

## Deified by the Triune God

*Triadosis: Union with the Triune God: Interpretations of the Participationist Dimensions of Paul's Soteriology*, by Eduard Borysov. Pickwick Publications, 2019.

The defense of deification as a legitimately Pauline description of salvation continues. M. David Litwa, Ben. C. Blackwell, and Michael J. Gorman have already made their cases; Eduard Borysov adds his contribution in *Triadosis: Union with the Triune God: Interpretations of the Participationist Dimensions of Paul's Soteriology* (hereafter, *Triadosis*), the published version of his dissertation. Borysov engages not only the scholars most interested in Paul and deification but also deification in the church fathers, the Protestant reformers, and contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology. While this makes for a helpful introduction to recent scholarship on deification, Borysov's own voice often gets lost in the crowd. The book reads more like a literature review than a solid contribution. That said, *Triadosis's* basic argument is easy to discern and certainly welcome: we need a fully trinitarian account of deification if we are to do full justice to Pauline salvation.

### Deification in Pauline Scholarship

The three most substantive treatments of deification in Paul currently on offer are Gorman's *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology*, Litwa's *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, and Blackwell's *Christosis: Engaging Paul's Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (reviewed in the Spring 2017 issue of this journal). Litwa's work is more properly a work in religious studies than it is a work in biblical studies or Christian theology. To ground the claim that Paul understands salvation as deification, Litwa highlights the continuities between Paul, some early Christian interpreters of Paul, and pagan apotheosis. Borysov agrees with a majority of scholars who think that Litwa has clearly overstated his case. Litwa highlights the continuities between pagan apotheosis and Christian deification so strongly that there is little that is new in the latter (193).

Rather than looking to the background of the New Testament, Blackwell looks to interpreters of Paul in the early church in his attempt to ground the claim that Pauline salvation is rightly described as deification. Eschewing the entrenched division between biblical studies and theology

in the academy, Blackwell argues that the earliest interpreters of Paul are the right place to look for help in rereading the Pauline texts, which have become so familiar to us. Blackwell looks primarily to Irenaeus of Lyons and Cyril of Alexandria as his guides to reinterpreting Pauline salvation. Blackwell proposes, in contrast to Litwa, that there is much to distinguish Christian deification from pagan apotheosis. To mark that Christian difference, Blackwell suggests we speak not of "theosis" but "christosis." What is distinctive about Christian deification, Blackwell urges, is that in God's salvation, believers become Christ. Gorman highlights the deeply Christological character of the believer's deification. The God whom we "inhabit," according to Gorman's account, is the "Cruciform God"—the God-incarnate, crucified, and resurrected in Christ.

While Borysov agrees with Gorman and Blackwell against Litwa, seeing much more discontinuity than continuity between Christian deification and pagan apotheosis, he proposes that their Christological focus does not do sufficient justice to the pneumatological character of Pauline soteriology. Blackwell admits as much in his own book, and Borysov attempts to make up for this deficiency by thinking of Christian deification in explicitly trinitarian terms (177). Christian deification, he suggests, is not adequately captured by calling it *christosis*. A better term, the one offered in his title, is *triadosis*:

The goal of this monograph is to assess how the concepts of *theosis* and the Trinity can inform and transform the traditional anthropocentric reading of Paul's soteriology into one that is theocentric or even trinity-centric. On the one hand, previous attempts to retrieve the doctrine of *theosis* are pervasively christological or anthropological in nature...On the other hand, theological reflections on Paul's trinitarian theology are mostly perceived as foisted on the apostle and discussed (if at all) with some hesitation. In those rare occasions, when researchers acknowledge the full trinitarian account in Paul, they do not explore the soteriological implication of such an account. By asserting the connections between *theosis* and the Trinity, this book will seek to redefine the former notion as an essentially trinitarian project, whereby believers experience transformation into the image of the triune God, not merely Christ or a new humanity. (2-3)

Part of the problem with Blackwell's proposal, Borysov thinks, is that his picks from among the church fathers are inauspicious. Irenaeus and Cyril were both involved in

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early controversies over the person of Christ—Irenaeus against the Gnostics and Cyril against Nestorius. Given their Christological focus, it should come as no surprise that Blackwell characterizes early Christian soteriology as Christological (177). In his second chapter, which offers snapshots of deification in a variety of early church fathers plus Gregory Palamas, Borysov argues that the Cappadocians—defenders not only of the Nicene Christological settlement but also of the deity of the Holy Spirit—are the place to look for a trinitarian account of deification in Paul: “I suggest reading the Cappadocian soteriology through trinitarian lenses that point the reader to *triadosis* as the ultimate image of the human-divine relationships” (71).

### Deification in the History of Christian Thought

*Triadosis* would have been a much stronger book had it simply presented the current research on Pauline deification and proceeded to work out a fully trinitarian reading of Pauline deification in conversation with the Cappadocians. Instead, Borysov introduces other areas in deification studies by adding a chapter on deification in Luther and Calvin and a chapter on deification in contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology. Purportedly, the point of these two chapters is to supply additional support for his proposed trinitarian account of Pauline deification. In chapter 3 Borysov draws on Finnish Luther scholarship and similar rereadings of Calvin to argue that both Luther’s and Calvin’s accounts of deification are deeply trinitarian rather than anthropocentric or Christocentric:

Despite the rare usage of deification language by Luther and Calvin and distinctive emphases on forensic justification, their theologies are in essential agreement with the patristic vision of participation in the life of the Trinity by means of incorporation into Christ through the Spirit. (122)

It seems doubtful, though, that Luther’s and Calvin’s accounts of deification are more trinitarian than those of Irenaeus or Cyril, both of whom Borysov characterizes as “Christocentric” in their understandings of deification. The chapter on the reformers seems to be a distraction from Borysov’s primary aim. The chapter makes no contribution to scholarship on deification in the reformers, and the scholarship on deification in the reformers makes little contribution to his stated aim.

The same can be said of the chapter that considers deification in contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology. Borysov’s primary interlocuter here is John Zizioulas. Again, Borysov offers no substantive contribution to our understanding of Zizioulas. He seems to make an appearance for the sole purpose of supporting a trinitarian account of deification:

Both Zizioulas and the Reformers discarded the idea of

participation between humans and Christ on the level of natures, preferring to talk about intimate personal relationships and indwelling of the person of Christ in believers. In union with Christ, believers receive access to all his spiritual gifts, but, most importantly, to communion with divine persons. This communion transforms estranged biological creatures into spiritual persons, who realize their potential and ultimate goal in the life of the church and the Trinity. (147-148)

In proposing Zizioulas as a resource for recovering a fully trinitarian account of deification, Borysov is on much more solid ground than when recommending the Reformers. Still, he has merely introduced the trinitarian character of Zizioulas’s deification and has not put it into dialogue with Paul.

### Trinitarian Deification

*Triadosis* engages in no sustained reading of Paul’s Epistles, which is strange for a dissertation in New Testament studies. Borysov’s proposal is interesting, but he has done little more than introduce and defend the proposal itself. He admits as much in the closing paragraph of the final chapter: “The limitations of this study do not allow for the constructive development of a new concept of *triadosis*, but, perhaps, it will become a stimulus for further reflection and analysis of the Trinity’s role in the process of deification” (198). One can only hope, then, that Borysov will make good on his own suggestion and offer us, in a second book, a sustained reading of Paul’s Epistles.

Thankfully, any reader of this journal will know that they need not wait on Borysov’s second book. Witness Lee long ago anticipated the need for what Borysov proposes in *Triadosis*. For Lee, the New Testament—Pauline or otherwise—depicts the Christian life and the church life as a life in and with the Divine Trinity.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this might be one of Lee’s signature contributions to the history of Christian theology—his seeing that if the God whom we become in God’s salvation is corporate in His own being, it cannot be otherwise than that, in His salvation, the Triune God makes us corporate in our being as well. For Lee, the Body of Christ, in its deified reality, is the organism of the Triune God.<sup>2</sup> Lee saw the corporate dimensions of deification not only in Paul’s Epistles but also in the writings of John. Lee’s classic statement on this subject is perhaps *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory*, which issue is the incorporation of the consummated God with the regenerated believers as the Father’s house in John 14, the Son’s vine in John 15, and the Spirit’s new child in John 16.<sup>3</sup> Here, the myth of deification as the peculiar prerogative of an ascetic elite evaporates entirely. Lee realized not only that the believers become God in God’s salvation but that deification is for the reality of the Body of Christ. Without deification,

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God merely has a group of redeemed persons; He does not yet have a corporate organism for the full expression of the riches of His divine life. This review is not the place to give a full presentation of this theme in Lee's writings; however, many of the issues of this journal have been dedicated to doing precisely that.<sup>4</sup>

by Mitchell Kennard

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See, in particular, Witness Lee, *Living in and with the Divine Trinity*. Living Stream Ministry, 1990.

<sup>2</sup>For a full account, see Witness Lee, *The Organism of the Triune God in the Organic Union of His Divine Trinity*. Living Stream Ministry, 1988.

<sup>3</sup>Witness Lee, *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory*. Living Stream Ministry, 1996.

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, the issues on "The Corporate God" (Oct. 2005), "The High Peak of the Divine Revelation" (Fall 2010), and "The Body of Christ" (Fall 2013) in *Affirmation & Critique*.

## Teaching Maturity in Character but Not in Life

*Maturity: Growing Up and Going On in the Christian Life*, by Sinclair B. Ferguson. The Banner of Truth Trust, 2019.

Professor of systematic theology Sinclair B. Ferguson revised his earlier work entitled *Add to Your Faith*, a guide to "encourage progress in the Christian life," by recalibrating it to present a "challenge to seriousness" (ix). The newly titled book, *Maturity: Growing Up and Going On in the Christian Life* (hereafter *Maturity*), presents a valuable perspective of a crucial facet of the Christian life that many believers take for granted or outright neglect by accepting the deceit that redemption is followed by an eternity in heaven with God. *Maturity* highlights the "deep-seated concern" in the writers of the New Testament "to see Christians grow to spiritual maturity" (3), elaborates on necessary stages of spiritual growth, and offers practical applications to overcome hindrances and obstacles in the maturing process. However, *Maturity* fails to emphasize two intrinsically significant characteristics of Christian maturity, namely that maturity is a matter of the divine life and that it is corporate in nature. Instead of expounding on maturing in the experience of the divine life, *Maturity* stresses the cultivation of maturity in human character. Moreover, *Maturity* views spiritual

growth as largely an individual matter, overlooking a spiritually mature Christian's corporate dimension as part of and as instrumental in building up the Body of Christ.

*Maturity* presents the importance of maturity, the warnings signs of immaturity, and the "divine pattern for spiritual growth" (53). According to the book, the word *maturity* in the New Testament conveys "the idea of wholeness" (6) and carries the sense of completeness, perfectness, and full development (6-7). Referencing Ephesians 2:10, *Maturity* defines a mature person as "someone in whom God's recreating purposes are clearly illustrated, a person who expresses the true qualities of a servant of the Lord" (7). *Maturity* asserts that a Christian, one who follows and "shares in fellowship with Jesus Christ" (8), must be spiritually mature because Christ is our Pioneer and pattern: "we must go on to maturity, because Jesus went on to maturity" (8). Today He, as the source of our salvation, is caring for us and reproducing in us a maturity "modelled on" His own (10). Likewise, the "central goal" of Paul's ministry was to "'present everyone mature in Christ' (Col. 1:28-29)" (3). Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, Philipians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews are expressions of this longing and burden (18). The latter Epistle, especially, contains "strong exhortations and sobering warnings" concerning "several symptoms of spiritual sickness" and a call to "go on to maturity" (19-20). These symptoms include the loss of concentration on Christ, a poor appetite for the solid food of His words, a deficit of discernment, and a weakness in worship (20-29).

*Maturity* acknowledges that believers easily neglect their calling to become mature Christians, which is the result of longterm, indeed lifelong, spiritual growth that "requires time and patient progress" (3-4). Obstacles and hindrances come from today's ephemeral and media-centric society that encourages instant gratification, from our personal background, and from the lack of seriousness and teaching about spiritual growth in contemporary Christianity. The result is the danger not only of "spiritual infancy" but also of apostasy (30). *Maturity* then points to the abiding in Christ in John 15 as a proper response for us to "bear the fruit of the Spirit and to develop stable Christian character" (34). The way for the believers to bear such fruit and to grow spiritually is by their union with Christ, their allowing His word to dwell in them, their drawing nourishment and life from Him as the vine, and their experiencing the pruning of the Father in their lives (36-37, 53).

In the face of obstacles that threaten our staying the course of the maturing process, *Maturity* argues that spiritual progress needs to be reinforced by the increasing confidence in and continual assurance of God's love and generosity and by the clear guidance revealed in His will. The basis for this is Colossians 4:12, which says, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus,

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greet you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.” The assurance that “God loves us, cares for us, that we belong to Him, and that He will never let us go” brings in a satisfaction of God’s ways of salvation, stirs a desire in us to serve Him, fills our heart with love for Christ, and gives us the boldness to live for Him (58, 79). *Maturity* claims that the “great passage on assurance in the New Testament” is Romans 8:31-39 (64), in which Paul emphatically points out that no one shall separate us from the love of Christ (v. 35); that no one can condemn us, since Christ Jesus has died on our behalf and has been raised (v. 34); that no one can bring a charge against us, since God has justified us (v. 33); and that we shall fear no opposition, since God is for us and freely gives us all things (vv. 31-32). Having the assurance of God’s love coupled with the knowledge that He will guide us according to His will gives us the confidence to press on, to stand mature, and to carry out His will regardless of consequence (81). In its discourse on God’s will, *Maturity* puts forward a notion rarely found in Christian literature: “One mistake we can make about guidance is...to think of it only from the standpoint of our needs and circumstances rather than from the perspective of God’s larger plans” (87). *Maturity*’s perspective admirably departs from the narcissistic teachings of God’s plan for the individual Christian that are usually proffered. *Maturity* understands God’s will to be God-centered and biblically based, positing that we can know God’s will by knowing His word. Our familiarity with God’s will avails us His guidance grounded in His word:

The way God’s *sovereign will* unfolds for us is through our knowledge of, and submission to, his *revealed will*. Understanding this helps to turn our gaze away from self and towards the Lord; it prevents us asking ‘what is God doing to enhance my life?’ and helps us to ask instead ‘what does it mean for my life to be unreservedly God-centered?’ It thus helps to suffocate our contemporary tendency to spiritual narcissism, in which our chief interest lies in how God fits his secret purposes into our lives. We begin to learn that knowing and pleasing God should have priority over concerns about self. The effect of this can be wonderfully liberating. For such God-centeredness leads to finding the will of God to be ‘good, perfect, and acceptable’ (Rom. 12:1-2). (88)

God’s guidance is centered on His longterm and ongoing work of transformation: “His goal in the specific guidance we seek is secondary to the life-transformation he is determined to pursue” (86).

**A** Christian’s journey toward maturity will inevitably encounter many difficulties, including dealing with the problem of sin, overcoming temptations, fighting with the enemy, and coping with sufferings. *Maturity* argues that struggling with these challenges is part of the maturing

process. Based on Psalm 119, *Maturity* shows that sinners should first seek to keep their way pure (v. 9) and then have a consciousness and realization of the depth of their sin in order to pursue holiness and the promise of the gospel (99, 101). The key to make progress following that is to wholeheartedly seek God (v. 10), to treasure His sanctifying word (vv. 11, 133), and to rejoice in His ways (v. 14). To overcome temptations, according to *Maturity*, we must also rely on the spiritual wisdom derived from Scriptures. Three principles—being armed with biblical truth, being watchful in our attitude and discerning of our weaknesses and of Satan’s presence, and being prayerful—summarize *Maturity*’s view of God’s normal means of delivering us from temptation, which, the book explains, is what God uses to expose to us our sin and thereby chasten us and to make us more like Christ (124-129).

*Maturity* is correct to point out that “two kingdoms are in conflict with each other, and the battle is being fought out in our lives” (149). Consequently, the Christian march toward maturity is fraught with spiritual warfare against Satan’s kingdom. *Maturity* points out that in this conflict, which is not against flesh and blood but against the forces of evil in the heavenlies, we need to recognize our weakness as well as the sufficiency of Christ’s strength in this battle. Regarding our making a stand, *Maturity* employs Ephesians 6:13 through 18 to present our need to take up the whole armor of God. First, we need to put on the belt of inner truth, that is, reality, integrity, and faithfulness (137-139); second, we need the protection of the breastplate of righteousness from the accuser of the brethren (139-142); third, our feet should be fitted with the “boots” of the gospel of peace in order to bruise the serpent’s head (142-143); fourth, we must bear the shield of faith, Christ, to be protected from the flaming darts of Satan (144-146); fifth, we must wear the helmet of salvation as protection from the deceiving evil one (147-148); and sixth, we must wield the sword of the Spirit to be protected from the devil who lies by twisting and contradicting the Scriptures however it suits his purpose (148-149).

**M***aturity* asserts not only that suffering is part of the Christian life but also that God works His purpose through tribulation. Our afflictions show our spiritual needs, teach God’s ways, and show God’s faithfulness. *Maturity* explains that Paul, who may be regarded as a chronic sufferer, learned that while his sufferings came through Satan’s hand, they were divinely permitted and purposefully administered to enable him to be a container of blessing (166-167). Sufferings and tribulation afford God the way to bring us to the goal of maturity—“to make us like his Son, Jesus Christ” (157). *Maturity* explains,

Afflictions focus our attention on the things that really matter, and thus restore us to single-mindedness and recalibrate our love for Christ. For another, they show us



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how determined God is that we should be unreservedly his. In addition, they make us realize just how dependent on him we really are. And they remind us that God's plan for our lives is much more substantial and radical than perhaps we imagined. (156)

According to *Maturity*, the mark of maturity includes a turn from self-centered immaturity to living for and employing our God-given gifts to serve His church. "True service involves self-denying love for the church" and is akin to Christ's willingness to lay down His life for His sheep (182). The ultimate goal in our service is to bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ and to bring Christians to maturity (185-186). A believer also needs to patiently run the Christian race. To be sure, if a Christian is to arrive at maturity, perseverance is crucial. Through its expounding of Hebrews 12, *Maturity* shows that there are both hindrances and encouragements in the course of running the race. The hindrances that weigh a believer down include the besetting sins that so easily entangle him, his becoming weary and fainthearted, which renders him sluggish during the run, and his making light of the Lord's chastisement. Hebrews, however, does not merely warn us of the encumbrances but more importantly encourages us to run the race by pointing out that the path has been marked out, allowing us to glimpse our final destination, and that others have run and completed their race, which spurs us on to persevere. Furthermore, our Forerunner, Christ, has run that race before us, and if we who are running the race maintain our view of Him, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith, we will not become weary or lose heart.

In its concluding chapter, *Maturity* describes a mature living as one of contentment, which is the outcome of being weaned from drinking milk to having a diet of solid food. A weaned believer is content to submit to God's determined will. *Maturity* further states that the path to maturity requires guarding our ambitions and controlling our preoccupations. Our ambitions should not go beyond God's calling, and we should not be preoccupied with things beyond our possession or our understanding.

### **Maturity for the Building Up of the Body of Christ**

Pointing to the Lord as the Pioneer of maturity and the believers' pattern of maturity, *Maturity* states that "Jesus was the first one whose life manifested perfect obedience, wholehearted service, a complete exhibition of the fruit of the Spirit, and maturity of character" (8). While it can be useful to measure the spiritual growth of a Christian by his abundant service and manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, and long-suffering (Gal. 5:22), maturity is intrinsically defined by the increase of Christ as life in his being from the initial seed at regeneration to his becoming part of the built-up Body of Christ in the present age and the bride of Christ in the coming

kingdom with glory and as the New Jerusalem for eternity. This lifelong maturing process, or spiritual growth, is mentioned in Romans 5:10 as being saved in Christ's life and alluded to in Hebrews 2:3 as "so great a salvation."

Hebrews 2:3 warns us to not neglect "so great a salvation." This great salvation is God's full salvation of the believers in Christ. Christ's redeeming death afforded the forgiveness of their sins and their reconciliation to God (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:10). In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit in order to indwell the regenerated believers (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:10-11), and in ascension Christ became the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to minister His indestructible resurrection life for saving the believers to the uttermost (Heb. 7:1, 16, 25). Salvation in life begins with regeneration and passes through shepherding, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, building up, and conformation and concludes with glorification. The entire process is carried out in and through the divine life by Christ as the life-giving Spirit. Without such an organic salvation, that is, a salvation in and by the divine life, God's eternal purpose of building up the church as the organic Body of Christ for His expression cannot become a reality. Apart from this organic salvation, God's will can never be worked out.

One of the most crucial verses concerning maturity in the New Testament is Ephesians 4:13, which says, "Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Here Paul speaks of maturity, being a "full-grown man," as having the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, revealing that maturity is the increase of the element of Christ in the believers. The element of Christ, His life and nature, fills the believer's spirit through regeneration and should continue to fill the parts of his soul: his mind, emotion, and will. The filling of the soul with the element of Christ corresponds to the filling of the vessels in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. The virgins had oil in their lamps, which signify their spirits (v. 3; Prov. 20:27) but needed to also take oil in their vessels, which signify their souls (Matt. 25:3-4). The prudent virgins had oil, which signifies the Spirit of God (Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9), in their lamps as well as in their vessels and were thereby ready to go in with the bridegroom to the wedding feast (Matt. 25:10). Mature believers not only have the Spirit of God indwelling their spirit but also are filled and saturated in their soul with the Spirit. This is why good human character, human obedience to God, and human faithfulness in service alone cannot constitute a genuine mark of maturity. We may love others and desire to serve them, but if our love for them and our service to them are derived from ourselves and not Christ, we are exhibiting mere good human character and not spiritual maturity. According to the New Testament, the extent to which our

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whole being, including the faculties of our soul, is filled and saturated with Christ is the extent of our maturity.

**E**phesians 4:13 is crucial in revealing another aspect of spiritual maturity, which can be seen from its context. Both the verses prior and after speak of the Body of Christ. Additionally, the church as the Body of Christ is the main subject of the entire Epistle to the Ephesians. Therefore, considering its immediate context and the Epistle in which it is located, verse 13 unveils that spiritual maturity is a matter of the Body of Christ. In his seminal book on the experience of life that brings the believer to maturity in life, Witness Lee says,

Concerning being full of the stature of Christ, we must first realize that none can attain to this stage individually. This experience is attainable only in the Body. It is entirely an experience that is gained in the Body...

Not only is it impossible for anyone to experience being full of the stature of the fullness of Christ outside of the Body, but, practically speaking, even in the Body, none can be full of the stature of Christ individually. To be full of the stature of Christ is a Body matter. Therefore, only the Body can be full of the stature of Christ. (364)

*Maturity* is virtually devoid of this fundamental revelation that spiritual growth and maturity are intrinsically connected to the Body of Christ.

*Maturity's* stance on God's will is admirable given the egocentric view held by most Christians on the matter. Though it involves humanity, God's will is absolutely centered on His person and accords with His goal and eternal purpose. Revelation 4:11 says, "You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created." God's will is to have many sons who not only have His life but also are conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God in order to be His corporate expression (Eph. 1:5-6). This notion is in keeping with the will of God spoken of in Romans 12:2, which says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." According to the context of this verse, the will of God is the Body of Christ revealed in verses 4 and 5: "Just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another." The many sons of God are the many members of the Body of Christ. *Maturity* misses the context of God's will being to gain a corporate people by choosing, calling, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, and conforming them unto glorification for His eternal expression in the universe (8:28-30).

The Body of Christ came into being through His resurrec-

tion, in which He imparted His life into all the believers to make them members of His mystical Body, and through His outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, in which He baptized the believers in one Spirit into one Body (1 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 12:13). Although Christ's mystical Body has come into existence, it needs to become a reality by being built up through the increase of Christ in all His members. The building up of the Body of Christ parallels the maturing process of the believers. With this perspective, Ephesians 4:15-16 is particularly enlightening:

Holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

**A**ccording to these verses, we need to hold to the truth of Christ and His Body in the love of Christ, by which we love Him and our fellow members. In so doing, we grow in life into Christ as the Head in all things, which is to have Christ increase in us in all things. The corporate growth and maturity of all the members, which develops each member's particular function, produces an operation out of Christ as the Head for the building up of the Body. *Maturity* fails to see that maturity and the building up of the Body of Christ in reality are intertwined and co-dependent. In consequence, any spiritual guidance offered in the book is bound to fail to produce genuinely mature Christians for the building up of the organic Body.

## Conclusion

*Maturity* delves into a vital subject often neglected by many believers and offers practical application. However, the book's earnest effort to challenge Christians to seriousness in their spiritual pursuit is hampered by its egregious failure to present two major aspects of spiritual maturity. First, strictly speaking, spiritual maturity is the growth and salvation in the divine life, not the cultivation of character and faithful service. Second, believers cannot attain to spiritual maturity individualistically but only in, by, and for the Body of Christ. At the end of their spiritual course, the Christians whose spiritual pursuit consists of the outward manifestation of "spiritual fruit," improved character, and faithful service will be put to shame by their relative immaturity in the development of the divine life in them when compared to those who are saved and have grown in Christ as life and in whom Christ has increased for the building up of His Body in reality.

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