculty Publications – George Fox Evangelical Seminary* 27 (2009): 353.
[99] Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 141-142; Van de Sandt, "The Fate of the Gentiles," 57, 76; Leeper, "The Nature," 32; Van der Horst and Kraemer, "Prophesying Daughters," 458.
[100] Rowland, "The Eschatology," 62.
[101] Arias, *Announcing*, 65.
[102] Focusing on the undisputed epistles is in line with common practice and for the sake of narrowing scope. See J. Paul Sampley, *Walking between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 2.
[103] Gupta, "The Theo-Logic," 340; Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 91.
[104] Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 28-29.

around the renewal of creation. Furthermore, Paul's eschatology is central to his ethical discourse, more so than commandments from the HB, which he reads as a narrative framework for goodness, righteousness, love, and authentic humanity.[105] Paul is less interested in universal prescriptions and more interested in instilling a thorough understanding and appreciation for what God is doing in creation through Christ and the Spirit.[106] For Paul, it is not scripture that is the ultimate paradigm for ethics, but Christ.[107] Still, scripture tells the story of how God loves and renews creation and is thus the best resource for understanding Christ.[108] Though Paul emphasizes that the renewal of creation will not be consummated until the *parousia*, he also asserts that because Jesus' resurrection assures the *parousia*, the reality of new creation at the *parousia* is already taking shape in the lives of Christ's followers in the present.[109] Paul argues that God is renewing humanity alongside creation right now, and God is inviting the followers of Jesus to take part in it. This means that the vision of new creation is vital to biblical ethics.

Beyond these summary statements of Paul's theology, Paul talks about both awaiting the renewal of creation and experiencing the blessings of creation being renewed in the present. When we consider Paul's eschatology in conjunction with Jesus' radical embodiment of the reign of God, it is clear that the NT as a whole points to a distinctly eschatological transformation of Christian life toward new creation. God enables this transformation through the Holy Spirit and models this transformation through Jesus.

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[105] Gupta, "The Theo-Logic," 340, 352-353; Richard B. Hays, "The Role of Scripture in Paul's Ethics," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 31, 35, 46-47; Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Body," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 26.
[106] Gupta, "The Theo-Logic," 352.
[107] Ibid., 349.
[108] Hays, "The Role of Scripture," 47.
[109] Gupta, "The Theo-Logic," 341; Duff, "The Significance," 285.

*Waiting and Experiencing, Future and Present*

A major theme of Paul's letters is the reign of God, particularly how the future fulfillment of the reign of God and the present experience of that fulfillment, practically take form in the life of the churches to which he writes.[110] Paul often characterizes the present as a time of waiting for the future fulfillment of creation and the consummation of hope.[111] This faithful, hopeful, and active waiting for salvation will be consummated in the resurrection of the dead, when humanity fully shares in God's glory and is released from its bondage to evil (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:20-23).[112] Paul affirms that we are living *before* the eschaton when God's reign will be fully victorious and God's promises of salvation will be fulfilled (2 Cor 5:7; Rom 8:23-25), and Paul argues that the eyes of the church should be kept upon that future hope.[113] Likewise, Paul looks forward to being resurrected with Christ in the future (2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 4:14).[114] In this way, Paul's writings can be interpreted as future-oriented, as they prepare the church for the return of Christ at the *parousia*.[115] If this perspective is emphasized, then Paul's ethics are interim-oriented, based on eschatological expectation rather than eschatological fulfillment.[116]

At the same time, however, Paul says that the life of the church is a present fulfillment of God's promise to redeem, liberate, and transform all of humanity.[117] Already, we live with Christ (2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 4:14). Christ already has torn the veil, bridged the divide between God and

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[110] Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 115.
[111] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 95; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 20.
[112] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 124-125.
[113] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 94; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 20.
[114] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 94.
[115] Geoffrey W. Grogan, "The Basis of Paul's Ethics in his Kerygmatic Theology," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 13 (1995): 136.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Robin Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), vii-viii.

humanity, and revealed the transformative glory of God (2 Cor 3:12-18).[118] The present is the dawn of God's renewal of creation, and those who choose can experience that reality right now (Gal 5).[119] The interim existence of the church is shaped by its consciousness of this eschatological future, with knowledge that salvation and the renewal of creation is already active in the lives of Christ-followers by participating in the gifts of grace (1 Cor 13; Gal 5:22-26).[120] If this perspective is emphasized, then Paul's ethics are rooted in the idea that Christ's act of salvation enables the church to leave the reign of evil and enter the reign of God right now.[121]

In other words, according to Paul, though we are waiting for the future hope to be fulfilled, we are also experiencing that hope fulfilled in the body of Christ in the present (e.g., 1 Thess 5). As Paul explores how the reign of evil and the reign of God interact, he appears to teach three contradictory things at once: (1) We are waiting for the future promise of God to be fulfilled; (2) We are in a transitional period of faith between the two ages as the promise of God is being fulfilled; and (3) We are experiencing the promise of God fulfilled in the present.[122] These three perspectives parallel the seemingly contradictory views of the reign of God being future, coming, and present that Jesus communicates in the Gospels.

The terms *already* and *not yet*, or *realized eschatology* and *unrealized eschatology*, help reconcile Paul's statements about the renewal of creation and how the church is supposed to respond. On the one hand, it is important not to relegate unrealized eschatology to "second-class

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[118] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 124-125.
[119] Richard B. Hays, "'The Righteous One' as Eschatological Deliverer: A Case Study in Paul's Apocalyptic Hermeneutics," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 191; J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Cambridge University Press* 31.3 (July 1985): 417.
[120] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 94.
[121] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 25.
[122] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 94.

status."[123] The old age persists in the common evils, sins, responsibilities, and sufferings of the present, and to live authentically, this reality cannot be ignored.[124] On the other hand, Paul's soteriology is shaped by the reality of the living Christ and the active presence of the Holy Spirit, which affirms the importance of those eschatological elements that are already realized.[125] The renewal of creation is a future hope that has been inaugurated by the redemptive action of Christ's death and resurrection.[126]

However, the dichotomy between these two categories, unrealized and realized, can be misleading, because it falsely suggest that there is a clear chronological line dividing the reign of evil from the reign of God. In reality, the resurrection of Jesus has caused the reign of God to infiltrate the reign of evil, and Paul makes clear that he does not see these reigns as chronologically distinct. The reign of God has infiltrated and *is infiltrating* the reign of evil; one reign does not subsequently follow the preceding reign in sequential order.[127] The reign of God and the reign of evil cannot be chronologically distinct, considering that Jesus declared that the kingdom of God is at hand and proved it through the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.[128] Thus, humans dwell where the reign of God and the reign of evil interpenetrate.[129] Far from being a static event with one-time consequences, the collision of God's reign and evil's reign dynamically effects humanity. With this in mind, it is better to think of realized eschatology less as a rigid reality and more as a process to reflect that the reign of God continues to arrive.

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[123] Grogan, "The Basis," 141.
[124] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 21.
[125] Grogan, "The Basis," 141.
[126] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 21.
[127] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 134.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.

This view of the reign of God acknowledges that the renewal of creation already began in the life and resurrection of Christ, while it also admits that the renewal of creation will not be consummated until the future eschaton. The old age, with its old forms and patterns, *is passing* away (1 Cor 7:31).[130] There is a distinct dialectical tension that arises between the already and the not yet, and how the Holy Spirit guides the church to respond to this tension is far from static.[131] To say that the reign of God is arriving does not mean that there is inevitable moral progress, either inside the church or outside of it. Instead, it recognizes that the living God, the resurrected Christ, and the life-giving Holy Spirit continue to call the church to realize the *telos* of humanity.

*Circumcision and Baptism*

Paul's discourse about circumcision and baptism illustrates the dialectic between future, coming, and present in Paul's thought and gives insight into his eschatologically oriented ethical perspective. Paul reinterprets the significance of circumcision throughout his letters (Rom 2:28-29, 7:6; 2 Cor 3:3, 6; Gal 3:23-4:7; Phil 3:3). In these passages, he expresses the belief that the gift of the Holy Spirit embodies the purpose of circumcision, allowing Christians to enter into the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah and receive the new heart and spirit anticipated in Ezekiel.[132] The result is that Paul replaces circumcision with the Holy Spirit, which makes the law of the Spirit the new law of God, not over and against the Torah, but as a transformative reinterpretation of the significance of the Torah.[133] Simultaneously, the Spirit empowers the law to become what God intended it to be: a liberating force of love, unity, and grace, and a powerful

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[130] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 20-21.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Dunn, "The Law of Faith," 70.
[133] Ibid., 73.

testament to God's redemptive work.[134] The law of the Spirit calls for obedience and faithfulness, so it does not undermine the Torah's ultimate purpose to draw God's people closer to the divine.[135]

However, the law of the Spirit is also an eschatological and covenantal gift that is represented by baptism.[136] Whereas circumcision was only accessible to male Jews, baptism is available to all.[137] Male Gentiles could convert to Judaism and undergo the painful procedure of circumcision, but baptism is more accessible to Gentiles and fully accessible to women, who participated in the old covenant only indirectly through their male relatives.[138] As Troy W. Martin articulates it, "Christian baptism ignores the distinctions required by the covenant of circumcision and provides a basis for unity in the Christian community."[139] Through baptism, all have direct access to God, to the inheritance of Christ, and to the Spirit and the Spirit's gifts.

Paul describes baptism as an eschatological and ecclesial act, in which the Christian submits to Christ's lordship, commits to God's reign, and unites to the body of Christ.[140] As Christians die to the reign of evil, they also die to the status quos of separation and hierarchy in all their forms.[141] Simultaneously, the Christian experiences salvation and is resurrected into God's reign, in which the faith community recognizes the unity of all and the destruction of

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 75, 81.
[136] Ibid., 75; Caroline Schleier Cutler, "New Creation and Inheritance: Inclusion and Full Participation in Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans," *Priscilla Papers* 30.2 (May 2016): 22.
[137] Wright, *The New Testament*, 447; Troy W. Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122.1 (January 2003): 117.
[138] Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision," 117-119.
[139] Ibid., 121. See Gal 3:28.
[140] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 44; Sampley, *Walking*, 32; Todd E. Johnson, "Hoping to Death: Baptism, Eschatology and Ethics," *Liturgy* 22.1 (2007): 56.
[141] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 44.

superior-inferior relationships.[142] Baptism is a declaration of hope in the resurrection and an opportunity for the baptized follower of Jesus to participate in the freedom of Christ, including Christ's holiness, righteousness, purity, justice, compassion, grace, hospitality, and peace.[143]

*Transformation*

According to Paul, the renewal of creation culminates in the transformation of the individual follower of Jesus Christ. Transformation is central to the Christian life, since Paul's theological and ethical frameworks are founded in the transformation that begins with grace and ends in the renewal of the Christian life in the present and the renewal of all creation at the *parousia*.[144] Just as Paul's religious teaching is oriented toward the future, so is Paul's ethical mentality.[145]

Paul asserts that the death and resurrection of Jesus signaled the disruption of the reign of evil with the reign of God, and this eschatological perspective shapes all of Paul's writings (1 Cor 2:2; 15:57; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:3-4).[146] Ethically, this perspective calls for complete transformation and renewal as an embodiment of the loving gift of salvation God has given freely already.[147] Christ's radical character and the call on the disciples to follow Jesus challenges Christians to clothe themselves in Christ (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).[148] Paul confidently makes the connection that it is *being* Christ-like that prompts *acting* in a Christ-like way.[149] To

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[142] Ibid.; Hartman, "Baptism," 590. The nuances of the relationship between baptism and salvation will not be explored here. For more on this, see Martha Smith Tatarnic, "Whoever Comes to Me: Open Table, Missional Church, and the Body of Christ," *Anglican Theological Review* 96.2 (January 2014): 299.
[143] Johnson, "Hoping to Death," 58-61
[144] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 19; Grogan, "The Basis," 129; Robin Scroggs, "Eschatological Existence in Matthew and Paul: Coincidentia Oppositorum," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 128.
[145] Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 29.
[146] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 20; Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 122.
[147] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 123; Wendland, "The Relevance," 366.
[148] Grogan, "The Basis," 145.
[149] Scroggs, "Eschatological Existence," 130.

be Christ-like is to follow Jesus in the footsteps of death and resurrection, which not only call Christians to a life of self-sacrifice and service but also instill profound hope in the gift of eternal life with God.[150] Paul deemphasizes fear of final judgment as an ethical motivation and instead encourages channeling awareness of judgment to become "more alert to the demands of our present condition."[151] Through God's love, humanity is destined to become a holy fellowship of love between God and others.[152] The presence of the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian to follow Christ and become Christ-like daily, as the church eagerly awaits Christ's return.[153]

To respond to this eschatological reality appropriately, then, we must consider how Paul understands the way it shapes both individual followers of Christ and the collective body of Christ. Paul asserts that the individual who is baptized into the body of Christ chooses to reject the reign of evil and sin and enter into the reign of God and grace (1 Cor 7:31).[154] However, because the renewal of creation has not been consummated, there is a certain amount of fluidity between these opposing worlds. The baptized individual is not yet sinless and holy, but has also already accepted the gift of redemption and renewal in Jesus. Nancy J. Duff describes this tension-filled life as a "parable of God's action on behalf of creation."[155] When Christians choose the reign of evil, they submit to the powers, hierarchies, oppressions, destructions, and lordships of the reign of evil.[156] However, when Christians choose the reign of God, they hope in the renewal of creation that Christ inaugurated, including the deconstruction of evil orders (Gal

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[150] Grogan, "The Basis," 145-146.
[151] Lovin, "Becoming Responsible," 393.
[152] Wendland, "The Relevance," 366.
[153] Grogan, "The Basis," 146-147.
[154] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 17, 25.
[155] Duff, "The Significance," 292.
[156] Ibid.

3).[157] Paul saw himself as a citizen of God's kingdom opposed to the reign of evil (Phil 3:20).[158] Paul's citizenship in God's eschatological kingdom drives his ethical perspective. He does not use the HB in a rabbinic sense in his ethics, nor does he draw on Greek or Jewish culture to explain what it means to be a transformed follower of Jesus Christ.[159] Instead, it is Paul's apostleship to a "risen and reigning Sovereign" that orients him toward the eschatological, redemptive event of Jesus' resurrection.[160] Through this orientation Paul frames his ethics eschatologically.[161]

Paul's eschatologically oriented perspective does not imply that God's original creation is defective; it asserts that God is calling us out of the defects of sin and death into the authentic humanity that God intends for humanity.[162] As Pannenberg puts it, "The biblical God is constantly bringing forth in the earthly reality things that are new, unheard of, not the shadow of things that were complete from the very beginning."[163] According to Paul, there is continuity between God's *telos* for creation and how that *telos* manifests in the eschatological community; however, there is discontinuity between the reign of evil, which includes the old orders of history, and the reign of God, which calls for new orders to match a new reality.[164] While humans will not enjoy authentic humanity fully until the *parousia*, Paul claims that authentic existence is possible in and through Christ.[165] Further, individuals cannot be transformed outside the context of the community. In other words, *authentic humanity* cannot be realized apart from

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[157] Ibid.; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 25.
[158] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 66.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 67.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 19.
[163] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 32.
[164] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 25.
[165] Ibid., 19.

*authentic human community*.[166] Paul argues that authentic human community is God's *telos* for creation.[167] The salvific reign of God is available to individuals in the present through the church.[168]

[166] Ibid., x.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Call on the Church to Embody the Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Creation

The preceding chapter makes two foundational claims about the NT narrative: (1) Jesus' resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit inaugurated the reign of God; and (2) Paul's epistles testify that the eschatological event of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has an immediate impact on the church community. The NT's emphasis on the kingdom of God and the renewal of creation sets the theological stage for an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics.

The church, rather than individual followers of Christ, is the focal point of this ethical consideration, because scripture tells the story of God's relationship with humanity primarily through a faithful community of people, rather than isolated individuals.[169] The narrative of community is prevalent in the HB, in the Gospels, and in Paul's epistles, in which Paul views the faith community as "an indispensable reality" and as the primary target of his mission.[170] Robin Scroggs says that Paul focuses on the community because the *telos* of the church is to attain human authenticity through mutual love and sharing.[171] This *telos* makes the community "absolutely essential if this authenticity is to come into being," because mutual love is impossible outside of the church.[172]

Before setting out specific ethical points of consideration, I first argue that the church is the body that God has ordained to represent Christ and the reign of God. To do this, I explore some of the language in the NT that outlines the nature and function of the church as an eschatological community with the responsibility of embodying God's renewal of creation. I also

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[169] Sampley, *Walking*, 37; Pannenberg, "The Church," 109-110; Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 39-40.
[170] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 39.
[171] Ibid., 39, 43.
[172] Ibid., 39. See also Ladd, *The Gospel*, 23.

clarify how an eschatological orientation to ethics functions alongside other approaches to ethics, and I address how the limitations that the church faces can be used to bolster the church's mission. Then I lay out eschatologically oriented actions that could help guide ecclesial ethics, which I identify as expressing hopefulness, affirming personhood, serving for justice, reconciling for unity, and exemplifying the new social order.

## The Church's Responsibility to Embody the Renewal of Creation

The Gospels describe Jesus' ethic as dependent upon eschatology, not only in the urgency of the *coming* reign of God, but also in the demands of the *arrived* reign of God.[173] Similarly, Paul asserts that the present life of the church community at least partially realizes the renewal of creation.[174] As a collective whole, the church participates in salvation through the reign of God.[175] According to Pannenberg, "The nature and the purpose of the church cannot be adequately dealt with except in relation to the Kingdom of God."[176] As the community formed in response to Christ's life, death, and resurrection, the church's existence is founded on eschatological events. In Pannenberg's words, the church is "an eschatological community pioneering the future" for all of humanity.[177] As a representative of Jesus, the church is responsible for manifesting new creation through its teaching and practice, because it is the

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[173] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 194.
[174] Scroggs, "Eschatological Existence," 125; Matera, *Resurrection*, 99; Pannenberg, "The Church," 109-110.
[175] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 11; Pannenberg, "The Church," 113-114; Arias, *Announcing*, 48; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 77, 86.
[176] Pannenberg, "The Church," 109.
[177] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 75. See also Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 136.

future of the church that determines what it should be in the present.[178] How the church lives out this role determines how it witnesses God's reign to the rest of the world.[179]

*The Church as an Eschatological Community*

The church's function as an eschatological community emerges from its identity as the recipient of God's Spirit and its unity with Christ.[180] In a world that lives according to the old orders and hierarchies of the reign of evil, the church embodies God's renewing and healing of creation.[181] When the church participates in the reign of God, it reflects the goodness and righteousness of God's reign in the world.[182] The church's participation in the reign of God also allows it to share in the resurrected life of Jesus and enjoy eternal life through fellowship with Jesus.[183] Unity with Jesus makes the church the instrument of the reign of God in the divine struggle against evil.[184] However, the church is not the end goal in this struggle; as the inheritor of God's reign, its task is witnessing to God's renewal of creation.[185] By submitting to God's reign through baptism, the individual experiences new life through the Spirit and serves God's purposes through the church.[186]

Language throughout the NT describes the church in eschatological terms, but two of the most important phrases are in Paul's epistles, in which Paul describes the church as being "in

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[178] Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 136. Unlike Paul Hartwig, I do not argue that or comment on whether the church is a factor in initiating the eschaton itself. See Paul Bruce Hartwig, "The Obedience of the Church as a Prelude to the Parousia: Ecclesial and Temporal Factors in New Testament Eschatology," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 26.2 (2005): 382-397.
[179] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 72-73.
[180] Wright, *The New Testament*, 447.
[181] Duff, "The Significance," 287; Johan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 326.
[182] Pannenberg, "The Church," 109-110; Ladd, *A Theology*, 113. It is important to remember that the church and the reign of God are not synonymous. The reign of God creates the church, and the church in turn witnesses to it. See Ladd, *A Theology*, 109-111; Pannenberg, "The Church," 115.
[183] Ladd, *The Gospel*, 72.
[184] Ibid., 121-122.
[185] Ladd, *A Theology*, 586; Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 42; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 151.
[186] Ladd, *The Gospel*, 94.

Christ" (1 Cor 15:21-22; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28; Eph 3:6) and as "the body of Christ" (Rom 7:4, 12:5; 1 Cor 10:16-17, 12:27; Eph 4:16; Col 2:19), as will be demonstrated below. Paul's use of these phrases connects the church to the resurrection and the subsequent inauguration of the reign of God. These images also carry significant implications for how God calls the church to act. The church being "in Christ" and the "body of Christ" is not only central to understanding the church's eschatological identity, but also its eschatological purpose.

*Living "in Christ"*

As the study of the end, eschatology is concerned with the ultimate *telos* of humanity, both what that *telos* is and how it is fulfilled.[187] We have explored how Jesus' person and the eschatological events of resurrection and Pentecost inaugurated the reign of God. These events put the past, present, and future in an eschatological light, which sets the *telos* of humanity back on the path toward God.[188] Thus, the community that formed in response to the Christ event is inseparable from the eschatological *telos* of humanity. The substance of this community is expressed succinctly through the term *in Christ*. Richard N. Longenecker argues that being in Christ cuts to the heart of Christian life, because it encapsulates the newness of life experienced by the Christ-follower through faith.[189] This transformation is expressed in baptism, through which we are "clothed in Christ"; putting on Christ demands actualizing the new humanity.[190]

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[187] Gerhard Sauter, "Protestant Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 249.

[188] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 23.

[189] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, World Biblical Commentary 41 (Colombia: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1990), 159.

[190] Ladd, *A Theology*, 522-523; Hartman, "Baptism," 588; Richard B. Hays, "Apocalyptic *Poiēsis* in Galatians: Paternity, Passion, and Participation," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter*, eds. Mark W. Elliott, Scott J. Hafemann, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 214.

Jürgen Moltmann describes the transformation that occurs through baptism as *becoming new* by entering into God's future and arriving reign.[191] Being in Christ makes salvation presently available, because in Christ we are free to receive God's promise to Abraham that was fulfilled in Jesus.[192] Furthermore, being in Christ commits the individual to the faith community and to the reign of God, uniting God's people to Jesus Christ and to each other.[193] Therefore, having new life in Christ is "distinctly eschatological" because it is future, coming, and present.[194]

The eschatological tension between the "already" and "not yet" places the church between two hopes: (1) the present reality that Christ has inaugurated God's reign, and (2) the promise that Christ will consummate God's reign in the future. Gerhard Sauter asserts that promise is at the forefront of all eschatology, because eschatology is dependent on hoping in God's promise to act and hoping in God's actions as a fulfillment of God's promises.[195] With this in mind, the question posed by Sauter, Moltmann, and Pannenberg becomes particularly pertinent: "Do we live as we hope?"[196] Human hopes determine human actions.[197] Sauter's question must also be put to the church: Does the church live as it hopes? Does its hope determines its actions, modeling for individuals within the community and the outside world what the hope is, why it is important, and how God's people are called to respond to it? If the

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[191] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 24. See also Susann Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ in Mission: Paul's Ecclesiology and the Role of the Church in Mission," *Missiology: An International Review* 41.4 (October 2013): 410.
[192] Ladd, *A Theology*, 525; Hays, "Apocalyptic *Poiēsis*," 214; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 151; Daniel Payne, "Radical Atonement and the Cosmic Body of Christ," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47.2 (January 2012): 294; Paul L. Hammer, "Inheritance (NT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 415.
[193] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 76; Cutler, "New Creation," 21; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158.
[194] Ladd, *A Theology*, 521.
[195] Sauter, "Protestant Theology," 259.
[196] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 133.
[197] Ibid., 139; Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 169.

church places its hope in the eschatological promises of God as inaugurated by Christ, the church's actions should reflect this eschatological orientation. To be "in Christ" means to hope in Christ, which means to act in Christ.

The church is able to act in Christ through obedience to Jesus' life, work, death, resurrection, and Holy Spirit. As the church embraces its "in Christ" identity, it will grow more fully into Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.[198] This growth parallels Paul's understanding of the community's eschatological transformation into Christ-likeness.[199] Paul asserts that God reconciled the world through Christ so that "we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). As Richard B. Hays points out, Paul does not say we will "know about" or "receive" the righteousness of God, but that we will "become" the righteousness of God.[200] The church is living "in Christ" and manifesting the renewal of creation when it "embodies in its life together the world-reconciling love of Jesus Christ."[201]

*Acting as the Body of Christ*

The NT consistently calls the church to embody Jesus Christ.[202] In what is arguably the most vivid image of this embodiment, Paul identifies the church as the "body of Christ":

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of

[198] Hartwig, "The Obedience," 394; Benjamin Schliesser, "'Christ-Faith' as an Eschatological Event (Galatians 3.23-26): A 'Third View' on Πίστις Χριστοῦ," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28.3 (2016): 285.
[199] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 24.
[200] Ibid., emphasis omitted.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid., 306.

> them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Cor 12:12-27)

The description of the church as the body of Christ highlights the unity of God's people to Jesus and each other.[203] Since being in Christ allows individuals to be a part of the communal body of Christ (Gal 3:26; Rom 8:1-2, 39), the theme of unity connects the ideas of being "in Christ" and being part of the "body of Christ" (Rom 12:5).[204] Though the image of the body of Christ is often seen as metaphorical to an extent, it has real, tangible, and immediate effects.[205]

The phrase *body of Christ* is an exceptional eschatological image that identifies the church as the primary, tangible enactor of God's work in the world.[206] By virtue of its call to be the body of Christ, the church becomes obligated to live as Jesus lived, proclaiming and embodying the reign of God in the world, as Jesus did during his life and ministry.[207] The God-ordained *telos* of the church is to embody the presence of God's reign in faith that Christ has inaugurated this reign and will bring it to fruition at the end of time.[208] Geerhardus Vos says,

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[203] Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 405; Payne, "Radical Atonement," 292.
[204] Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 405; Cutler, "New Creation," 21; Gupta, "The Theo-Logic," 351.
[205] Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 404, 410; Yung Suk Kim, "Reclaiming Christ's Body (Soma Christou): Embodiment of God's Gospel in Paul's Letters," *Interpretation* 67.1 (January 2013): 20; Michael Parsons, "Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 245-246.
[206] Ladd, *A Theology*, 590; Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 410-411; Eckhard J. Schnabel, "How Paul Developed His Ethics: Motivations, Norms, and Criteria of Pauline Ethics," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 282.
[207] Pannenberg, "The Church," 109-111; Kim, "Reclaiming Christ's Body," 23.
[208] Pannenberg, "The Church," 109; Payne, "Radical Atonement," 290-291; Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 404.

"All that is related in the Messianic prophecies concerning the enjoyments of the future age is inseparable from the existence and functioning of the body."[209] However, the church can embody God's reign on earth only if all of its members use their diverse gifts in service to the rest of the body and to those outside of the body.[210] In analogy to the way the diverse parts of a physical body work together for the good of the whole, it is only in the diversity of spiritual gifts that the church can be unified as a body and effectively represent Christ in the world.[211]

The *telos* of God's inaugurated reign is the transformation of all aspects of the world through the church.[212] As the body of Christ, the church must do more than explain what the reign of God will look like; it must also embody Christ and model the renewal of creation in its communal life through mutual faith, hope, and love.[213] The church's obedience to its call to participate in the reign of God leads to spiritual maturity that both models Jesus and forecasts Jesus' return (1 Cor 1:4-9; Phil 1:3-11).[214] In turn, the body of Christ's spiritual maturity frees the church to model the hope, authentic humanity, service, reconciliation, and new social order that God makes accessible through the Holy Spirit.

The church's essence as the body of Christ confirms that the embodiment of God's reign can only be done in the faith community, not by isolated individuals.[215] The body of Christ completes the selfhood of the individual as it witnesses and participates in the renewal of

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[209] Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 69.
[210] Tatarnic, "Whoever Comes to Me," 299; Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 402; Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 216.
[211] Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 402, 410-411.
[212] Ladd, *The Presence*, 4.
[213] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 42.
[214] Hartwig, "The Obedience," 384, 386, 388.
[215] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 40; Pannenberg, "The Church," 109-110.

creation.[216] The church's knowledge of the will of God can only be discerned through the faith community's submission and transformation, which comes through seeing the work of God through the body of Christ.[217] Only in the community can Christ-followers maintain their hope in God's future promises.

*The Role of the Holy Spirit*

The church's embodiment of Jesus is possible and fruitful only in so far as the Holy Spirit empowers that witness.[218] The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church foreshadows the promised redemption of God at the eschaton, even as it makes it real in the present.[219] As Victor Furnish puts it, the Spirit is "the operative presence of God's love" in humanity and is "the ground of hope" for the fulfillment of God's promises.[220] Though God works through the body of Christ, God is still the ultimate actor of redemption and model of righteousness. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to identify itself and its *telos* "within the cosmic drama of God's reconciliation of the world" to God (2 Cor 5:14-18).[221]

In terms of God's reign on earth, the Holy Spirit functions as a representative of the future renewal in a world that is often disinclined and sometimes hostile to God's purposes.[222] The Spirit's sanctifying presence gives the church the power to withstand opposition from the world to the mission of proclaiming the truth (2 Cor 10:3-6).[223] The Spirit enables the church to stand as a "witness against the violence, immorality, and injustice of an earthly empire that claims the authority that belongs rightly to God" by exemplifying the powerlessness, suffering,

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[216] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 40. See also Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 204.
[217] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 306.
[218] Ibid., 193.
[219] Ibid., 21; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 92.
[220] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 130, 131, emphasis omitted. See also Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 21.
[221] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 19.
[222] Ibid., 26; Parsons, "Being Precedes Act," 241.
[223] Parsons, "Being Precedes Act," 239; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 26.

and service that are characteristic of God's reign.[224] Though the church must always remain vigilant against sin, the Spirit allows and compels Christ-followers nevertheless to serve others in love and self-sacrifice.[225] In this way, the church does not just stand in opposition to the rest of the world, but exists for the sake of the world, as a model of God's reign through the Spirit.[226]

## The Value of an Eschatological Orientation to Ethics

Traditionally, Christian theologians have argued for an ethics based on some combination of commandments—specifically Jesus' interpretation of the law—and nature. The former refers to guidelines for behavior as described in scripture, whether they are written as commands or implied through narrative. The latter refers to the physical and biological laws of nature. Commandments and natural law are important to Christian life and behavior. The ethics of Christ-followers cannot be separated from scripture, nor can they be separated from God's natural laws of creation.[227] However, the command of God and natural law must be set into an eschatological framework and modified by the vision of the absolute future revealed in the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Spirit.[228]

Eschatology must be the foundation from which Christians approach ethics. If the problem of ethical action for Christians revolves around discerning and obeying God's will, then Christians must keep the *telos* of creation at the fore of their thought as they consider their actions.[229] This eschatological approach to ethics is exemplified in the NT. Jesus' and Paul's

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[224] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 176. See also Paul Lehmann, "Barmen and the Church's Call to Faithfulness and Social Responsibility," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 305, 307.
[225] Boer, *Galatians*, 392.
[226] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 92.
[227] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 194; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Introduction," in *Revelation as History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou (New York: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1969), 4.
[228] Lovin, "Becoming Responsible," 394.
[229] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 227.

ethics were rooted in their theology, and their theologies revolved around the reign of God and the renewal of creation.[230] That said, eschatology cannot be the sole determinant of ethics, since our understanding of God's renewal of creation is limited based on scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.[231] Focusing an ethic on eschatology alone would be arbitrary at best and chaotic at worst. However, Christian eschatology asserts that a new order of creation is being realized and that the church anticipates the culmination of this new order based on faith in God's promises. The new order has retroactive power on the current order, which means that commandments, natural law, and other approaches to ethics must be interpreted through the eschatological lens of God's renewal of creation.

On one level, the urgency of the reign of God and the second coming of Jesus make commandments relevant.[232] Though it should not be at the center of evangelization, understanding the rewards and penalties of the eschaton can enlighten Christ-followers to the importance of ethics. However, the reign of God liberates the commandments from legalistic interpretations and allows us to account for specific situations and circumstances.[233] In other words, Christians should constantly view imperatives with "a dynamic vision of God" in history and in creation, thus continually redirecting Christians toward the end goal of humanity and creation.[234]

Eschatology also has significant implications for how Christians understand the importance of natural law. Jürgen Moltmann raises the question, "Should redemption be

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[230] Grogan, "The Basis," 129.
[231] Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2005).
[232] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 193.
[233] Ibid.; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 34.
[234] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 193.

understood in the light of creation, or creation in the light of redemption?"[235] If we understand redemption in light of original creation, this would imply that all endings would have to return to their beginnings, which would mean, "Strictly speaking, this circle of the Christian drama of redemption would have to repeat itself to all eternity."[236] However, if we understand creation and the natural law that comes with it in light of God's redemption and renewal of that creation, we can see natural law through an eschatological and teleological lens. Natural law in the present state of creation is important for delineating our current biological and psychological limits, and it is our responsibility to acknowledge and act within those limits.[237] Ultimately, however, Moltmann concludes that not the restoration of original creation, but the present renewal and the future consummation of creation provides the ultimate grounds for liberation, and is thus not fully subservient to natural law.[238] Pannenberg argues that it is contrary to experience and the biblical narrative to assert that "the structures of human relationship always remain the same, at least to their core, because they are givens of human nature, are something created."[239] Pannenberg says this assertion obscures the distinction between the distortion of humanity and God's *telos* for humanity.[240] From Pannenberg's perspective, commandments and natural law are seen as protections against sin for a fallen humanity, rather than the end of ethics themselves.[241]

When we see commandments and natural law as the absolute end of ethics, we slip into moralism, legalism, or Puritanism, which contradict the gospel; instead, the gospel promises

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[235] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 261.
[236] Ibid., 263.
[237] Lovin, "Becoming Responsible," 394.
[238] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 264-265. See also Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 32.
[239] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 29.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

continual renewal through the presence of God's reign right now.[242] The book of Revelation, which focuses on the end of time and the consummation of creation, speaks to the pertinence of an eschatological orientation to ethics.[243] Revelation epitomizes the Christian understanding that "the future hope is essential to the critique of the present order. Only the prophetic vision of eschatological salvation enables the believing community to recognize the lies and illusions of the Beast and the false prophet. Thus, apocalyptic eschatology sustains the possibility of resistance to the present unjust order of the world."[244] Far from promoting passivity or indifference to the reign of evil in the present, Revelation calls Christ-followers to resist the sin and evil of the present and participate in the hope of God's promise.[245] Revelation's emphasis on a new heaven and a new earth does not subvert this, but instead highlights that God will consummate the redemption and transformation of creation rather than extinguish it.[246]

## Limitations on the Church as the Body of Christ

The church is called to embody God's present renewal of creation. However, because the kingdom of God has not been consummated on earth, there are some limitations on the church. Foremost among these limitations are the persistence of sin and death and the church's childlike understanding of the present and ignorance of the future. Furthermore, though we have focused thus far largely on realized eschatology, the unrealized aspects of eschatology are not only inherently significant but can also help us better sharpen our understanding of the realized aspects of eschatology.

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[242] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 194.
[243] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 179-181.
[244] Ibid., 179.
[245] Ibid., 180. See also Pannenberg, *The Church*, 53.
[246] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 181.

*Persistence of Sin and Death*

Though individual disciples of Christ and the collective church live in Christ and with Christ in them, sin remains a stark reality, both in the world around the church and in the church. As people who dwell in the world, the church is deeply influenced by the sin and death that pervade the world.[247] From one perspective, this indwelling in the world makes the church effective in its cultural context. However, the world is ultimately hostile to God and to the gospel.[248] Inevitably, a church that dwells in the intersection between the reign of evil and the reign of God will reflect aspects of both reigns, even as it strives to embody God's reign. God's reign is not the only power in the present, and the church must remember that God's reign will not be consummated until the *parousia*, when sinfulness and death are completely abolished.[249]

Indeed, it is the persistence of sin and death in the present that requires thoughtful ethics. Sin pervades the church, and like Israel throughout the HB, the people of God today must continually choose to turn away from sin and toward God in submission (Phil 2:15).[250] Baptism does not wipe away the power of sin, but baptism opens the Christ-follower's eyes to sin and makes them responsible for choosing God and forgiveness instead of sin and alienation.[251] Baptism reveals to the disciple that the eschatological is wholly different from the worldly and that salvation is wholly different from sin; yet the church lives and chooses in the tension between these two realities.[252] In part, sacraments like baptism are important because they

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[247] Jeffrey Bloechl, "Being and the Promise," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, eds. Neal DeRoo and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 121.
[248] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 116-118.
[249] Ibid., 118.
[250] Ibid., 115; Ladd, *The Presence*, 70; Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 22.
[251] Arias, *Announcing*, 73.
[252] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 63-64.

continually remind the faith community to choose Christ in hope for the future fulfillment of God's reign.[253]

*Childlike Vision of the Present and Ignorance of the Future*

Besides the persistence of sin and death, the church is severely limited by its paltry understanding of both the present and the future. Living in the overlap between the reign of evil and the reign of God means that a dozen committed disciples of Christ can pray for clarity on a specific issue and come to a dozen different conclusions. The church's discernment of reality and its present behavior cannot be equated with the reign of God in an unqualified way.[254]

The church is deeply entrenched in its local cultures, biases, and backgrounds, which inevitably restricts understanding of God's present will and future *telos* for the community on micro and macro levels. From one perspective, Jesus' ethics can be seen as interim rather than kingdom ethics, precisely because the supraethical nature of the future kingdom is incompatible with the sin and ignorance that necessitates ethics.[255] Mysteriously, however, God can work through these significant limitations—sin, death, childlikeness, and ignorance—to guide, prompt, and lead the church according to the will of God.

*Unrealized Eschatology*

The influence of sin and our ignorance of reality point to the unrealized aspects of eschatology. While realized eschatology highlights the arrived and coming aspects of God's reign, unrealized eschatology reminds us that the consummation of God's renewal of creation

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[253] William A. Beardslee, "Natural Theology and Realized Eschatology," *The Journal of Religion* 39.3 (July 1959): 159.
[254] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 10; Gerhard Sauter, *Eschatological Rationality: Theological Issues in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1997), 151.
[255] Ladd, *The Presence*, 281.

will occur in the future, according to God's will and power alone.[256] While some writers reference unrealized eschatology to assert human depravity over the possibility of human transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit, unrealized eschatology does not have to be separated so dramatically from the already-realized aspects of the eschaton.[257] Hans Schwartz articulates the interaction between realized and unrealized eschatology this way:

> The combination of the parallelism and mutual dependence of the already and the not yet is the actual essence of Jesus' eschatological outlook. The already and the not yet depend on each other and presuppose each other: the present assertions point toward the coming fulfillment, while the futurist assertions are grounded in the present anticipation and initiation.[258]

Unrealized eschatology grounds the hopeful and transformative aspects of eschatology so that they do not stray toward utopianism or lead the church to believe that it can accomplish anything apart from God to achieve a renewed creation or, perhaps, that creation is not in need of renewal.[259] Unrealized eschatology also reminds us of the provisional nature of the church and all other human structures in the interim between the inauguration and the consummation of the reign of God.[260] Though these structures, especially the church, can be important for striving toward the reign of God, they can never attain or consummate the reign of God.[261] While we may already be able to participate in salvation and the activity of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4), salvation in its fullness will be accessible only in the future (Rom 8:18-25; 1 John 3:2).[262] Thus, unrealized eschatology reminds us that hope for God's future is at the center of faith.[263]

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[256] Walls, "Introduction," 13; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 12-13.
[257] Walls, "Introduction," 13; Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 137; Beardslee, "Natural Theology," 158.
[258] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 137.
[259] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 469; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 115; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 12-13.
[260] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 114-115; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 13.
[261] Wendland, "The Relevance," 367; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 67; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 47.
[262] Rowland, "The Eschatology," 57.
[263] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 469-470.

This complementary tension between the already and the not yet raises the pivotal question: What is already and what is not yet? The most obvious aspect of unrealized eschatology is the biological body: Our minds are susceptible to sin, and our bodies succumb to illness, disease, and inevitably death. Biological limitations force the church to remember that salvation is not fulfilled and not everything we are or do is inherently eschatological.[264] Our resurrected bodies will maintain our identities, or else it could hardly be called a resurrection. However, the bodily resurrection also will be so wholly other that it will inevitably result in a radical change in personality.[265] The nature of Jesus' resurrection indicates that the capabilities of the resurrected body are not the same as those of our current bodies.[266] Furthermore, by accepting Jesus, our physical bodies are no less prone to disease and death and do not suddenly gain any unique powers. Therefore, we can categorize the biological body and the limitations of nature under unrealized eschatology.

However, ecclesial relationships do not necessarily fall under the scope of biological limitations. Jesus' resurrection suggests that ethics, religious attitudes, and relationships do not have to change after resurrection.[267] For Jesus, they did not change, because Jesus was a perfect and sinless human. For us, they will change, because of our present limitations of sin and ignorance. However, the fact that they did not change for Jesus shows they do not have to change inherently, which means that these aspects of human life, particularly communal life, do not fall under the scope of unrealized eschatology. Because we can strive for relationships that reflect the renewal of creation, communal life and ethics fall under the category of realized eschatology. To

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[264] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 22; Beardslee, "Natural Theology," 158.
[265] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 289-290.
[266] Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 209.
[267] Ibid.

some extent, biological limitations inform how we express love in ways that will not be necessary after the eschaton, such as clothing the naked and feeding the poor. In essence, however, the transformed person practices transformed relationships through freedom, joy, love, hope, and peace-making.[268] Although sin and ignorance will cause us to fall short, transformed relationships are possible and accessible through the transformation empowered by the Holy Spirit. Unrealized eschatology reminds us that the act of salvation has not been consummated, and it motivates us not just to pursue the kingdom but to long for its final form after Jesus' return. Augustine notes that hope does not eliminate our limitations, but it still transforms our present to reflect the eternal.[269] This is especially true for relational ethics, especially in the context of the church.

## A Framework of Eschatological Ethics in the Church

Up to this point, I have worked to set the theological stage for a practical eschatological orientation to ethics. So far, I have argued that eschatology is immediately pertinent to ethics and is the unifying theme of ethics in the NT.[270] I also have argued that the church is called to be the embodiment of the connection between eschatology and ethics by embracing the new covenant that points us to an eschatological orientation to ethics.[271] We can now turn our attention to the question: How is the church to practice an eschatological orientation to ethics? This question leads to five eschatological characteristics of the faith community as: the harbinger of hope, the affirmer of personhood, the first responder to injustice, the reconciler for unity, and the exemplar

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[268] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Body," 19.
[269] Brian Daley, "Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100.
[270] Beardslee, "Natural Theology," 159; Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 200-204.
[271] Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 160.

of the new social order. These principles point the church toward its identity as the people of God with an eschatological orientation to ethics.

*The Church as the Harbinger of Hope*

The most important role of the church is to be a sign of hope in a world suffering under the reign of evil and in desperate need of God. One of the primary and unique claims of the Christian faith is its hope in the present activity of the reign of God and in God's future consummation of the renewal of creation.[272] The heart of God's reign is expressed in hope.[273] While the church cannot live as if we are already in that consummated reality, the church can live as if we know where we are going: to the fulfilled reality of God's supreme reign.[274] This concept goes back to one of Pannenberg's fundamental ideas, which Richard John Neuhaus summarizes this way: "Christian life is true in the sense that what something *is* now must be perceived in terms of what it *is to be*.... When the meaning of something is finally revealed, however, it is obvious that that is what it always was."[275]

Humans naturally strive for what they want, and the human strive for the reign of God is no different.[276] Striving to embody God's renewal of creation indicates a desire for it to come.[277] Through our actions and attitudes, we offer an account of the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15).[278] If the church actually craves the coming of Jesus and new creation as Paul and the early church did, it will work to make its life look as much like new creation as possible.[279] Far from being an arrogant attempt at earning salvation through works, it is an outward expression of what the

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[272] Beardslee, "Natural Theology," 159.
[273] Ladd, *The Gospel*, 14.
[274] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 133; Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 30, 42.
[275] Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 42, emphasis original.
[276] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 126.
[277] Ibid., 143.
[278] Duff, "The Significance," 290.
[279] Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 42; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 126.

church confesses with its lips: "Lord, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).[280]

In this way, it is what Christ-followers believe and hope about the last things that actually come first in terms of ethics.[281] The unrealized aspects of eschatology actually strengthen the ethical call on the church to announce and embody this hope.[282] Paul's vision of the Second Coming of Christ gives us "our inheritance of an ethic of hope," because "hope, not guilt or fear, defines who we are and what we are to do" as a faith community.[283] As the church behaves hopefully in a groaning, unredeemed creation, it recognizes its own limitations, and its faith grows.[284] It is not despite but because of the existence of sin and suffering that:

> we continue to hope, pray, and work for something better, for a community more closely conformed to the will of God as disclosed in Scripture.... No complacency, no despair, no nostalgia: we reach forward, press on, knowing that we can trust God's grace because Christ Jesus has already claimed us. With this knowledge, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, hoping and expecting that [God] will continue to transform the community of the church so that our moral discernments may indeed be true.[285]

God's grace allows us to see ways in which the reign of God is present, active, and expanding, if the church is willing to see it in unexpected and subtle ways.[286] These experiences affirm the validity of hope. Eschatology is not concerned with just the end of time and beyond, but also with the reality and the hope that shapes all of Christian life.[287] Nancy J. Duff says, "Hope reminds us that although we know the darkness of this evil age, we are not *of* the darkness.

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[280] Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 30-31; Payne, "Radical Atonement," 294.
[281] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 139.
[282] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 469.
[283] Duff, "The Significance," 290.
[284] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 469.
[285] Ibid., 470.
[286] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 77.
[287] Ibid., 2, 11, 77, 80.

Living in the present we, nevertheless, live as children of tomorrow, i.e. children of hope. Our lives are now bound up with the destiny of Jesus Christ."[288]

Because of this, the faith community should be "restlessly eager for change" out of respect for the heritage of hope.[289] Hope teaches that the church must change in order to remain relevant to human experience.[290] As Pannenberg points out, the church's witness to the coming reign of God "is severely compromised… when the Church succumbs to the false otherworldliness that invites an aloofness from the sweaty and unsatisfactory particulars" of the human experience in broader society.[291] Put simply, the church is called both to proclaim and to embody hope. As a people privileged to be participants in God's redemptive work, the church can cling to hope regardless of physical circumstances, because "all hope is founded and centered in God, and not in the belief in progress or in humanity."[292] Despite the reality of evil, the church announces and lives the hope that God has already imbued the present with meaning and purpose, and that God has determined the final outcome of the struggle between evil and God.[293]

In light of the tension between hope and reality, Paul counsels a necessarily high tolerance for paradox and ambiguity.[294] Hope is not a warm feeling, but a profound conviction that prompts committed action in response to the future fulfillment of that hope.[295] Like faith (Jas 2:14-26), if the church's hope does not lead to hopeful action, then that hope is dead,

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[288] Duff, "The Significance," 290.
[289] Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 29.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid., 30.
[292] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 13. See also Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 26.
[293] Walls, "Introduction," 6; Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 42.
[294] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 26.
[295] Sauter, *What Dare We Hope?*, 9.

meaningless, and inauthentic.[296] Furthermore, this hope is not just for the redemption of the individual, but for the entire world (Rom 8:21).[297] The ethic of hope is a sometimes-uncomfortable and paradoxical solidarity with all of creation, especially with the rest of humanity, inside and outside of the church.[298]

The hope of the church makes an immediate demand on the present life of the church. If the church affirms that it hopes in an eternal and steadfast God, there is no need to be threatened by shrinking congregational numbers. If the church affirms that its hope is in the sovereign and unconquerable reign of God, there is no need to be discouraged by social or political persecution. Said more positively, hope in God's future should be the central identifying characteristic of a community that is too often known for fear, hatred, anger, and exclusivity. Hope is what makes all other characteristics and actions of the church possible, genuine, and effective.

*The Church as the Affirmer of Unconditional Personhood*

Hopefulness frees the church to affirm the unconditional personhood of all humans. For our purposes, personhood refers to the dignity and worth of all individuals, as humans who are created, beloved, gifted, and called by God in unique ways. The church affirms personhood by fulfilling its role as the means through which individuals experience authentic humanity and authentic community. The church is the unique representative of God to affirm personhood and express authentic humanity because, "It is only in the Church… that we are not who we have been but who we will be."[299] This role should not cheapen or relativize the church's interactions with outsiders or cause the church to neglect and minimize the human dignity of others; instead it

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[296] Ibid.; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 251-252.
[297] Duff, "The Significance," 291.
[298] Ibid.; Tatarnic, "Whoever Comes to Me," 303.
[299] Manoussakis, "The Promise," 69. See also Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 42.

should affirm others' personhood in the eyes of God.[300] Robin Scroggs notes that the hopefulness of the church and its acceptance of God's promises "leads to loving behavior, the upbuilding of the neighbor, that conforms to God's will and is the fulfillment of that will found in the commandments."[301]

Affirming the unconditional personhood of all people is an acknowledgment that all people have sinned, and though some people's sins are more public than others', we affirm that Christ came for all humans because all are deserving of death (Rom 3:23-25). As Jesus' earthly ministry exemplified, it is the responsibility of all Jesus' disciples to affirm the personhood of all. As Nancy J. Duff puts it:

> That Christ is Lord of the world as well as of the Church indicates that the Church has no room to boast of special privilege. If we seek to lord ourselves over others we have not accurately answered the ethical question "Who is our Lord?" nor have we yet recognized our apocalyptic vocation which calls us to live in the New Age inaugurated by Jesus Christ.[302]

By affirming unconditional personhood, the church participates in God's redemptive action in creation and the healing from sin.[303] This affirmation also allows members of the church to participate in authentic humanity and extend the invitation to others to participate in authentic humanity.[304] While the most obvious and challenging boundaries of personhood that the church imposes lie in both real and perceived sinfulness, the NT deconstructs all human-imposed barriers, distinctions, and dichotomies that prevent the affirmation of unconditional personhood (Gal 3:28).[305]

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[300] Manoussakis, "The Promise," 75.
[301] Scroggs, "Eschatological Existence," 141.
[302] Duff, "The Significance," 285.
[303] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 13.
[304] Ibid.; Sampley, *Walking*, 38.
[305] Duff, "The Significance," 285; Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies," 415.

*The Church as the First Responder to Injustice through Service*

It is the hope of the church and its affirmation of the unconditional personhood of each individual that drives the church to serve in response to injustice. The service of God's people does not look like the service of the rest of the world, because in the footsteps of Christ, God's people rush to respond to the effects of sin, evil, and death in the world, even to the financial, physical, or social peril of themselves. By being the first responder not just to its own members, but to all humans created and beloved by God, the church participates in God's mercy and grace.[306] The ministry of healing in response to pain, sin, and injustice is one of the primary ways Jesus modeled the good news of the kingdom; this healing ministry is holistic, including individuals' bodies, minds, hearts, and souls, as well as relationships within families, groups, and communities.[307] The ministry of healing also makes the church radically countercultural and affirms the necessity of serving God as a community of discipleship.[308]

However, the church does not always embody this calling. As Pannenberg points out,

> Christians seem to be rather complacent people. They have their population centers in the richest countries of this world, but they don't manage to change the miserable living conditions of the majority of [hu]mankind, but rather contribute to, continue, perpetuate, or even aggravate the disastrous occurrences of hunger, war, and political or economical alienation.[309]

Members of the community must empower each other to continue praying for and pursuing God's peace and justice, even while holding each other accountable for our participation in sin, evil, hatred, and injustice, whether actively or passively.[310]

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[306] Lovin, "Becoming Responsible," 393.
[307] Arias, *Announcing*, 75.
[308] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 196.
[309] Pannenberg, "The Working," 24.
[310] Christian Scharen and James F. Caccamo, "Eschatology and Justice: Introduction," *Liturgy* 22.1 (January 2007): 1-2.

The pursuit of God's justice in the world does not have to be political and certainly should not be partisan.[311] In whatever form it takes, striving for justice must be rooted in the church's eschatological vision of God's future, even as we recognize that righteousness and justice on micro and macro levels will not be fully achieved until the eschaton.[312] Christian Scharen calls this action a "rehearsal" of "God's reign come near," prompting us to "work for justice while we wonder if it matters."[313] The church is the first responder to suffering and the painful effects of sin not out of false utopian desires, but out of love for and hope in God. In this, we challenge the assumption that "there is not enough" and instead insist that God will provide,[314] because the reign of God is "the utterly concrete reality of justice and love."[315]

As we hope for the culmination of God's reign, we die to the perceived conveniences of sin and long for a world imbued with God's grace, justice, compassion, hospitality, peace, self-sacrifice, equity, and perfection.[316] The church acknowledges that it will not achieve this before the eschaton. However, the church is also the representative of the divine in a world still plagued by the reign of evil.[317] Through the power of the Holy Spirit, as representatives of Christ, in longing for the hoped-for fulfillment of God's future, the church embodies the justice of God in its community as far as it is possible.[318] The church knows that injustice and oppression are the opposite of God's reign, and only God's reign will endure. Paul notes that proper faith inevitably leads to a longing for justice, especially for the marginalized, so having freedom in Christ means striving for righteousness through justice-oriented service.

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[311] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 12-13.
[312] Walls, "Introduction," 14; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 79.
[313] Scharen, "Eschatology and Justice," 3. See also Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 117.
[314] Tatarnic, "Whoever Comes to Me," 291.
[315] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 79.
[316] Johnson, "Hoping to Death," 61.
[317] Beardslee, "Natural Theology," 159.
[318] Tatarnic, "Whoever Comes to Me," 291; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 79, 117.

*The Church as Reconciler for the Sake of Unity*

The eschatologically oriented principles covered thus far—hope, personhood, and justice—are realistic despite the diversity of perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs within the church. In fact, the diversity of sects, denominations, movements, backgrounds, cultures, and even doctrines can help the church mature into these principles, as long as the church also values reconciliation and unity.[319] Reconciliation is another principle of the church that wishes to be eschatologically oriented, since it is necessary for unity, which is a key characteristic of God's reign.

Paul especially modeled unity and wrote most of the epistles in the NT to encourage churches to remain unified and to resist conflict and division in reverence to Christ.[320] As the body of Christ, the church is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12-27). Individual members make up the diverse parts of a congregation, just as unique Christian communities make up the diverse parts of the universal church. In the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5), micro and macro communities can respect, appreciate, and learn from the diversity of the body of Christ, which contributes to, rather than detracts from, unity.[321] This pattern of community is affirmed in the image of the church as the body of Christ. Diversity and difference do not justify privileges and power.[322] Instead, diversity and difference prompts us to an ecumenical attitude toward theology and ecclesiology. This is not to advocate for relativism but to admit that the devaluation of unity in the church has led, in the words of Pannenberg,

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[319] John Gibaut, "Building Up the Body of Christ: Reflections on Ecclesiology and Ethics in the Dialogue of Faith and Order," *The Ecumenical Review* 65.3 (October 2013): 389.
[320] Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 110.
[321] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 183; Gibaut, "Building Up the Body," 389.
[322] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 183.

> to the modern splintering into denominations, the religious wars, the secularization of public life, and the reduction of religion to a private matter. By including the elements of pluralism and tolerance in its understanding of itself, Christianity will become able to present its claim to truth with new credibility, without thereby exposing itself to the charge of representing an authoritarianism that restricts freedom. Only a church that is ecumenical in this sense can expect that the political order of society might orient itself to the future Lordship of God over humanity, if it wishes to escape the judgment of God.[323]

However, this ecumenicism is complicated. Reconciliation is difficult, and remaining unified through the difficult process of disagreeing and reconciling is even more difficult, especially if not all parties value reconciliation and unity.

Yet, Pannenberg argues that unity is necessary for the church to embody the reign of God and model the renewal of creation for the rest of the world, because the reign of God is characterized by peace, justice, forgiveness, and solidarity.[324] Ecumenicism requires that the church's unity does not depend on human leadership, but on Jesus' lordship.[325] Anything that threatens the unity of the church is an ecclesial issue, because it threatens the effectiveness of the church to embody the reign of God[326] and to fulfill its role as the "symbol and instrument of human unity."[327] On this note, it is important to recognize that social justice work cannot take the place of the reign of God, but in the context of church unity, it can be a means through which the church models the reconciliation and unity that it practices.[328]

However, meaningful reconciliation is only realistic if the church focuses on its hope for the future fulfillment of God's promises, affirms the unconditional personhood even of those who disagree, and acts as the first responder to injustices by bearing healing and grace. Further, reconciliation is only possible through the rejection of old-age distinctions, hierarchies, or social

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[323] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 18-20.
[324] Ibid., 197; Gibaut, "Building Up the Body," 389; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 15, 20, 61, 165.
[325] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 19-20, 23.
[326] Ibid., 165; Gibaut, "Building Up the Body," 399-400.
[327] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 21.
[328] Ibid., 151; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 79.

positions, which require reconciliation to overcome.[329] As the early church modeled, these hierarchies must be overcome for all members of the church to use their gifts to fulfill their role in the body of Christ.[330] In this case, reconciliation could lead to unity, not to the detriment or erasure of valuable differences—like the diversity of personalities and spiritual gifts—but to the uplifting of the community, and thus the community's message, as a whole.[331] Therefore, reconciliation is a revolutionary, countercultural statement of unity in the face of evil and division.[332]

*The Church as the Exemplar of the New Social Order*

These four characteristics of the church—harbinger of hope, affirmer of personhood, responder to injustice, and reconciler for unity—empower the church to be the exemplar of God's new social order. The new social order is the structuring of relationships within the reign of God. The church's embodiment of new-order relationships is the culmination of an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics.

Even though the church is surrounded by the reign of evil, Jesus calls his disciples to choose God's reality. Hans Schwarz examines the church's call to embody the new social order of God's reign in practical terms:

> The involvement of the church in the affairs of the world, in the struggle for justice, human rights, and access to the necessities of life, serves a dual purpose. On the one hand the church does serve those who are in need. Yet, being aware that all of its efforts are at best patchwork, bandages on the wounds of a hurting world, the church also witnesses with its actions to a world that will be without anguish and suffering. Similar to the miracles of its Lord which were both a help for people in need and signs of a new creation, the church is the symbol of God's future. This eschatological symbol of the new

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[329] Duff, "The Significance," 288.
[330] Sampley, *Walking*, 37-38; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 55.
[331] Carl E. Braaten, "The Episcopate and the Petrine Office as Expressions of Unity," in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, eds. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 98-99.
[332] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 197.

> creation becomes visible not just in social involvement, but in every activity of the church.[333]

The church's proclamation of hope in the good news of Jesus Christ means that the rest of the world evaluates the church's every action as a representation of God.[334] If the church is not embodying the new order of God, it is misrepresenting God.[335]

Too often, the church models itself after the hierarchies of the present age, marginalizing members of the church based on factors like ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status; these are members of the church with the gifts and desire to serve God, the church, and the world.[336] In so far as the church embraces the reign of God as its model for proper ordering, the church's structure will increasingly become more service-oriented rather than authoritative.[337] When some are privileged over others, the church fails to embody the reign of God.[338] With this eschatological framework for ethics in mind, we now can consider a specific ethical question: What is the right relationship between men and women in the church?

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[333] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 371.
[334] Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day*, 81.
[335] Hays, *The Moral Vision*, 198.
[336] Braaten, "The Episcopate," 99-100; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 93; Mimi Haddad and Alvera Mickelsen, "Helping the Church Understand Biblical Equality," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 485.
[337] Braaten, "The Episcopate," 103, 105-106; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 19-20, 156; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 93.
[338] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 20; Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom*, 93, 95.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## An Exploration of Male-Female Relations as a Practical Application of an Eschatological Orientation to Ecclesial Ethics

Now that we have established what an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics looks like, we can explore how this vision applies to male-female relations in the church. The renewal of creation is particularly applicable to the male-female relationship, because eschatological ethics is primarily about the new ordering of human relationships, among the most fundamental of which is the relationship between men and women. [339] Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether states it this way: "The Christian symbol of future hope, the reign of God on earth, provides a vision of 'what ought to be' in human-human and human-earth relations, against all distortions into violence and oppression. It provides us with the paradigm of who God is for us and with us and thus the foundations of our hope."[340] The church has the opportunity to embody the reign of God by modeling the vision for how men and women relate to each other under God's reign. This chapter unpacks what the reign of God means for male-female relationships and how God's renewal of creation guides the male-female relationship—as a paradigm for all relationships—toward love, righteousness, holiness, justice, and goodness.[341] I argue that an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics calls for the male-female relationship to embody mutual service to the church and the world based on spiritual giftedness, because men and women are gifted in the Spirit without regard for gender, and they experience the same transformation by having the same access to God's covenant through baptism.

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[339] Elna Mouton, "The Reorienting Potential of Biblical Narrative for Christian Ethos, with Special Reference to Luke 7:36-50," in *Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 35; Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 110.

[340] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Eschatology in Christian Feminist Theologies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 339.

[341] McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 111, 129.

Like many other Christian treatments of male-female relations, I lean on Gal 3:28 as a pillar for understanding God's ordering of relationships in the renewal of creation.[342] As the summary statement of Paul's conclusion to his argument in Galatians, Gal 3:28 is the climactic statement of one of the best-authenticated epistles of Paul.[343] Galatians has historically been foundational to Christian teaching and practice, and it is significant that the male-female relationship is mentioned as a parallel to the Jew-Gentile relationship, the hierarchy and privilege of which Paul deconstructs and replaces with a new order based on shared inheritance of the Spirit.[344] Paul argues for the new ordering of relationships based on liberation, mutuality, service, and authenticity, which allows for all people to participate in the reign of God through the church.[345] Paul follows Jesus' example by disrupting the old norms of hierarchy between the sexes in favor of expressing a "new humanity" that transcends patriarchy.[346]

## Men and Women Experiencing Giftedness in the Reign of God

Jesus' inauguration of God's reign in the Gospels, the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2, and the giftedness passages in the epistles (1 Cor 12:4-31, 14:1-19; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:7-16; 1 Pet 4:8-11) exhibit that gender is no longer a factor in a person's participation in the kingdom. Gal 3:28 illuminates how this inconsequentiality of gender applies in the present; it is by nature of the church being "in Christ." Gal 3:28 and the gender-neutral language of the giftedness passages indicate that the biological and social distinctions between ethnicities, genders, and

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[342] Stephen J. Lennox, "'One in Christ': Galatians 3:28 and the Holiness Agenda," *Evangelical Quarterly* 84.3 (July 2012): 211; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 137.
[343] Longenecker, *Galatians*, lvii; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 1.
[344] Longenecker, *Galatians*, xliii, 156; Cutler, "New Creation," 26; McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 105; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998), 70.
[345] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 28; Cutler, "New Creation," 26; Elaine H. Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42.3 (1974): 547-548.
[346] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 2.

classes have no bearing on the gifts and callings of individuals within the church.[347] While biological distinctions remain between the sexes, no one is primarily identified by being a man or a woman, but by their participation in the reign of God through baptism and the gift of the Spirit.[348] As part of the created order, *biological* distinctions between the *sexes* remain, but the *social* distinctions between the *genders* are continually transformed in the faith community to reflect the transcendence of hierarchy in the reign of God. This is not a matter of equality, since people are not equally gifted, but a matter of honoring how the Spirit chooses to gift the people of God, both male and female.[349] Together, the church discerns the spiritual giftedness of individuals and empowers the use of those gifts in service to the community.[350]

Under God's reign, the church has the opportunity to resist the old orders of power and privilege that are characterized by corruption, domination, and subjugation and instead imitate the mutual service that Jesus modeled; this service takes diverse forms for different members of the body of Christ based on their giftedness in the Spirit.[351] In contrast, ministry that is gender-based rather than gift-based limits how individuals serve. Considering Paul's general lack of concern with strictly delineating church roles and structures, it is much more in line with the

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[347] Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40.3 (1972): 288; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 10th ann. ed. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 235.

[348] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 288.

[349] Gordon D. Fee, "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 241, 254.

[350] Texts that appear to prohibit women's speech (1 Cor. 14:26-14; 1 Tim. 2:8-15) can be reasonably explained within their cultural and situational contexts, and they do not carry the necessary weight of universality to overrule the NT's prioritization of liberation, mutuality, and giftedness. See, for example, John Jefferson Davis, "Incarnation, Trinity, and the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood," *Priscilla Papers* 24.1 (2010): 9.

[351] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 30.

vision of God's reign to allow all to use their gifts according to the Spirit's empowerment.[352] Gift-based ministry, as Gordon Fee refers to it, is the best fit for an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics, because it is more concerned with ministry than authority, it is more concerned with honoring the roles assigned by the Spirit than the the roles assigned by human social expectations, and it is more concerned with mutual service than exclusive lordship.[353] The Spirit's bestowal of gifts helps usher the church into a new reality with transformed relationships that are no longer subject to old-order hierarchies.[354]

*Equality, Egalitarianism, Patriarchy, and Complementarianism*

Before we continue in our exploration of male-female relations in the reign of God, it is important to delineate some of the language that is frequently used in discussions about gender in the church. The terms of complementarianism and egalitarianism, the predominant ways of speaking about gender roles from a Christian perspective, often function as agendas that each side manipulates the biblical text to fit. They are simplistic terms that are often used to categorize, and sometimes caricaturize, a broad spectrum of thought. Occasionally, I use the terms egalitarianism and complementarianism—and their respective cousins, equality and patriarchy—for the sake of brevity and simplicity. Patriarchy, whether in reference to male domination or male headship,[355] relies on understanding the biblical narrative as fundamentally

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[352] Fee, "The Priority," 248-249, 251; Gordon D. Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26-29," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 184.

[353] Fee, "The Priority," 254. See also Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 216, 230.

[354] Liubinskas, "The Body of Christ," 410-411.

[355] Some feminist scholars do not see a distinction between male domination and male headship. However, from the complementarian perspective, there is a stark difference between violent domination of men *over* women and the loving headship of men *in service to* women. The church has practiced both forms of patriarchy in different moments, congregations, and cultures throughout history.

hierarchical, and that hierarchy is a good aspect of the creation story.[356] Egalitarianism sees the biblical narrative as fundamentally promoting equality among all. I use these terms with caution and with an awareness that they lack biblical precedent and nuance.

Part of the problem with these terms is that they consider males and females as homogenous groups, not as individuals. From the egalitarian perspective, for example, equality between men and women can be elevated so highly as the ideal that it can be to the detriment of individual gifts and personalities. From the complementarian perspective, the patriarchal order can be elevated so highly as the ideal that it can force men and women into socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity instead of honoring individual gifts and personalities. While there are biological distinctions between men and women, there is no universally applicable statement that can be made about *all* men or *all* women.

Another issue with these terms is that they fail to delineate what equality means in one's spiritual status before God and in one's practical function in ministry. The egalitarian perspective can overemphasize the connection between status and function to the point that it threatens to overvalue some gifts and roles and undervalue others. The complementarian perspective can make too much of a distinction between status and function, to the point that they have absolutely no bearing on each other.[357] In reality, there is a correlation between status and function, in the sense that one's status before God—not ethnicity, gender, age, or class—and their giftedness in the Spirit determine what roles an individual could have in the church.[358]

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[356] Kevin Giles, "The Subordination of Christ and the Subordination of Women," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 351.

[357] Ibid.; Stephen Douglas Lowe, "Rethinking the Female Status/Function Question: The Jew/Gentile Relationship as Paradigm," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34.1 (March 1991): 59.

[358] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 59, 61; Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 283; Lennox, "One in Christ," 211.

Certainly, this is recognized (in thought if not in practice) for ethnicity, age, and class; yet gender is often regarded as a different category.[359]

Egalitarianism and equality can be practiced in biblically consistent ways that honor God and the calling of the church to embody the new order of creation. However, they can be so concerned with Enlightenment ideals of "fairness" and individual autonomy that spiritual gifts and cultural norms can be ignored. Likewise, complementarianism, and even patriarchy, can be practiced in ways that honor the dignity, humanity, giftedness, and belovedness of both men and women. However, with roots in views of women as inferior, weaker, and inherently subordinate, complementarianism and patriarchy are often the means for physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and spiritual abuse.[360] This is oppressive and damaging not just to women, but to men as well, because it estranges the church as a whole from Christ and prevents it from striving for the reign of God by chaining it to the orders of the reign of evil.

### Men and Women Experiencing Resurrection-Transformation through Baptism

Together, as members of the body of Christ and participants in the reign of God, men and women experience the transformation of resurrection life by participating in the covenant of baptism. Galatians signals that baptism has real, transformative effects on the status and roles of individuals within the faith community, which is made possible through the baptized person's participation in the resurrection and in the reign of God.[361] In the case of the Jew-Gentile relationship, this transformation clearly had ecclesial consequences.[362] The same is true for the male-female relationship: The primary rite of initiation and participation in the faith community

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[359] Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 19-20.
[360] Ruether, "Eschatology," 332; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 1, 251.
[361] Susan Smith, "Women's Human, Ecclesial and Missionary Identity: What Insights Does the Pauline Correspondence Offer the Contemporary Woman?" *Mission Studies* 127 (January 2010): 149.
[362] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 210; Fee, "Male and Female," 177.

shifted from the gender-exclusive mark of circumcision to the gender-inclusive mark of baptism.[363] Baptism transforms individuals and their place in the faith community, and it compels them to proclaim the good news of Christ and participate in God's renewal of creation.[364] Because all receive baptism and the gift of the Spirit without regard for ethnicity, gender, age, or class (Acts 2:17-21), all become children of God, inherit the promise to Abraham, and overcome the hierarchical distinctions of the old age.[365] This inheritance of the baptized cannot be limited. As Caroline Cutler puts it:

> If the word "only" needs to be used to describe this inheritance—that it only applies to our salvation—then it is, indeed, a small world that we inherit. In complete contrast, the letters of Paul show our inheritance to be vast and infinite, invading every area of our lives and the life of the church of Christ. It is a world where "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all [of us] are one in Christ Jesus!" It is a "new creation inheritance" that is meant for all. Anything less shrinks the world we inherit for both women and men and is thus an insult to the Giver of this good gift.[366]

The transformation that occurs through baptism in Christ and into the body of Christ allows the disciple to enter into the inherited new reality, the reign of God, expressed through a renewed and transformed community in which the old hierarchical orders no longer have any bearing.[367] The Holy Spirit is restoring the authentic humanity of all to the *imago Dei* and is transforming the formerly hierarchical relationships of the world to mutuality.[368]

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[363] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 210.
[364] Smith, "Women's Human," 156-157; Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 292.
[365] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 2; Van de Sandt, "The Fate of the Gentiles," 56; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157; Fee, "Male and Female," 177-179; J. Eichler, "Inheritance, Lot, Portion," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 302; Boer, *Galatians*, 268; J. Louis. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 374. For the more spiritual interpretation of Gal. 3:28, see John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2006).
[366] Cutler, "New Creation," 27.
[367] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 11.
[368] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 58.

## Male-Female Relations in the Church as an Announcement of Hope

Embodying the hope of God's future is one of the primary responsibilities of the faith community. The relationship between men and women in the faith community can be a beacon of hope in a world that continues to be scarred by sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other evils that disproportionately affect women. The NT reinterprets male-female relations on the macro and micro levels so that the social, functional, and religious barriers between men and women in the faith community are challenged in Christ, even if they remain in the macro society of the patriarchal Greco-Roman world.[369] One of the primary realities of Christian hope is that God has redefined the relationship between humans, especially between ethnicities, classes, and genders. The NT primarily describes transformed relationships through Jews and Gentiles, since this was the main concern of the early church community.[370] As the church participates in the hope of transformed relationships between ethnicities, so can the church participate in the hope of transformed relationships between the sexes.

One of the ways the early church embodied the transformed relationship between men and women was by calling each other *brother* and *sister*.[371] While Paul and other early-church leaders recognized that the hierarchical structure of society and in families, especially the *paterfamilias*, would not be deconstructed in society, the use of familial language within the church indicates that the faith community would not be defined by the same sort of exclusive, domineering patterns of authority.[372] Patriarchal favoritism of men prevents both women and

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[369] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 189
[370] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 72.
[371] Cutler, "New Creation," 27.
[372] Ibid.; Ruether, *Sexism*, 30.

men from realizing their renewed relationship with God and each other.[373] The reign of God has no room for "the corrupting principles of domination and subjugation" that confine some to exclusive servility and others to exclusive power.[374] In the eschatological faith community, only new creation behavior, practices, and attitudes endure, which means all people in the community treat each other with mutual respect and service. The image of table fellowship, in which all of the baptized children of God have a seat at the table without privilege, is an image of the community's hope in God's redemption of creation.[375]

When the church reflects the reign of God, leadership manifests as service and self-sacrifice based on the example of Jesus, not as corrupted, domineering lordship over others. Individuals will live this differently depending on their unique Spirit-endowed gifting, "which empowers the disinherited and brings all to a new relationship of mutual enhancement."[376] The church embodies hope by empowering women and men to use the means and gifts at their disposal to uplift the faith community and spread the gospel.[377] The women and men of the early church accomplished this task despite the societal boundaries of patriarchy. In the contemporary situation of the church, we must strive to do the same, not because we are assured success, but "because we know we are part of God's struggle on our behalf. The assurance for our hope, the ground for our undefeated persistence, lies in our faith that we are joining God in a struggle for the redemption of creation, and God will never give up on us."[378]

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[373] Everett Berry, "Complementarianism and Eschatology: Engaging Gordon Fee's 'New Creation' Egalitarianism," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13.2 (Fall 2008): 59-68.
[374] Ruether, *Sexism*, 30.
[375] Cutler, "New Creation," 27.
[376] Ruether, *Sexism*, 30.
[377] Shaw, "Women and the Early Church," 22.
[378] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 180.

Male-Female Relations in the Church as an Affirmation of Unconditional Personhood

The most important characteristic of men and women is not their respective maleness and femaleness, but their status as children of God who inherit the promise of God's covenant. The church, however, has not always lived this reality. Christian theology, in the first few hundred years after Paul and the other NT writers, largely characterized women merely as a "good gift to men" and the "curse of the world," who occasionally showed positive (masculine) traits, but were mostly weak, vain, trivial, deceitful, tempting, lustful, materialistic, and voracious.[379] Because of this, Christian imagination about Satan has been projected onto women in certain traditions.[380] The church fathers saw women as having less *imago dei* than men, and as "naturally" subordinate because of their role in sex and procreation, which is likely why they encouraged the difficult—and for most women of the time, impossible—route of asceticism.[381]

While the contemporary church would likely not articulate a view of women like this, much of the faith community's teaching and practice carries the weight of its legacy. For example, certain forms of complementarianism continue to promote male headship in ways that imply that women should view men as exclusive representatives of Jesus and God.[382] Eschatologically, this forces women to rely on men instead of Christ for their redemption, as husbands become the redeemers of their sinful wives, who become pure by submitting to their husbands, who more closely reflect Jesus.[383] If women are not able to represent Christ because

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[379] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 11; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church: Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1983), 15. See also Naomi R. Goldenberg, *Returning Words to Flesh: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Resurrection of the Body* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 165.
[380] Goldenberg, *Returning Words*, 165.
[381] Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, 16-17, 23.
[382] Ruether, *Sexism*, 141.
[383] Ibid. Of course, complementarians would not articulate redemption in this way. However, as Ruether points out, this is often the effect that patriarchal practice has within the church, either blatantly or in the collective subconscious of the community.

he took on a biologically male body, then it calls into question whether women are redeemed by Christ at all.[384] In cases such as these, the church could greatly benefit from feminist and other forms of contextual theology that reaffirm and bring to the fore the full, authentic humanity of women and others who are marginalized.[385] Jesus incarnates the experiences of the marginalized just as much as the experiences of the powerful.[386]

Many contemporary complementarians assert a "two-nature anthropology" that affirms the personhood of both men and women in status, even as they maintain a difference in role; however, this distinction denies full, *unconditional* personhood because it mandates certain roles of people based merely on their sex, rather than their gifts.[387] This is not to say that subordination denies personhood; it is actually the opposite.[388] While forced subordination infringes on human dignity, voluntary self-subordination, in response to and modeled after the self-subordination of Christ, is the ultimate form of authentic humanity.[389] In this way, submission based on circumstance and gifts, rather than assigned gender roles, is liberating for both men and women.[390] Because both men and women are fully in the image of God, they are equally expected to practice compassion, justice, hospitality, and service.[391] While these practices will take diverse forms, they are dependent upon the individual's gifts, and not upon the individual's sex.

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[384] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 67.
[385] Ruether, *Sexism*, 18-19.
[386] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 5.
[387] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 7; Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 65.
[388] John Jefferson Davis, "Some Reflections on Galatians 3:28, Sexual Roles, and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19.3 (1976): 207-208.
[389] Ibid., 208.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Spirituality of Resistance and Reconstruction," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. Mary John Mananzan (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 170.

Affirming—in inclusion and participation—the personhood of all does not mean that the distinctions between men and women have been entirely abolished, since biological differences clearly remain. However, it does mean that there is "in the eschatological community of Christ no longer a person whose primary characteristic is woman nor any person whose primary status is man," especially when it comes to a person's role in the faith community.[392] Men and women do not have to become sexless creatures to use their spiritual gifts in the faith community.[393] Instead, if both sexes are not ministering to the congregation and the wider society, then the full image of God is not being expressed, and the body of Christ is being underused.

Gregory of Nyssa challenged the ideas of fixed masculinity and femininity: He argued that realized eschatology destabilizes these roles in a way that liberates both men and women and transforms the faith community by making it easier to affirm all as unique individuals, rather than whether they fit a certain gender mold.[394] Gregory, in partnership with his sister Macrina, proposed a "transformative eschatology [that] entails participation in the divine and suggests destabilizing consequences for fixed masculine and feminine identity."[395] From a perspective like Gregory's, forcing traditionally masculine or feminine roles upon individuals denies personhood because it denies their expression of their God-given identities, which limits their participation in the faith community.

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[392] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 288.
[393] Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13.3 (1974): 188-189. The ideal of androgyny is likely what Paul was correcting in the passage on head coverings (1 Cor. 11:2-16).
[394] Michael Nausner, "Toward Community Beyond Gender Binaries: Gregory of Nyssa's Transgendering as Part of His Transformative Eschatology," *Theology and Sexuality* 8.16 (2002): 56, 59.
[395] Ibid., 56.

Allowing the use of gifts does not only prepare the church for the culmination of God's reign, "but actually lets aspects of divinely restored humanity become enacted."[396] As Ruether articulates it:

> The full humanity of every woman and of every man, indeed the best possibilities of every entity, are integral to the intention of God. In God's initial aim, women are called to their full potential and men to support women's full potential, and vice versa. Thus, sexism, among other injustices, is against the intentions of God. God continually overcomes sexism within God's nature, representing optimal possibilities for gender and other relations to us at each moment.[397]

Affirming the unconditional dignity of each person means allowing all who are baptized into Christ to enter the eschatological faith community. In Galatians and Romans, Paul makes the themes of adoption and inheritance prominent, emphasizing that no aspect of a person's biology, social status, or past can prevent them from entering into God's covenant in faith (Gal 3:23-4:7; Rom 8:14-25).[398] All inherit equally as adopted sons and daughters by clothing themselves with Christ, and as Paul demonstrates in the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, this inheritance is not only soteriological but ecclesial as well.[399]

Limiting people's participation in God's redemptive work based on biological rather than spiritual factors hinders the church's affirmation of the unconditional personhood of the individual.[400] Patriarchal structures in the church have contributed to the abuse of women (and of men who do not fit into the socially expected form of "masculinity").[401] The church must recognize, repent of, and repair these structures in order to create a community of love in which all are affirmed as sons and daughters of God who are inherently valuable. In this way, the

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[396] Ibid., 59.
[397] Ruether, "Eschatology," 336.
[398] Cutler, "New Creation," 21.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Haddad and Mickelsen, "Helping the Church," 485.
[401] Ibid.

church will express its eschatological calling to embody the reign of God by loving as Christ loved with humility and sacrifice: "Even at present, personal relationships of love appear exceptional in comparison to both manipulative and mercantile relationships. If in the *parousia* every personal creature stands in an immediate loving relationship to Christ, the relationships of persons among one another will also be characterized primarily by their share in this eschatical [sic] love."[402]

Preventing power abuses in the church requires first replacing corrupted institutions with communities of mutual service between brothers and sisters in Christ. Secondly, preventing abuse requires the inclusion of all ethnicities, classes, and genders in positions of ministry. The Protestant understanding of the "priesthood of all believers" is based on the notion that Jesus, as the "high priest," includes all those who are baptized into Christ and invites them to participate in the mission of Christ (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 5:10; Heb 10:2).[403] To exclude women from this based on their sex is to reject one of the fundamental affirmations of the faith: that God gifts and calls men and women into service of the kingdom, not based on their maleness and femaleness, but based on their status as God's children.[404] Robin Scroggs asserts that Paul is the strongest voice in the NT who affirms the liberation of women through baptism, just as much as Gentiles and slaves have been liberated.[405] Those who claim only men can lead the church because only men can represent Christ neglect the fundamental claim that Jesus saved all of humanity, because

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[402] Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook*, 274.
[403] Smith, "Women's Human," 145-146; Davis, "Incarnation," 9; Frances Young, "Hermeneutical Questions: The Ordination of Women in the Light of Biblical and Patristic Typology," in *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, eds. Ian Jones, Janet Wootton, and Kirsty Thorpe (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 33.
[404] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Body," 17; Robin Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42.3 (1974): 532.
[405] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited," 535.

Jesus assumed the position of all humanity.[406] Jesus' was circumstantially, not inherently or soteriologically, male.[407] In other words, Jesus' maleness is not fundamental to Jesus' identity as the Messiah or to the redemptive work of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Otherwise, we could not say that Christ has saved women alongside men. If Christ represents women just as much as Christ represents men, the reverse is also true: Women represent Christ as much as men represent Christ. To deny women the role of representing Christ in whatever way the Spirit has gifted them is to deny Christ's assumption of women's position and thus their full participation in God's community.[408]

*A Note on New Creation and Original Creation*

The creation story in Gen 1-3 inevitably arises in discussions about proper gender relations, and with good reason. These chapters in Genesis describe how God created humanity and how humans became estranged from God, setting in motion the divine love story of redemption. Gen 1-3 is often interpreted as an establishment of male headship, largely because it has been read with a priority toward Gen 2 and 3. According to this reading, the man is understood to be created first and to be given dominion over everything, including the woman, who is created to serve and help the man, and who causes the fall of creation by usurping the authority of the man.[409] If this were true, then the Christian vision of new creation would be subversive to God's original creation. The liberation, mutuality, and giftedness that characterize new creation would appear to indicate that the gendered subservience and hierarchy of original

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[406] Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 199-200.
[407] Ibid., 205, 209.
[408] Ibid., 200-201. Another side of the argument denies women the role of representing the church. Considering the church is imagined as the bride of Christ, however, makes this illogical.
[409] See, for example, Raymond Ortland, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2006), 95-112.

creation was wrong. Considering that few, if any, biblical scholars (including those who identify as complementarian) maintain that there will be hierarchy between the genders after the eschaton, the "goodness" of original creation is highly questionable if Gen 1-3 is read hierarchically.

However, there are other linguistically and biblically coherent interpretations of the creation story that coincide far better with new creation. Countless scholars have detailed why Gen 1, in which males and females are created simultaneously and as equals, is the proper framework through which to understand Gen 2-3, instead of the other way around.[410] According to this interpretation, men and women are created as partners, who serve each other mutually, share stewardship over creation, and are both at fault for sin.[411] The woman is not the weaker, secondary sex, but the *ezer*, the "warrior helper," who serves and leads alongside the man as a partner, a role which was lost when the fall replaced mutuality and service with hierarchy and domination.[412] This understanding of original creation is far more consistent with God's renewal of creation. Only with this interpretation of Gen 1-3 does it make sense to say that new creation is "the divine fruition of the original intent" of mutual partnership in original creation.[413] In other words, new creation restores the original mutuality created between the sexes, who share the

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[410] L. Ann Jervis, "'But I Want You To Know…': Paul's Midrashic Intertextual Response to the Corinthian Worshipers (1 Cor. 11:2-16)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112.2 (1993): 231-232.

[411] It is not within the purview of this thesis to detail the biblical exegesis that informs this interpretation of Gen 1-3. See Jervis, "But I Want," 246; McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 165; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 251; L. Ann Jervis, "1 Corinthians 14.34-35: A Reconsideration of Paul's Limitation of the Free Speech of Some Corinthian Women," *JSNT* 58 (1995): 56; John Jefferson Davis, "First Timothy 2:12, the Ordination of Women, and Paul's Use of Creation Narratives," *Priscilla Papers* 23.2 (2009): 6. Many of these scholars also address interpretations of NT references to Genesis (e.g., Rom. 5; 1 Tim. 2; 1 Cor. 11) that are consistent with new creation.

[412] McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 165.

[413] Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 287.

*imago Dei*, and overcomes the sinful hierarchies that enable domination and exploitation.[414] To perpetuate these hierarchies, including patriarchy, is to reject the renewal of creation that frees humanity to return to the original ideal of mutual partnership and unity.[415]

In any case, the reign of God is the highest good, and the ideal for which the church should strive.[416] When the church recognizes that traditional interpretations of the creation account have been colored by patriarchal norms, it becomes clear that original creation aligns with the ideals of the reign of God.[417] Thus, the reign of God is not the reversal of original creation nor an exact return to original creation, but the consummation of the *telos* of humanity that original creation inaugurated.

Male-Female Relations in the Church as Bringing Justice through Responsive Service

There are two parts to the church's response to male-female relations in terms of bringing justice: (1) The church must respond to injustice against women and men inside and outside of the church living under corrupted patriarchal structures; and (2) The church must harness the gifts of the entire faith community—including men and women—to respond to all forms of injustice. The reign of God has no room for oppressive hierarchies, and it radically destabilizes the existing social order in favor of peace and justice.[418] Because the church has the responsibility to embody God's renewal of creation, it is also responsible to embody God's justice by responding to patriarchy and other forms of hierarchy. There is a sharp distinction

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[414] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 58; Jervis, "1 Corinthians 14.34-35," 56; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 1; Trevor Morrow, *Equal to Rule: Leading the Jesus Way – Why Men and Women Are Equal to Serve in Leadership in the Christian Church* (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 2014), 20, 27.
[415] McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 165; Jervis, "But I Want," 245.
[416] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 111.
[417] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 1; Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 102; Pannenberg, "The Working," 23-24.
[418] Ruether, *Sexism*, 26. See also Jens Herzer, "Paul, Job, and the New Quest for Justice," in *Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 83.

between *response* and *reaction*, as the former emerges from a place of humility and compassion, while the latter often emerges from a place of indignation and anger.

The first form of injustice takes place specifically in response to patriarchal structures. The misuse of power in patriarchal structures is the root cause of injustices like sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence and discrimination that disproportionately affect women. This is not to say that patriarchal privilege—or its softer form, male headship—is always used in manipulative or abusive ways.[419] However, wherever there is unquestioned power among sinful humans, there is the potential for blatant and subtle abuses. In patriarchal structures, including many faith traditions, this has resulted in the subjugation of women and of men who do not fit the mold of masculinity.[420] The subjugation and abuse of women is systematic in cultures and social structures that grant a disproportionate amount of power to men, a principle that can be applied to all hierarchical relationships that involve the corruption of power.[421] The church is responsible for repenting for how its theological teaching and pastoral practice have colluded with systemic violence and prevented the church from embodying the reign of God.[422]

In light of this critique of disproportionate power, it is important that patriarchy is not replaced by matriarchy, or female domination, which Paul corrected in 1 Tim 2:12 by forbidding the women in Ephesus who had succumbed to false teaching "to teach in a way that domineers over men."[423] Furthermore, women do not need to worship themselves or demand others to worship them as "goddesses," as Naomi Goldenberg suggests, in order to live out their authentic

[419] Berry, "Complementarianism and Eschatology," 63-64.
[420] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ties That Bind: Domestic Violence against Women," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. Mary John Mananzan (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 44.
[421] Ibid., 42.
[422] Ibid., 51.
[423] Translation by Davis, "First Timothy 2:12," 9.

humanity alongside men or to correct the wrongs of patriarchy.[424] This notion runs counter to the authentic humanity of both males and females. Instead, liberation, not from the biological sexes, but from culturally defined restrictions on gender roles and behavior, reflects the kingdom's orientation toward individual giftedness and the priority of each child of God as uniquely created by God.[425]

The second form of injustice responds more broadly to hierarchical structures. Like patriarchy, most human-inflicted injustices result from a misuse of power and privilege motivated by greed, lust, pride, or other vices. The corruption of power in institutionalized hierarchy is the root cause of extreme poverty, modern slavery, and countless other macro and micro injustices.[426] To respond to these injustices is a fundamental purpose of the existence of the church in light of the reign of God, because the church's existence "is justified only by the service that the church renders to the basic concerns" of all humans.[427]

As people with different perspectives and experiences than their male counterparts, it is necessary for women to serve in ministry with men to identify injustice, practice compassion, and collaborate for solutions; only through the collaboration of people with diverse gifts and perspectives can the church hope to embody the reign of God.[428] Including women in the search for justice (Mic 6:8) frees women and men to use their gifts in the most beneficial way for the sake of the kingdom (Rom 11:29).[429] The early church existed in the extremely hierarchical

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[424] Goldenberg, *Returning Words*, 190-195.
[425] Sarah Coakley, "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God," *Modern Theology* 16.1 (2000): 70. The giftedness of individuals requires communal discernment.
[426] Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 59.
[427] Pannenberg, "The Church," 119.
[428] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 173-174; Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 78; Joan Burgess Winfrey, "In Search of Holy Joy: Women and Self-Esteem," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 445.
[429] Winfrey, "In Search," 445; Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 59.

Greco-Roman world, in which "position and status prevailed in every way," so fewer people had the opportunity to overcome their social status despite hope that the new order would reverse their situation.[430] Now that culture has changed, the church is free—indeed, responsible—better to reflect the reign of God by allowing the gifts of God's sons and daughters to be used freely.[431] However, responses to the evils of hierarchy, including sexism, racism, extreme class stratification, war, poverty, and other forms of violence, should not translate into the "demonization, defeat, and destruction of particular groups of people… One overcomes systems of evil while reclaiming the persons captive in those systems, the oppressed and the oppressors, for a new liberated humanity on a redeemed earth."[432]

Those who point out that women do not need to be in formal leadership roles to address injustices are correct. Any and all people in the church, including those in "supporting" roles have the right and responsibility to respond to injustice by reflecting God's mercy and compassion in whatever situation they find themselves. However, preventing women from participating stems from a misunderstanding of what leadership within the faith community is. Leaders of the church are not called to exercise their power over others for the sake of their agenda.[433] Instead, they are called to empower and support the church to fulfill its mission to embody the reign of God by facilitating the ministry that belongs to the faith community as a whole.[434] This facilitation is most effective if both men and women serve the church, because exclusively "male voices easily elevate and articulate a solely male-oriented 'pattern of life,'" which is a significant problem when we are discussing the church's approach to justice for the

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[430] Fee, "Male and Female," 179.
[431] Ruether, *Sexism*, 26; Brent Shaw, "Women and the Early Church," *History Today* 44.2 (February 1994): 23.
[432] Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 178.
[433] Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 216.
[434] Ibid., 213-216.

marginalized.[435] Furthermore, giving men a voice exclusively privileges and entitles men, which actually infringes on their ability to lead in a way that reflects Christ: in servitude, humility, selflessness, and love.[436] Women should not replace men as the leaders of addressing cultural, institutional, and individual injustices. Women should not be idealized as morally superior to men; they are not.[437] Instead, all leaders, male and female, are to be the humblest of servants, and Jesus calls all disciples of Christ to self-sacrificial servanthood (Mark 10:41-44; 1 Pet 5:1-3).[438]

*A Note on Experience*

Of the four sources in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, experience is rightly relegated below scripture, tradition, and reason.[439] However, experience is also valuable and often misunderstood. Many scholars are aware of the dangers of experience, like letting emotion color one's interpretation of scripture or allowing unique, personal incidents lead to broad, universal beliefs. However, scholars often neglect that much of scriptural interpretation, tradition, and even reason have been based on the experiences of men to the neglect of the experiences of women. Thus, when women present their experiences or interpret scripture from their perspectives, it can be critiqued as counter to scripture, tradition, and reason in a way that men's experiences are not equally critiqued. Similarly, female interpretations of scripture and tradition are often seen as based on experience or subjective emotion, while male interpretations of scripture and tradition are often seen as based on reason or objective logic. In reality, human experience is inextricable from the exegetical and hermeneutical process, just as human experience was central to the

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[435] Ibid., 216.
[436] Ibid., 218.
[437] Goldenberg, *Returning Words*, 171.
[438] Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 227-228; Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited," 537.
[439] Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.*

formation of scripture and tradition.[440] Yet, the experiences of women have been neglected in two primary ways: in biblical interpretation and in ecclesial practice.

For one, the experiences of women in the HB and in the NT have been largely ignored. There are numerous examples of women who lead and use their gifts in a number of ways throughout scripture. Usually, scripture describes these women without comment, indicating that their experiences are normative in the sense that what they were doing was not seen as unethical, even if it may have been abnormal in a patriarchal society.[441] Women's experiences throughout scripture testify that God ordains women to lead, preach, teach, pray, and prophesy, even when it is countercultural. By sharing the experiences of women in scripture, the church can begin to shift away from institutionalized, hierarchical structures of power and help hesitant church members "accept and institute new truths," such as biblical notions of gender mutuality and liberty.[442]

Secondly, the experiences of women in contemporary church congregations are often ignored. The secondary status of women in the congregation and the lack of female pastoral care and female role models lowers women's and girls' self-esteem and hinders their abilities to use their God-given gifts.[443] Psychological research in and outside of the church consistently demonstrates that "Women frequently hold the belief that they are less intelligent, less capable and less valuable than men."[444] Furthermore, the secondary status of women and girls has allowed for high rates of domestic violence in the church, not just in the ancient world but in contemporary Western churches as well. A special investigative report by *Post and Courier* in

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[440] Ruether, *Sexism*, 12, 16; Letty M. Russell, "Spirituality, Struggle, and Cultural Violence," in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, ed. Mary John Mananzan (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 24.
[441] Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 20.
[442] Haddad and Mickelsen, "Helping the Church," 482.
[443] Winfrey, "In Search," 431; Morrow, *Equal to Rule*, 10.
[444] Winfrey, "In Search," 432.

2014 explored domestic violence in South Carolina, a Bible-Belt state with the highest rates of femicide due to domestic violence.[445] The reporters found clear correlations between the rates of domestic violence and a church culture that insists on the subservience of women and the dominance of men inside and outside of the home.[446] Consistently, research has found that domestic violence is directly connected to patriarchal domination, especially when that domination is religiously justified.[447] Indeed, domestic violence is one of the foremost reasons feminist theology and other liberation theologies developed in the first place: out of necessity.[448] Inadvertently or not, churches that do not let women use all of their spiritual gifts relegate women to second-class citizenship, which often contributes to emotional damage and sometimes physical violence.[449] Men and women in the church need to acknowledge and incorporate women's experience *alongside men's* to help reduce spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, physically, and sexually abusive environments by deconstructing power structures and replacing them with a framework for mutual service.[450]

Whether congregations are ready to have women in leadership roles or not, the church must work to repent of and resolve these realities out of love for God's people and Jesus' body.[451] Complementarians should take this information seriously; even if they want to maintain a difference of roles between men and women, the conviction that men and women are equal in status is not being communicated clearly. Women are invited to participate in redemption, reconciliation, love, spiritual giftedness, biblical interpretation, dialogue, righteousness and the

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[445] Doug Pardue, et al., "Till Death Do Us Part," *The Post and Courier* (2014).
[446] Ibid.
[447] Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ties That Bind," 39.
[448] Russell, "Spirituality," 21.
[449] Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ties That Bind," 41.
[450] Russell, "Spirituality," 25.
[451] Oduyoye, "Spirituality," 166.

in-breaking reign of God alongside men.[452] Furthermore, they are to be honored, respected, and dignified alongside their brothers in Christ, and free to use their gifts in whatever way best serves the body of Christ and the kingdom of God, rather than being limited to tasks that are seen as appropriate for them based solely on their sex.[453] This is not just spiritually harmful to women; it limits the abilities of the church to serve the world by modeling the kingdom.[454] The church is called to help transform, in the power of the Spirit, the broken relationships that enable violence.[455]

As women participate in more areas of society in the contemporary Western world, the church would greatly benefit from listening to the experiences of women as sisters in Christ and not as potential threats to the status quo.[456] Likewise, the church has the opportunity and responsibility of better serving the female half of the body of Christ by giving as much weight to their voices as their male counterparts.[457] The experiences of women—alongside the experiences of men—must be heard, addressed, and incorporated into the teaching and practice of the church.[458] Only by taking into account the experience of all of humanity can the church begin to embody the reign of God.[459]

### Male-Female Relations in the Church as Reconciliation and Unity in Action

The early church modeled reconciliation and unity: People of different ethnicities, cultures, religious backgrounds, genders, ages, classes, and socioeconomic statuses came together to worship Christ Jesus. They called each other *brother* and *sister* and recognized that

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[452] Winfrey, "In Search," 445-446.
[453] Morrow, *Equal to Rule*, 10.
[454] Winfrey, "In Search," 437.
[455] Oduyoye, "Spirituality," 169.
[456] Winfrey, "In Search," 437.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid., 446.
[459] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 111.

through baptism, they had all been unified in and with Christ.[460] In unity, individuals are not the same, but unified in their diversity.[461] They are not homogenous equals, but their functional differences are not defined by the old social hierarchies between ethnicities, classes, genders, and generations, but by their participation in God's covenant.[462] Gordon Fee points out that the Jew-Gentile, slave-free, and male-female pairs of Gal. 3:28:

> represent the primary ways people were divided/separated from each other in the structures of the present age that was now passing away (1 Cor 7:31; 2:6): on the basis of race, social standing and gender. But "in Christ Jesus," Paul asserts, these categories have lost their structural significance and relevance; that is, these very things that keep people distanced from or at odds with each other in a fallen world have been relativized in the body of Christ, where not only Jew and Greek but also masters and slaves, men and women, all form that one body together.[463]

Since the church is a body, notions of homogenous equality can actually hinder reconciliation and unity. Forced equality where uniqueness exists often means making the minority or the voiceless group look like the dominant group.[464] This counters authentic reconciliation and the necessary diversity of the body of Christ.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, men and women of the early church were put into a unified and mutually dependent relationship with each other that had never existed before in the ancient Greco-Roman world.[465] In the eschatological faith community, the distinctions between men and women are radically abolished for the sake of unity.[466] However, Enlightenment notions of equality improperly applied can endanger this unity. For example, in churches where women

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[460] Young, "Hermeneutical Questions," 23; Cutler, "New Creation," 21; In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 46.
[461] Martyn, *Galatians*, 377.
[462] Davis, "Some Reflections," 202; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 210; Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 19; Fee, "Male and Female," 172-173; Pagels, "Paul and Women," 540.
[463] Fee, "Male and Female," 176-177.
[464] Ruether, *Sexism*, 20.
[465] Fee, "Male and Female," 184.
[466] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 538-539.

are invited to lead, they could be expected to lead in a masculine way, but it is only with feminine and masculine examples from men and women that the church can meet the needs of its congregants and the larger community, and therefore be unified in mission and identity.[467]

Another place where reconciliation needs to take place is between those who have different views about what "a woman's place" should be. This conversation, inevitably emotional and serious for all parties, can lead to bitter divisiveness between egalitarians and complementarians.[468] However, unity is possible even in a serious disagreement about what truth is, the consequences of which all biblically minded Christians care about deeply regardless of their conclusion about gender roles.[469] If all parties practice mutual service and self-sacrificial love, then unity can be maintained through respect, humility, empathy, compassion, forgiveness, and fellowship.[470] When it comes to gender roles, it is vital to listen to and respect how others experience Christian freedom, even as we attempt to correct them in the spirit of truth.[471] Instead of being a point of division or perhaps even scandal, the church can harness the conversation about gender roles to model reconciliation in disagreement and unity in diversity to the rest of the world.[472] Even the apostles were not unanimous about virtually anything except the lordship of Christ.[473] This is not to say that the differences in opinion are not important; they are.[474] It simply is to say that there does not have to be complete uniformity of opinion for the church to

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[467] Wieser, "Community," 94.
[468] Alice P. Mathews, "Toward Reconciliation: Healing the Schism," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 494.
[469] Ibid., 494-495; Pagels, "Paul and Women," 548.
[470] Mathews, "Toward Reconciliation," 495, 498, 501-502; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 51-52; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 149.
[471] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 548; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 173-174; Pannenberg, *The Church*, 14.
[472] Mathews, "Toward Reconciliation," 501.
[473] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 55.
[474] Mathews, "Toward Reconciliation," 503.

model the unity and reconciliation that characterize the reign of God.[475] After all, only in community can humans experience the reign of God, and only in diversity can a community that empowers authentic humanity be formed.[476]

*A Note on Adaptability and Culture*

Conversations about male-female relations often lead to one or both sides accusing the other of succumbing to the pressures of culture, namely the social customs and expectations of the surrounding society. The egalitarian might insist that the complementarian perspective is clouded by patriarchal norms and archaic gender expectations that distract from biblical truth.[477] Likewise, the complementarian might say that the egalitarian perspective is rooted in pragmatism and Western individualism instead of biblical truth.[478] The question of how culture influences perspective is an important one. In the spirit of unity, it is important to remember and consider the micro cultures (e.g., familial background) and macro cultures (e.g., geographical background) that inform perspectives. This is one of the many reasons why dialogue that strives for reconciliation is not only beneficial, but necessary for the growth and empowerment of the church. Even more importantly, we must remember that God works through cultures, manifests God's self in any culture, corrects sinful aspects of culture, and uses culture as a vehicle for revelation.[479] Paul, for example, dismantled hierarchy in light of the new creation, but

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[475] Ibid., 504.
[476] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 47.
[477] Duff, "The Significance," 292.
[478] Berry, "Complementarianism and Eschatology," 63; Coakley, "The Eschatological Body," 67.
[479] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 47.

acknowledged that not all cultural problems can be overturned at once or else the unity of the church would be threatened.[480]

Not all aspects of culture should be perceived as ordained or good; a major role of the church as the embodiment of the reign of God is to critique and correct a depraved and fallible society.[481] Being too friendly with culture can manifest in the church as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, nationalism, and any number of evils.[482] It is the responsibility of the church to form a theology that addresses these and other kinds of evils.[483] Ironically, the church at this moment is largely lagging behind contemporary Western culture in terms of acknowledging the giftedness and liberty of women and men.[484] Culture is not the inherent enemy. The church should be wary of culture, but it does not need to fear it. The church should also be aware that it could benefit from culture and that it bears the responsibility to adapt to better address the needs of the culture.[485] Reflecting the cultural norms of the apostolic age, including patriarchy, in the twenty-first-century Western church may be hindering the essence of Christian liberty:

> By regarding the apostolic age as the norm, the church lost its freedom to recognize which elements of its way of life and thought were limited and conditioned by the times. As early as the second century, there was a tendency to glorify the time of the church's origins, in clear contrast to Paul's understanding of that time, for Paul was fully aware of the distance between his own time and the eschatological culmination.[486]

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[480] Thus we see Paul's acquiescence to slavery, the *paterfamilias*, patronage, and other hierarchical norms of society. However, Paul helped the early church think through those realities from an eschatological perspective. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 207.
[481] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 193.
[482] Duff, "The Significance," 292.
[483] Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 70; Ruether, *Sexism*, 26.
[484] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73.
[485] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 55; Pannenberg, "The Working," 29.
[486] Pannenberg, *The Church*, 55.

In terms of gender roles, there is an opportunity to address the dramatically changed situation of men and women living in a post-industrial, rather than an agrarian, world. There are moments when it is appropriate for the church to prayerfully and humbly listen to culture and adapt.

### Male-Female Relations in the Church as the Exemplar of the New Social Order

By being a beacon of hope to men and women, affirming the beloved personhood of men and women, responding to injustices against men and women, and reconciling men and women in order to unify the body of Christ, the church can begin to exemplify the new social order of the reign of God. In the Gospels, we see the new order manifest as Jesus discipling men and women to lead the new human family through Christ.[487] Jesus invites these male and female disciples not only to inherit him but also to participate in his inheritance.[488]

In the epistles, Paul wrestles with the pastoral issues that arise in the tension between the extremely patriarchal culture of the Greco-Roman world and the radically mutual nature of the church, which calls for self-sacrificial service and the laying down of power.[489] Paul's driving vision is one of liberation from the reign of evil for men and women.[490] Yet, because the church was young and small, challenging the social structures that permitted and perpetuated subordination—especially slavery and patriarchy—could have meant social revolution.[491] Still, Paul insists on a radical new mutuality within these structures that represents the new, unified humanity that will eventually emerge out of and undermine the hierarchies of his time.[492] This is Paul's solution to the tension between eschatological liberty for women and social order in a

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[487] Morrow, *Equal to Rule*, 32.
[488] Eichler, "Inheritance," 295, 300.
[489] Morrow, *Equal to Rule*, 41; Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 66.
[490] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 544.
[491] Ibid., 545-546; Fee, "Male and Female," 183.
[492] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 544-545; Ruether, *Sexism*, 26; Fee, "Male and Female," 179, 183; Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 209-210; Ruether, *Introducing Redemption*, 66.

patriarchal world: functioning freely in Christ within the faith community with respect for the customs of the micro and macro culture.[493]

Liberty in Christ does not mean liberty from moral constraints. Quite to the contrary, liberty in Christ means slavery to God.[494] However, slavery to God also means liberty *from* social expectations and liberty *to* use one's gifts in service to the kingdom; it also means liberty to find one's dignity in Christ rather than in marriage, parenthood, or other social norms.[495] Baptism does not eliminate social distinctions or biological realities; it transforms them in light of Christ and the eschatological community.[496] Specifically for the sexes, the old, hierarchical relations between male and female are not the standard of the church; the church is called to model kingdom relationships.[497] God invites women to participate in God's reign, just as God invited Gentiles, slaves, and the uncircumcised.

While this chapter is focused on male-female relations in the church, it is worth mentioning the marriage relationship, too, since this is an important aspect of ecclesial life for many men and women. First, men and women (even husbands and wives) relate to each other foremost as brothers and sisters in Christ, especially when they are participating in communal gatherings as the body of Christ.[498] This means that the marriage relationship can serve as a microcosm of the partnership and unity that the church strives for as a whole.[499] Yet, Paul seems to say that the marriage relationship can ultimately constrain eschatological freedom for men and

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[493] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 548; Fee, "Male and Female," 181.
[494] Boer, *Galatians*, 392.
[495] Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 23; Cutler, "New Creation," 26.
[496] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 213, 217; Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 208.
[497] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73; Cutler, "New Creation," 27; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 148; Fee, "Male and Female," 179.
[498] Bartchy, "Can You Imagine," 22-23; Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73; Fee, "Male and Female," 184; Cutler, "New Creation," 27.
[499] Fee, "Male and Female," 182.

women, perhaps because of the inescapable patriarchal structures of marriage in the Greco-Roman world.[500] Certainly, Paul encourages people to remain as they are—for married people to remain married and for single people to remain single—but he also acknowledges that the renewal of creation does not mean the annihilation of sexuality, which is why he makes concessions for marriage.[501]

These concessions are likely not because marriage is *inherently* counter to the reign of God. As Paul makes clear, sexual relationships generally and patriarchal marriage specifically are no longer fundamental to an authentic human experience nor to the new faith community formed in Christ, because men and women are no longer defined foremost by their biology.[502] In the interim period between the inauguration and the consummation of the reign of God, marriage can serve as a healthy way to control sexual desire, which appears to be one of its primary functions in the early church according to Paul. However, in a different culture, in which partnership and mutuality are the social expectation of marriage, marriage can serve to support and empower the church's role of embodying the reign of God.

While culture will sometimes prevent or even prohibit it, the ideal called for by the renewal of creation is the free participation of men and women in church work based on their giftedness in the Spirit.[503] This ideal should be limited only in circumstances where one's participation will limit the spread of the gospel.[504] Still, to settle for anything less than the full use of all spiritual gifts is to give the old distinctions a power they do not have and to ignore the

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[500] Pagels, "Paul and Women," 542.
[501] Ibid.; Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," 293; Fee, "Male and Female," 181.
[502] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 211, 213.
[503] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73; Fee, "Male and Female," 183; Fee, "The Priority," 254; Cutler, "New Creation," 26; Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 208, 218, 230; Shaw, "Women and the Early Church," 28.
[504] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73; Fee, "Male and Female," 181.

radical breadth and depth that transformation in Christ brings.[505] The church's most authentic embodiment of the reign of God will invite and welcome the gifts of all, not based on their external marks (like circumcision), their biological traits (like sex), or their social status (like supposed cultural inferiority), but based on the inheritance and liberty they have received in Christ.[506] When the church honors men and women equally, it can better model mutuality, unity, partnership, service, love, and authenticity in its role as the body of Christ.[507]

[505] Fee, "Male and Female," 183.
[506] Lowe, "Rethinking the Female," 73; Fee, "The Priority," 254; Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 229-230; Pannenberg, "The Church," 123; Pannenberg, "The Working," 30.
[507] Pannenberg, "The Church," 121; Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 209-210.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Suggestions for Future Research and Conclusion

The preceding chapters set out a systematic theology for an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics and practically applied that framework to male-female relations. After the first introductory chapter, chapter two explored how eschatology influences Christian ethics by examining Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, and Paul's writings. Chapter three argued that the eschatological vision of scripture explored in chapter two demands to be realized as far as possible in the church's present life through the church's calling to proclaim hopefulness, affirm the unconditional personhood of all humans, respond to injustice with service to the world, reconcile for the sake of unity, and exemplify the new social order that characterizes the reign of God. Chapter four used these principles to explore how the church can approach male-female relations from an eschatological perspective.

### Suggestions for Future Research

In this thesis, I look broadly at eschatology and ethics to create an outline for how an eschatological orientation to ecclesial ethics could be practically viable. More detailed research into the nuances of eschatological ethics would be beneficial to theology and ministry. While there are countless articles about individual passages with eschatological themes in the Gospels and Paul's epistles, a systematic analysis of these passages would help shed more light on how eschatological themes in scripture can be practically applied today. Also, further research could help establish better the parameters of the church as an eschatological community with the responsibility to embody the reign of God. Other points of further clarification include the influence of sin, the impact of baptism, the extent of individual and communal transformation

through faith, and other eschatologically oriented principles to help guide the church in embodying the reign of God.

## Conclusion

My goal in this thesis was not to present an exhaustive system of eschatological ethics, but to establish a framework for considering ecclesial ethics, specifically male-female relations in the church, through an eschatological lens. Though this thesis merely scratches the surface of a topic God's people will understand fully only at the eschaton, it demonstrates that the inaugurated reign of God profoundly impacts the present life of each disciple and the community of God's people. Jesus' inauguration of God's reign calls the church to embody the renewal of creation. One of the most important ways the church accomplishes this is through transformed relationships. The Spirit has been poured out upon all of God's people, regardless of ethnicity, class, age, or sex, and baptism marks participation in God's covenant for all people without partiality. These eschatological events liberate anyone who chooses to participate in the resurrection of Jesus. The presence of God's reign enables transformed individuals to interact with each other based on their shared inheritance in Christ, rather than the old hierarchies that characterize the reign of evil. The relationships of the new order liberate men and women to serve each other, the church, and the world in mutual love and service, with self-sacrifice, and for the glory of God.

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