

The Christian Ministry in the Church: Its Reasons, Duration and Goal, and Practical Effects (Ephesians 4:11–16), with Special Emphasis on verse 12

By Richard C. Barcellos

for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12, ASV, 1901)

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12, NAU, 1995)

Ephesians 4:11–16 is a vital passage in order to understand the importance of the Christian ministry in the church. In this crucial text, as will be argued below, the apostle Paul gives us the reasons (v. 12), duration/goal (v. 13), and practical effects (vv. 14–16) of the Christian ministry in the church. Though it will be shown that this is the best way to understand this passage, in the last 100 years or so an alternative understanding of verse 12 from the one reflected in this article has been offered and widely accepted. The two versions quoted above, the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901 and the New American Standard Bible Updated (NAU) of 1995, illustrate the translational change that has taken place. The older view, represented by the ASV, understands the three prepositional phrases as coordinate and as results of the actions of the gifted persons mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. The newer view, represented by the NAU, understands the actions assumed in the second prepositional phrase as done by the saints. In other words, pastors equip the saints to do the work of

service or ministry. In order to do justice to this passage in light of the two major views, we will conduct ourselves as follows: 1) a brief history of the translation of Ephesians 4:12; 2) the syntactical issues involved with the translation and interpretation of Ephesians 4:12; and 3) a conclusion to the study.

As we work our way through the many relevant and technical issues, the reader may begin to think that a view which takes so much technical discussion to prove must be walking on thin ice. We must remind ourselves, however, that if we lived in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, we could have said the same thing about the newer view. There was a day when there were no discussions about this text as far as various meanings go. As you will see below, that day has ended.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRANSLATION OF EPHESIANS 4:12

As mentioned above, there have been changes in translations and different interpretations offered on Ephesians 4:12 in the last 100 years or so differing from the position held prior to the twentieth century. We will not seek to answer the question of why but concentrate on the fact and particulars of the translational changes. We will focus on two issues: 1) a lexical issue—the translation of the Greek word *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos* [“equipping”¹]) and 2) a syntactical issue—the relationship of the three prepositional phrases *πρὸς* (*pros* [“for”]) . . . , *εἰς* (*eis* [“for”]) . . . , and *εἰς* (*eis* [“to”]). Once we get to the section discussing the syntactical issues of our text it will be clear why these two issues were included in this section of the history of translation.

Concerning the translation of the word *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos* [“equipping”]) in Ephesians 4:12, we will survey some important individuals and some of the major translations throughout the history of the church.

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1. All English translations are taken from the NAU (New American Standard Bible Updated, 1995), unless otherwise noted.

What will become obvious is that the mid- to late-twentieth century produced a different translation history from the previous centuries. We will begin with John Chrysostom. In Chrysostom's *Homilies on Ephesians* (c. A.D. 400), he translates *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos*) as "perfecting."² The Latin Vulgate (c. A.D. 400) translates it "*consummationem*" (i.e., "completion" or "completeness"). John Calvin preferred "*settlement* or *constitution*," taking it in that sense in which a commonwealth, or kingdom, or province, is said to be *settled*, when confusion gives place to the regular administration of law.³ The Geneva Bible (GB) of 1560 translates it "repairing." The King James Version (KJV) of 1611 translates it "perfecting." Both the English Revised Version (ERV) of 1885 and the ASV, an American revision of the ERV, translate it "perfecting." Later in the twentieth century, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of 1952, largely a revision of the ASV, translated it as "the equipment."⁴ The NAU, first published in 1960, a revision of the ASV, translates it "the equipping." The 2nd edition of the RSV, 1972, translates it "to equip." The New International Version (NIV), first published in 1973, reads, "to prepare."⁵ The New King James Version of 1982 (NKJV) reads, "the equipping." The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of 1989 has "to equip." The English Standard Version (ESV) is a revision of the RSV 1971. It was first published in 2001 and was revised in 2007 and 2011. It translates *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos*) as "to equip." The Holman Christian Standard Bible (CSB) of 2004 translates it as "the training." Since the RSV, major English translations are basically the same. As will be observed below, there is a similar pattern when it comes to the translation of the three prepositional phrases of Ephesians 4:12.

Concerning the relationship of the three prepositional phrases, there are two views reflected in the history of translation. Examining the major English Protestant translations, the view that Ephesians 4:12 refers to the actions of the gifted persons in verse 11 goes back to the GB.⁶ There we read, "For the repairing of the Saintes, for the woork of the ministrie, and for the edification of the bodie of Christ." This English translation, as with all others, sees verse 12 as subordinate to the main verb in verse 11 (i.e., "he gave"). The "he" of verse 11 refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. The GB on Ephesians 4:11 reads, "Hee therefore gaue some to be Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Euangelists, and some Pastours, and Teachers." Notice the punctuation of verse 12 above. According to the GB, there are three prepositional phrases, apparently coordinate, each functioning subordinate to the main verb in verse 11.

The commas between "Saintes" and "for" and "ministrie" and "and" indicate this. Another observation worth noting is that the three prepositions are all translated as "for."⁷ The KJV of 1611 at Ephesians 4:12 reads, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The ERV of 1885 reads, "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." The ASV of 1901, reads, "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." Like the GB and KJV, the ERV and the ASV view the three prepositional phrases as coordinate (notice the commas separating the prepositional phrases), but unlike the GB and KJV, the ERV and the ASV translate the first preposition as "for" and the second and third as "unto." This translation seeks to reflect the change in prepositions in the Greek text, something we will examine below. The Moffatt translation of 1935 reads, "for the equipment of the saints, for the business of the ministry, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ." The RSV of 1952 reads, "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."⁸ The RSV first edition is the last English translation to reflect the view that Ephesians 4:12

2. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians*, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, First Series*, ed. Philip Schaff (1889; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendriksen Publishers, 1994, Fifth Printing–January 2012), 13:104 (Homily XI).

3. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. (1854; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1984), 21:281.

4. See footnote 8 below.

5. The New Testament of the NIV was published in 1973. The entire NIV was first published in 1978.

6. For a similar survey see John Jefferson Davis, "Ephesians 4:12 Once More: 'Equipping the Saints for the Work of Ministry?'" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 24:2 (2000): 168–74.

7. This will become important below when we note that the latter two prepositions of verse 12 are not the same as the first one in the Greek text.

8. This is taken from *The New Covenant Commonly Called The New Testament Of Our Lord And Savior Jesus Christ, Revised Standard Version* (Toronto; New York; Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946). The RSV NT was first published in 1946. The entire RSV Bible was published in 1952. It is of interest to note that, according to J. C. O'Neill, "Edgar J. Goodspeed's translation of the New Testament in *The Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935) followed this trend with, '... in order to fit his people for the work of service ...' Both Moffatt and Goodspeed had a hand in making the RSV (New Testament 1st edn., 1946). Moffatt's own translation had: '... for the equipment of the saints, for the business of the ministry ...,' and Goodspeed did not get his way in the RSV, which read: 'for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.'" Cf. J. C. O'Neill, "'The Work of the Ministry' in Ephesians 4:12 and the New Testament," *The Expository Times* 112 (2001): 339.

contains three coordinate prepositional phrases, each functioning subordinate to the main verb of verse 11.

The first English translation to possibly reflect a different reading than the above was Tyndale's New Testament of 1534. It reads, "that the saintes might have all thinges necessarie to worke and minister with all to the edifyinge of the body of christ." In this translation, the saints (possibly⁹) are the ones who "worke and minister with all to the edifyinge of the body of christ." It is not until 1960, however, that another major English Protestant translation clearly reflects a view other than the one held by the versions noted in the previous paragraph. The NASB of 1960 reads, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." Here the action assumed in the first prepositional phrase is that of the gifted persons mentioned in verse 11. The action assumed in the second prepositional phrase is that of the saints. The action of the third prepositional phrase appears to be that of both the persons of verse 11 and the saints. Notice that, unlike older versions, there is no comma after the first prepositional phrase. Every major English Protestant translation since has followed suit, indicated by a comma between the second and third prepositional phrases. The RSV 2nd edition (and the NRSV and ESV) reads, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The NIV reads, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." The NKJV reads, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The CSB reads, "for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ."

This brief survey illustrates for us the shift that has taken place in the translation of Ephesians 4:12. It is interesting to note that the change in interpretation

9. I added "possibly" because without commas it could be understood as the saints working and ministering.

10. Notice the comma between διακονίας ("service") and εις ("to"). According to Sydney H. T. Page, "Up to the 25th edition, the notes of the Nestle-Aland Greek text mentioned the possibility of placing a comma between the first two phrases in Eph. 4:12." Cf. Sydney H. T. Page, "Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12" *Novum Testamentum* Vol. 47, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 2005): 27, n. 4. It is of interest to point out that *The New Testament in the Original Greek, Byzantine Textform 2005*, compiled and arranged by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005), 433, has two commas in Eph. 4:12, indicating the coordinate function of the three phrases.

11. See David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988, 1995), 120ff. for an accessible discussion on semantics.

actually predates the change in the translations. Though a few commentators took the more recent view prior to the major English Protestant versions surveyed above were published (see below), the majority of commentators in the last 50 years reflect the view of the modern translations. In the section which follows, we will identify the syntactical issues involved with both views and propose that the older view is to be preferred.

THE SYNTACTICAL ISSUES INVOLVED WITH THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION OF EPHESIANS 4:12

Here is the Greek text (NA27) and the NAU English translation.

πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ¹⁰

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,
to the building up of the body of Christ

Though our study focuses on the syntactical issues surrounding the function of the three prepositional phrases, it will soon become apparent that meanings of words can help with determining the function of phrases. In other words, in exegesis, we must consider both words and their meanings and how certain words (and the forms in which they appear) in conjunction with others function to convey meaning (i.e., semantics). Semantics is the part of linguistics that assigns meaning to the grammar (i.e., morphology [i.e., the forms in which words are used in a given text] and syntax [i.e., the study of the way in which words are arranged together and combined into larger units, e.g., prepositional phrases]). Greek grammar deals with both analysis and description of the structure of the Greek text. Semantics gets us beyond structure and into meaning.¹¹ It seeks to understand and determine the meaning of Greek words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs as they are used by a given author in a given context. Prior to assigning meaning to a text, however, we must identify the words, phrases, and clauses contained in the text, noting the forms of words used as well as how those forms function in the context in which they are used. This will be illustrated below.

Determining the meaning of Ephesians 4:12 is not so simple as to identify the words used, look them up in a Greek lexicon, import the lexical options into the text and then make semantic conclusions. Nor is it so simple as to look up words in an English concordance and determine meaning based on usage elsewhere.

These methods of determining meaning are part of the process but not its whole. The same goes for the function of the prepositional phrases in this text. For example, stating the obvious, that Paul does not separate the prepositional phrases with “and,” is simply just that—stating the obvious; it proves nothing. Our goal should be to determine what Paul intends by the words used in relation to each other in the context in which they are used (i.e., Eph. 4:11–16). This means we must do the hard work of analysis first, then synthesize our analysis, explaining the meaning of the text in light of the analysis.

1. THE SYNTACTICAL ISSUES OF EPHESIANS 4:12 IDENTIFIED

The text of Ephesians 4:12, as noted above, contains three prepositional phrases. Determining the function of the three prepositions, however, can be (and I think it is in this instance) related to what particular words are used in the particular form(s) they are used. This

Greek diagram¹⁴

(v. 11)	αὐτός	ἔδωκεν ...
(v. 12)		1. πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων
		2. εἰς ἔργον διακονίας
		3. εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ

English diagram

(v. 11)	He	gave ...
(v. 12)		1. <u>for</u> the equipping of the saints
		2. <u>for</u> the work of service
		3. <u>to</u> the building up of the body of Christ

A second possibility is that the first phrase is directly subordinate to the verb in verse 11 and the other two phrases are subordinate to the first phrase. In other words, Christ gives the gifted persons of verse 11 for one reason with two effects or results. The action implied by the noun which functions as the object of the first preposition (i.e., καταρτισμός [“equipping”]) is

will become clear as we work our way through the text and the issues it brings to the surface.

There are various possibilities when it comes to the function of the phrases under consideration.¹² All agree that the phrases are subordinate to the verb in verse 11 (i.e., ἔδωκεν [“He gave”]). The question is how: 1) directly and coordinately; 2) the first is directly related but the second two are indirectly related to it and subordinate to the first; or 3) successively—the first leads to the second and the second leads to the third.¹³ Below are diagrams of the two major ways these phrases have been explained.

The view reflected in the older English translations discussed above is that each phrase is coordinately subordinate to the verb in verse 11. In other words, Christ gives the gifted persons of verse 11 for three reasons. In each prepositional phrase, the actions implied by the nouns (i.e., καταρτισμός [“equipping”], ἔργον [“work”], and οἰκοδομή [“building up”]), which function as the object of each preposition (πρὸς [“for”], εἰς [“for”], and εἰς [“to”]), are performed by the gifted persons of verse 11. This would be diagrammed as follows:

performed by the gifted persons of verse 11. The actions implied by the nouns (ἔργον [“work”] and οἰκοδομή [“building up”]) functioning as the objects of the second two prepositions (εἰς [“for”] and εἰς [“to”])¹⁵ are performed by the saints.

This would be diagrammed as follows:

12. Both (nineteenth-century commentators) Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1856), 228–30 and John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (1883; reprint, Minneapolis: James and Klock Christian Publishing Co., 1977), 307–08 list five views. In a more recent work, Glenn H. Graham, *An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians*, Second Edition (Dallas: SIL International, 2008), 308–10, also lists five views. We will concentrate on the two views reflected in the English translations above.

13. The second view mentioned, “the first [prepositional phrase] is directly related [to the verb] but the second two are indirectly related to it and subordinate to the first [prepositional phrase],” is basically held by Eadie, *Ephesians*, 308 and Hodge, *Ephesians*, 229. This view understands

the first prepositional phrase as indicating the ultimate or remote end for which Christ gave officers to the church. The second two prepositional phrases would then be immediate ends or means by which the ultimate end is reached. This is the manner in which this view seeks to account for the change in prepositions. Though this is certainly plausible (and does not differ much in practice with the view for which I will argue), I think the discussion under “*Are the three prepositional phrases coordinate?*” below leans one in a direction other than this view purports.

14. The prepositions are underlined.

15. It is of interest to note that the NAU translates the second and third prepositions differently though they are the same in the Greek text, i.e., “for” and “to.”

Greek diagram

(v. 11) αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν ...
 (v. 12) πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων
 εἰς ἔργον διακονίας
 εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

English diagram

(v. 11) He gave ...
 (v. 12) for the equipping of the saints
for the work of service,
to the building up of the body of Christ

These are the two views of this verse reflected in the translations noted above and will be examined further below.

2. VIEWS AMONG THE COMMENTATORS AND OTHER SOURCES

In this section, we will examine the views of several commentaries and other sources. We will do so in chronological order as was done with the translation history. What will become evident is that the older view gave way to a novel view and that there has been some push-back on the latter view in the last 25 years. We will start with John Calvin because he is the first major commentator who corresponds with the major English Protestant translations.¹⁶

In his commentary on Ephesians 4:12, it is clear that Calvin takes the prepositional phrases as coordinate.¹⁷ Concerning the first prepositional phrase, specifically the translation of *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos*), he says:

The Greek word employed by Paul is *καταρτισμός*, which signifies literally the *adaption* of things possessing symmetry and proportion; just as, in the human body, the members are united in a proper and regular

manner; so that the word comes to signify *perfection*. But as Paul intended to express here a just and orderly arrangement, I prefer the word (*constitutio*) *settlement* or *constitution*, taking it in that sense in which a commonwealth, or kingdom, or province, is said to be *settled*, when confusion gives place to the regular administration of law.¹⁸

Calvin takes the second prepositional phrase as intending to

anticipate an objection. “Cannot the church be constituted and properly arranged, without the instrumentality of men?” Paul asserts that a *ministry* is required, because such is the will of God.¹⁹

It is clear in the context of Calvin’s discussion that he identifies “ministry” as the activity of the gifted persons in verse 11. Commenting on the third prepositional phrase, Calvin says:

This is the same thing with what he had formerly denominated the *settlement* or *perfecting of the saints*. Our true completeness and perfection consist in our being united in the one body of Christ. No language more highly commendatory of the ministry of the word could have been employed, than to ascribe to it this effect.²⁰

We move now to the seventeenth century. Paul Bayne wrote a commentary on Ephesians before his death in 1618, though it did not appear in full until 1643.²¹ Bayne’s view is clearly stated in these words which form the outline for his discussion of the verse:

The ends [of the giving of verse 11] follow, which are set down three ways, in regard of three kinds of persons to whom the function of the ministry hath reference.

16. Harold W. Hoehner lists Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Eusebius as ancient commentators who held the view that the entirety of Eph. 4:12 refers to the gifted persons of v. 11. Cf. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 547, n. 1.

17. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:281–82.

18. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:281.

19. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:281.

20. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:281. Calvin’s view might be understood as the third prepositional phrase being expegetical of the first.

21. Paul Bayne, *An Entire Commentary upon the Whole Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians* (1866; reprint, Stoke-on-Trent, England: Tentmaker Publications, 2001, 2007, 2010), x. The title is a bit misleading since Bayne ends the commentary at 6:10.

1. In regard of the people : it is to repair them.
2. In regard of themselves that are pastors and teachers : it is that they should labour, and not make holiday.
3. In regard of Christ : that his body may be built.²²

David Dickson wrote a commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith and the book of Ephesians. Commenting on Ephesians 4:12, he mentions three ends or uses “for which Christ did bestow these offices and gifts [of v. 11].”²³ He says:

(1) That the saints might be restored even as members loosened and out of joint set and brought to their proper place. (2) That the ministers ... should follow the work of their ministry ... (3) That the whole body of the church might be edified and built up....²⁴

Later in the seventeenth century, in his “The Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin,” John Owen discusses Ephesians 4:11ff. in the context of the provisions God grants for the saints’ growth in grace (i.e., the outward means of spiritual improvement). Owen is proving the power of indwelling sin by the measures God has instituted for the saints to fight against it. In this context, he says:

The *word* itself and all the ordinances of the gospel are appointed and given unto us for this end [i.e., to prevent decay and bring to maturity], Eph. iv. 11–15. That which is the end of giving gospel *officers* to the church is the end also of giving all the *ordinances* to be administered by them; for they are given “for the work of the ministry,”—that is, for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. Now, what is or what are these ends? They are all for the preventing of decays and declensions in the saints, all for carrying them on to perfection; so it is said, verse 12. In general, it is for the “perfecting of the saints,” carrying on the work of grace in them, and the work of holiness and obedience by them; or for the edifying of the body of Christ, their building up in an increase of faith and love....²⁵

It is clear from the context of Owen’s discussion at this point that the three prepositional phrases refer to the persons of verse 11. Notice that “the work of the ministry” for Owen refers to “the administration of the ordinances of the gospel.” This is not the duty of all believers. In Owen’s thought, gospel ordinances include the preaching of the word but are not exhausted by it.

Continuing the discussion quoted above, he identifies gospel ordinances as the word, the Lord’s Supper, and the communion of saints. It is of interest to note that while discussing the communion of saints in a sermon entitled “Gospel Charity,” Owen cites Ephesians 4:15–16.²⁶ In the extensive quote above, notice that Owen starts out by saying, “The *word* itself and all the ordinances of the gospel are appointed and given unto us for this end [i.e., to prevent decay and bring to maturity], Eph. iv. 11–15.” His initial discussion concentrates of verse 12. He then comments on verses 13–15. Commenting on verse 13, he says:

The dispensation of the word of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof, is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummate.²⁷

Moving to verse 14, Owen says:

Why, verse 14, these ordinances are designed for our safe-guarding and deliverance from all their [i.e., “Satan and his instruments”] attempts and assaults, that so being preserved in the use of them, or “speaking the truth in love, we may grow up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ Jesus.”²⁸

His comments on verse 14 lead to verse 15, “speaking the truth in love....” At the end of the paragraph he is discussing the communion of saints and says this, “The communion of saints is for the edifying each other in faith, love, and obedience.”²⁹ It seems that Owen sees verse 12 as the reasons or ends for the work of the gifted persons of verse 11. In fact, this is exactly how he explains verse 12 elsewhere (of which see below).³⁰ Verse

22. Bayne, *Ephesians*, 259.

23. David Dickson, *Reformation Commentary of Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians*, New Testament X, ed. Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 344.

24. Dickson, *Reformation Commentary of Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians*, X:344.

25. John Owen, “The Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin,” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols. (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, Fourth printing 1987), 6:284–85, emphasis original.

26. Owen, “Gospel Charity” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols. (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, Fourth printing 1990), 9:266.

27. Owen, “The Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin,” in *Works*, 6:285.

28. Owen, *ibid.*, 6:285.

29. Owen, *ibid.*, 6:285.

30. John Owen, “A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols. (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth

13 identifies the goal and duration of the dispensation of the word and gospel ordinances. Verse 14 identifies the word and gospel ordinances as preservatives against the onslaughts of the evil one, which produces or results in the saints “speaking the truth in love . . .” as mentioned in verse 15. In other words, the saints are active in verse 15 as a result of the actions in verses 12–14. The actions in verses 12–14 are performed by the gifted persons of verse 11.

In his “A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” Owen clearly holds that the three prepositional phrases are coordinate. While discussing the “end why it [i.e., the Christian ministry] is bestowed,” under the positive reasons he lists three—the three prepositional phrases of Ephesians 4:12. It is here where Owen’s translation of the first phrase is most explicit. He says it refers to “the gathering of the saints into complete church-order” or “compact-ing into order.”³¹ For Owen, the presence of pastors is essential for proper church order or completeness. He says, “That which renders a church completely organical, the proper seat and subject of all gospel worship and ordinances, is this gift of Christ in the ministry.”³² The saints are made complete or perfect by the presence and work of pastors.

In the eighteenth century, John Gill understood the actions implied in verse 12 as performed by the gifted

persons of verse 11.³³ In the nineteenth century, Charles Hodge argued that the gifts or gifted persons of verse 11 were given for the ends mentioned in verse 12.³⁴ Later in the nineteenth century, John Eadie articulated the same basic view as Hodge.³⁵ Both Hodge and Eadie rejected the view that saw the three prepositional phrases as coordinate, however. Both saw the first phrase as referring to the remote end for which the gifted persons of verse 11 were given and the second and third phrases as depicting the immediate ends. Eadie cites Meyer, Ellicott, and Alford as holding the same view.

Late in the nineteenth century, in *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, S. D. F. Salmond expressed what was at that time a somewhat novel view.³⁶ He claims that the noun *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos*) “may well have the meaning of *equipment* here.”³⁷ He explains the three prepositional phrases as successive:

Thus the sense becomes—“Christ gave some men as Apostles, some as prophets, etc., with a view to the full equipment of the saints for the work of ministrations or service they have each to do in order to the building up of the body of Christ”. The building up of the Church—that is the great aim and final object; to that every believer has his contribution to make; and to qualify all for this is the purpose of Christ in giving “Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.”³⁸

In 1903, J. A. T. Robinson’s commentary on Ephesians was published. He expressed a similar view to Salmond.

The second of these clauses must be taken as dependent on the first, and not (as in the Authorised Version) as coordinate with it. The equipment of the members of the Body for their function of service to the whole is the end for which Christ has given these gifts to His Church. If the life and growth of the Body is to be secured, every member of it, and not only those who are technically called ‘ministers’, must be taught to serve. More eminent service indeed is rendered by those members to whom the Apostle has explicitly referred; but their service is specially designed to promote the service in due measure of the rest: for, as he tells us elsewhere, ‘those members of the body which seem to be feeblers are necessary’. Thus ‘the work of ministry’ here spoken of corresponds to the ‘grace given to every one of us’, which is the subject of this section.³⁹

In 1906, B. F. Westcott’s commentary on Ephesians was published in which he took the same view as Robinson.⁴⁰

Trust, Fourth printing 1988), 4:496–97. Here Owen discusses each phrase on its own and in the order contained in Eph. 4:12.

31. Owen, “A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” in *Works*, 4:496.

32. Owen, “A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” in *Works*, 4:496.

33. John Gill, “Ephesians,” in *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9 vols. (1809; reprint, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 1989), 9:90.

34. Hodge, *Ephesians*, 227.

35. Eadie, *Ephesians*, 308.

36. I say “somewhat novel” because Frank Thielman claims that W. M. L. De Wette advocated this view in 1843. Cf. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 277–80. De Wette contributed to an exegetical handbook on the New Testament written in German. Some readers might recall that De Wette was an early advocate of the higher critical method for the study of the Pentateuch. Apparently, Julius Wellhausen described De Wette as “the epoch-making opener of the historical criticism of the Pentateuch.” Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Martin_Leberecht_de_Wette. Accessed 21 April 2015.

37. S. D. F. Salmond, “The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, 5 vols., ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (1897; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 3:331.

38. Salmond, “The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, 3:331.

39. J. A. T. Robinson, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes* (London and New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903), 98–99.

40. Brooke Foss Westcott, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians: The*

These late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentaries marked the beginning of a different interpretive trajectory from earlier centuries. The predominant view among commentators in our generation is that the actions assumed in all three prepositional phrases are not exclusively those of the gifted persons of verse 11. The first prepositional phrase refers to the gifted persons in verse 11 but the second and third refer to the actions of all the saints. Among the more recent commentators who hold this basic view are F. F. Bruce,⁴¹ William Hendriksen,⁴² Markus Barth,⁴³ Geoffery B. Wilson,⁴⁴ Peter T. O'Brien,⁴⁵ Harold W. Hoehner,⁴⁶ Bryan Chappell,⁴⁷ Frank Thielman,⁴⁸ and Clinton E. Arnold.⁴⁹ These commentators come from differing ecclesiastical traditions. Their reasons for holding their views will be discussed below. It seems fair to add that they do not hold their views simply due to adherence to their own ecclesiastical tradition.

Since 1980, several published works have provided some push-back to the predominant view of the twentieth century, which has carried over into the present. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1 to 16* advocated the older view.⁵⁰ Australian Lutheran scholar Henry P. Hamann provided "The Translation of Ephesians 4:12—A Necessary Revision," published in 1988.⁵¹ Andrew T. Lincoln's commentary on Ephesians was published in 1990.⁵² In 1994, the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* published T. David Gordon's "'Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?"⁵³ John Jefferson Davis contributed to the discussion with his 2000 piece entitled, "Ephesians 4:12 Once More: 'Equipping the Saints for the Work of Ministry?'"⁵⁴ J. C. O'Neill contributed a 2001 article entitled, "'The Work of the Ministry' in Ephesians 4:12 and the New Testament."⁵⁵ Finally, in 2005, *Novum Testamentum* published an article by Sydney H. T. Page, "Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12."⁵⁶

In the next section of our study, we will interact with the various commentaries mentioned above and the sources that have provided push-back to the predominant contemporary view cited in the previous paragraph.

3. THE FUNCTION OF THE THREE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES AND AN INTERPRETATION OF EPHESIANS 4:12

Before embarking upon our discussion of the function of the phrases and an interpretation of Ephesians 4:12, let's look at the NA27 Greek text, noting eight observations.

πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ

1. There are three prepositional phrases, the first indicated by πρὸς and the second two indicated by εἰς.
2. There are no conjunctions between any of the phrases.
3. The NA27 places a comma between the second and third prepositional phrases.
4. The object of the first preposition has an article, τὸν.
5. The objects of the second and third prepositions are anarthrous (i.e., without the Greek article), ἔργον and οἰκοδομὴν.
6. All three objects of the prepositions are in the accusative case and are singular in number.

Greek Text with Notes and Addenda (London; New York: The MacMillan Company, 1906), 62–63. Westcott's commentary was published posthumously. I was unable to determine when he wrote his work on Ephesians 4.

41. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (1961; reprint, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974), 86.

42. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians* (1979; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 197–98. Hendriksen's Ephesians commentary was published individually in 1967.

43. Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4–6* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 478–84.

44. Geoffery B. Wilson, *Ephesians* (1978; reprint, Edinburg; Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 89.

45. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 301–05.

46. Hoehner's commentary, cited above, was published in 2002.

47. Bryan Chappell, *Ephesians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 190–91.

48. Thielman's commentary, cited above, was published in 2010.

49. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 262–64.

50. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1 to 16* (1980; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, Seventh printing, May 1995), 196–208.

51. Henry P. Hamann, "The Translation of Ephesians 4:12—A Necessary Revision," *Concordia Journal* (January 1988): 42–49.

52. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Volume 42 (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), 253–55.

53. T. David Gordon, "'Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?" *JETS* 37/1 (March 1994): 69–78.

54. See footnote 6 above for bibliographic information.

55. See footnote 8 above for bibliographic information.

56. See footnote 10 above for bibliographic information.

7. All three prepositional phrases are modified by nouns in the genitive, τῶν ἀγίων, διακονίας, and τοῦ σώματος.

8. The first and third prepositional phrases are modified by articular genitival nouns, τῶν ἀγίων and τοῦ σώματος.

These are the types of observations necessary to make and analyze in order to arrive at the function of the prepositional phrases and meaning of this verse. There are other observations that are necessary, such as context, that will be discussed below. These initial observations will be used to help frame our discussion.

Many scholars, beginning in the nineteenth century, argue that the prepositional phrases cannot be coordinate, each referring back to the gifted persons of verse 11, for various reasons. These reasons include: 1) the change of prepositions; 2) the absence of coordinating conjunctions between the prepositional phrases; 3) the presence of an article before the object of the first preposition, πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν (*pros ton katartismos* [“for the equipping”]) and the lack of an article before the objects of the second two, εἰς ἔργον (*eis ergon* [“for work”⁵⁷]) and εἰς οἰκοδομὴν (*eis oikodomēn* [“to building”⁵⁸]); 4) the order of the phrases; 5) the meaning of the noun in the first phrase, καταρτισμός (*katartismos* [“equipping”]); 6) the meaning of the noun in the second phrase, διακονίας (*diakonias* [“service”]); and 7) the context as a whole, which argues against a clergy/laity distinction.⁵⁹ I will attempt to interact with these arguments below, though not in order. They are all plausible and give a *prima facie* weight of contrary evidence to the older view. As we shall see, however, each of these arguments have been discussed in the

relevant literature and good reasons can be provided for the older view. For those familiar with the detailed exegesis of Paul’s epistles, it should be no surprise that there are so many issues to consider and various views held by a wide variety of scholars. For those not familiar with this, welcome to the club.

Are the three prepositional phrases coordinate?

Paul uses a different preposition for the second two prepositional phrases. Does this necessarily mean that they are not and cannot be coordinate with the first? In 1903, Robinson admitted that the change in prepositions “is not in itself conclusive. . . .”⁶⁰ One reason why this is so is because there is no grammatical rule against changing prepositions in a series of prepositional phrases that are coordinate and dependent upon the same verb or verbal idea. In fact, Paul does this elsewhere in Ephesians (e.g., 1:20–21; 2:7; 4:14) and outside of Ephesians (cf. Rom. 3:26; 15:2 and Philm. 5). As Lincoln says, “. . . to string together a number of prepositional phrases, all dependent on the main verb and coordinate with each other is a characteristic feature of this writer’s style.”⁶¹

Also worth noting is that the two prepositions Paul uses may (and do) have telic force. The semantic range for prepositions is wide and often overlapping. Page comments, “There is, for example, overlapping in the semantic range of the prepositions ἀπὸ and ἐκ, ἀπὸ and ὑπὸ, ἀπὸ and παρὰ, ὑπὲρ and ἀντὶ, περὶ and ὑπὲρ, and εἰς and ἐν.”⁶² In his *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, Murray J. Harris notes that when used in a non-spatial sense (as our text), the two prepositions used in the New Testament which carry the basic sense of result are εἰς and πρὸς.⁶³ So it is at least possible that these prepositions are functioning to indicate the result or telos of the same verbal idea. In Ephesians 4:12, the verbal idea assumed by the prepositions is “He gave” of verse 11. This would mean that all three prepositional phrases possess telic force. This does not, in itself, prove that the three phrases are functioning coordinately, but neither does it argue against it. Paul could have made the telic force of the latter two phrases clearly subordinate to the first by using “two complementary infinitives joined by the copula.”⁶⁴ Since he did not, however, their telic function is under debate. The real issue is not the telic function of these prepositions; it is whether or not they are coordinate among themselves.

Many admit that the change in prepositions may be simply due to stylistic variation. Harris comments:

Given the general tendency in Hellenistic Greek toward

57. Interestingly, the NAU includes an article (i.e., “the”) in its translation. I removed it to reflect the anarthrous noun in the Greek.

58. See footnote 57.

59. Cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 547–48, 549.

60. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 182. Arnold lists the change in prepositions as his first line of evidence for the newer view. He references Best in a footnote as follows: “For example, Best, *Ephesians*, 398, notes, ‘the change in preposition between 12a and 12bc confirms that the movement from the discussion of the work of the ministers (v. 11) to that of the whole church takes place between 12a and 12bc.’” (Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262, n. 58).

61. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 253.

62. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” 28,

n. 9. Page refers the reader to M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples* (trans. J. Smith; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 28–37.

63. Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 30.

64. Gordon, ““Equipping” Ministry in Ephesians 4?,” 71.

relative laxity of usage and “overlap” of function with respect to prepositions, the exegete should not assume that a change of preposition, a change of case with a repeated preposition, or the use or nonuse of a preposition in successive phrases or parallel passages marks a change of meaning. A writer may merely wish to avoid repetition or vary his style....⁶⁵

If the change is due to stylistic reasons, not function (i.e., syntax) or meaning (i.e., semantics), then the older view makes sense. What gives credence to the older view is that Paul changes prepositions elsewhere for what appears to be stylistic purposes. For example, let’s take a close look at 1 Thessalonians 2:6. The prepositions are in underlined.

οὐτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὐτε ἀφ’ ὑμῶν οὐτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων

nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others

In this text two⁶⁶ different Greek prepositions are used with the same meanings (i.e., semantics) and similar functions (i.e., syntax). Both prepositions function subordinate to the verb “we seek,” though carrying the same meaning. This structure and function is different from Ephesians 4:12, though it does illustrate the fact that prepositions may vary in form yet overlap in meaning and function.

Romans 15:2 is another instructive text when it comes to the use of prepositions. It reads as follows:

ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς οἰκοδομήν

Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification

Notice that Paul uses εἰς (*eis* [“for”]) and πρὸς (*pros* [“to”]) in the same verse, both functioning to modify the same verb, ἀρεσκέτω (*aresketō* [“to please”]). The object of the first preposition, ἀγαθὸν (*agathon* [“good”]), has an article, τὸ (to [“his”⁶⁷]), but the object of the second preposition, οἰκοδομήν (*oikodomēn* [“edification”]), does not. This not only illustrates the change of prepositions and overlap of meaning, it also shows that the presence or absence of an article can be stylistic.

The change of the preposition argument is used quite often for the predominant view. B. F. Westcott, for example, says, “The change of the preposition shows clearly

that the three clauses are not coordinate....”⁶⁸ This, in fact, is not necessarily the case. Many others have followed Westcott at this point.⁶⁹

Also in the discussion about the function of the three prepositional phrases is the fact that Paul does not use coordinating conjunctions between the phrases. This, in fact, is the case. But as can be observed in Ephesians 4:13, Paul uses three prepositions without coordinating conjunctions though they are coordinate and all function to modify the same verb. Ephesians 4:13 read:

ἐχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ

A similar construction occurs in the Ephesians 4:14 as well.

ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης

so that we may no longer be children, tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, with the scheming of error (my translation)

65. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 40. 66. The second and third prepositions are actually the same, from ἀπὸ. The difference is that the first one, ἀφ’ , is followed by a pronoun (ὑμῶν) which takes a rough breathing mark and thus the slight change in the preposition. In other words, ἀπὸ becomes ἀφ’ when used with objects carrying the rough breathing mark (i.e., ;). The second use of ἀπὸ is an abbreviated form due to its object beginning with a vowel.

67. For a discussion on Greek articles functioning in the place of pronouns, cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 215–16. Wallace says, “it is important to note that unless a noun is modified by a possessive pronoun or at least an article, possession is almost surely not implied” (215). The NAU translators saw possession implied with both nouns, though the second is without an article. This could be a case where the function of the first article carries over to the anarthrous noun of the second prepositional phrase.

68. Westcott, *Ephesians*, 63.

69. E.g., O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 302 and William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 78.

The absence of coordinating conjunctions can be explained simply as a stylistic decision. In fact, there are several places in the Greek text of Ephesians where Paul strings prepositions together without conjunctions all modifying the same verb (cf. 1:3 [three coordinate phrases]; 1:20–21 [three coordinate phrases]; 2:7 [two coordinate phrases]; 4:13 [three coordinate phrases]; 4:14 [three coordinate phrases]; and 6:12 [four coordinate phrases]).

What about the presence and/or absence of articles?

In the discussions on Ephesians 4:12, mention is made of the presence and absence of articles with the objects of the prepositions. For example, Robinson says:

The phrase *εἰς ἔργον διακονίας* [“for the work of service”] is most naturally taken as dependent on *καταρτισμὸν* [“equipping”]. The change of preposition (*πρὸς... εἰς*) points in this direction, but is not in itself conclusive: the absence of the definite articles however, with the consequent compactness of the phrase, is strongly confirmatory of this view. The meaning accordingly is: ‘for the complete equipment of the saints for the work of service.’⁷⁰

Similarly, Clinton Arnold says:

(2) The object of the first preposition has the article whereas the objects of the second two prepositions do not. This variation further stresses the distinctiveness of the first phrase.⁷¹

As with Wescott, so with Robinson and Arnold—they over-state their case.

Daniel B. Wallace asserts that “it is not necessary for a noun to have the article in order to be definite.”⁷² He says elsewhere, “There are at least *ten ways* [emphasis added] in which a noun in Greek can be definite without the article.”⁷³ Commenting on objects of prepositions, Wallace continues:

70. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 182.

71. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263.

72. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 243.

73. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 209, emphasis added. Wallace references Givón’s *Syntax*, which says, “Speakers code a referential nominal as definite if they think that they are entitled to assume that the hearer can—by whatever means—assign it unique reference” (245, n. 72).

74. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 247, emphasis original. An “anaphoric” article points back to something previously stated or implied.

75. A “cataphoric” article points forward.

There is no need for the article to be used to make the object of a preposition definite. However, this is not to say that all prepositional objects are definite. An anarthrous noun as object of a preposition is not *necessarily* definite.... Thus, when a noun is the object of a preposition, it does not *require* the article to be definite: if it has the article, it *must* be definite; if it lacks the article, it *may* be definite. The reason for the article, then, is usually for other purposes (such as anaphora or as a function marker).⁷⁴

Making too much of the presence or absence of articles seems to be what has taken place in this discussion. It is of interest to note that many major English Protestant translations (GB, KJV, ERV, ASV, NKJV, and NAU) translate all three objects of the prepositions with the English article “the,” though the Greek text has only one article, the one fronting the object of the first preposition. The RSV, NRSV, CSB, and ESV translate the object of the second preposition with the English article. Without communicating with the various translation committees, it is impossible to know why they translated as they did. One thing seems to be for certain—at times the committees thought that the absence of the Greek article did not necessarily qualify the noun it fronted as indefinite. In fact, it could be that the GB, KJV, ERV, ASV, NKJV, and NAU translators viewed the first article modifying the object of the first preposition as carrying down in function to the second and third phrases (cf. Rom. 15:2 and the discussion above). If they did, this would constitute an example of some sort of a cataphoric use of the article.⁷⁵ This cataphoric function, if indeed this is how the first article is functioning, would indicate that the definiteness of the object of the first preposition indicated by the presence of an article is to be carried down to subsequent coordinate phrases. This appears to be how the GB, KJV, ERV, ASV, and RSV understood Ephesians 4:12. This at least suggests that making too much of the absence of articles with the objects of the prepositions in the second and third phrases is dubious at best and maybe even spurious. The absence of articles could be explained simply as the author’s desire for stylistic modification, though with functional consistency.

What does *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos* [“equipping”]) mean?

This brings us to the translation and meaning of *καταρτισμός* (*katartismos* [“equipping”]). This is the only time this noun is used in the New Testament. A cognate noun

of this word is used in 2 Corinthians 13:9. There Paul says, “For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.” The noun translated “complete” comes from *κατάρτισις* (*katartisis*). Notice the suffix is *σις* (*sis*) not *μος* (*mos*). In this text, Paul prays for the Corinthians to come to a state of existence as a result of his prayer, a state of maturation. A verbal cognate of *κατάρτισις* (*katartismos*), *καταρτίζω* (*katartidzo*), is used 13 times in the New Testament. The NAU translates the verb in various ways, e.g., “mending” (Matt. 4:21 and Mark 1:19 [both times translating the participial form]), “prepared” (Matt. 21:16; Rom. 9:22; and Heb. 10:5), “complete” (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Thess. 3:10), and “equip” (Heb. 13:21). Its first use is found in Matthew 4:21, translated by the NAU as, “Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, *mending* [emphasis added] their nets; and He called them.” Paul uses it in Romans 9:22, which says, “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath *prepared* for destruction?” (emphasis added). These examples show that the semantic domain of the *καταρ* word-group is varied and dependent upon contextual usage.

One further observation concerning *κατάρτισις* that may help with determining its function and meaning in Ephesians 4:12 is the suffix of the lexical form (i.e., *μος* [*mos*]). The lexical form is in the nominative singular. The form used by Paul in Ephesians 4:12 is in the accusative singular due to the word functioning as the object of the preposition *πρός*. The normal object case in Greek is the accusative. The suffix *μος* indicates that the noun is an action noun, one which implies some sort of action or the state that results from the implied action. If Hamann is correct, that the verbal idea of *κατάρτισις* comes to its end with the genitive phrase modifying it, *τῶν ἁγίων* (“of the saints”), then no additional modifier is needed. In other words, the action embodied in the noun *κατάρτισις* (*katartismos*) is conducted by the gifted persons of verse 11 and terminates upon *τῶν ἁγίων* (“the saints”). It does not need a complement, the verbal idea coming to an end in the noun itself.⁷⁶

As mentioned above, older versions translated this word as “perfecting.” The newer translation of “equipping” did not come into the translational history until the mid-twentieth century. There is good reason to prefer something other than “equipping.” As noted above, cognates of *κατάρτισις* (*katartismos*) are translated

differently in the New Testament. The context and function of the word in each place in which it is used must be considered in order to determine what is meant by it. Translating it like the newer versions “has the sense of equipping persons with what they need to be able to accomplish a particular task.”⁷⁷ Assuming that the prepositional phrases are coordinate and that the action of the noun terminates upon “the saints” and needs no further compliment, however, would warrant a different nuance to *κατάρτισις* (*katartismos*). Instead of giving persons what they need to accomplish a task, it could “refer to moral or spiritual maturation,” as Page says.⁷⁸ He continues:

This meaning makes excellent sense in the context of Eph. 4:12, for the following verse goes on to state that the goal of the ministry of the gifted ones mentioned in v. 11 is that “all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” Rather than translate the first phrase in v. 12 “to equip the saints,” it would be better to adopt the translation proposed by J.J. Davis, “for brining the saints to maturity.”⁷⁹

How would the presence of pastors bring the saints to maturity? It is not their mere presence but primarily their actions, blessed by the Spirit of God. This “bringing the saints to maturity” involves gathering them and implies a compacting into order, in the words of Owen. It requires the presence of the saints to bring them to completion or appropriate constitutional and moral order. *What about the meaning of the phrase ἔργον διακονίας (ergon diakonias [“the work of service”]) in the second prepositional phrase?*

Much discussion has taken place concerning the word *διακονίας* (*diakonias* [“service”]). It is used in various contexts referring to varying persons and actions. The point of interest for Ephesians 4:12 is its use in context. Some take this to refer to various acts of service by the saints.⁸⁰ The older view is that it refers to the work done by the gifted servants of verse 11.

The only other time Paul uses these two words

76. See the discussion in Hamann, “The Translation of Ephesians 4:12—A Necessary Revision,” 43–45.

77. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” 34.

78. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” 34.

79. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” 34–35.

80. E.g., Bob Gonzales, “Giving Proper Due To the People in the Pew (Part 1),” *The Founders Journal*, Issue 79 (Winter 2010): 6–21 and “Giving Proper Due To the People in the Pew (Part 2),” *The Founders Journal*, Issue 83 (Winter 2011): 11–27.

together is found in 2 Timothy 4:5, where we read, “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the *work* of an evangelist, fulfill your *ministry*” (emphasis added). The “work of an evangelist” is Timothy’s ministry to be fulfilled. In other words, the final clause of the verse is exegetical of that which precedes it—“do the work of an evangelist.” Timothy’s “work of an evangelist” is his “ministry.” Here Timothy’s work is the official “work of an evangelist.” He is to perform a ministerial act that is designated as his work.⁸¹ Though this does not solve the issue of the meaning of the phrase under consideration in Ephesians 4:12, it does provide us with the only other verse where Paul uses both words under discussion.

Understanding the phrase to refer to various acts of service rendered by the saints is certainly plausible. This view, however, does not seem to fit the context. As will be argued below, the older view does not have to be understood as making the saints wholly passive in the church. Paul says in verses 14–16, that as a result of the activity of the gifted persons of verse 11, “we are no longer to be children ... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up...” The “speaking the truth in love” comes as a result of the activities stated and implied in verses 12–14. The specific activity of the saints comes as a result of the activity of the gifted persons and it terminates upon the church.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph. 4:14–16)

Despite this clear churchly context, Marcus Barth extends the application of this passage “outside the church.”⁸²

Understanding this phrase as the action of the gifted persons of verse 11, one does not have to wonder what

81. See the discussion in Gordon, “Equipping’ Ministry in Ephesians 4?,” 74.

82. Barth, *Ephesians*, 481. See Gonzales, “Giving Proper Due To the People in the Pew (Part 1),” where he seems to commit some version of what is called the illegitimate totality transfer, defining “service” by transferring its total possible meaning, as used in other texts, and defining its use in Eph. 4:12 accordingly. He does admit that “the nature of which [i.e., the nature of service] is usually defined by the context” (11).

“work of service” is provided. The gifted persons of verse 11 all have at least one thing in common; they are all ministers of the word of God. The “work of service” is the Christian ministry, focusing on the ministry of the word of God, though not necessarily exhausted by it. The verses that follow support this view. Verse 13 mentions attaining “to the unity of the faith,” which refers to the Christian faith, that which has been delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Verse 14 describes the negative effect of the actions of verse 12, “so that we may no longer be children, tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (my translation) and verse 15 the positive effect, “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up...” The only activity of the saints in the passage, according to the older view, is found in verses 15 and 16. These are not general acts of service but a very specific action which comes as a result of the pastoral ministry in verses 12–14. The “speaking the truth in love” of verse 15 is the effect produced in saints (by the blessing of the Spirit) who sit under a faithful pastoral ministry. Another observation worth noting is that this passage is a church-centered passage. It speaks of activities in the church, for the church, and by the church. So any view that *διακονίας* (*diakonias* [“service”]) refers to the activity of the saints, must restrict itself to the saints in the church “for the building up of itself in love.” These observations lead us to our last consideration.

What about the context or flow of argument?

The ASV of 1901 may help us see the flow of Paul’s thought. It reads:

for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: 13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; 15 but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, *even* Christ; 16 from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in *due* measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. (Eph 4:12–16, ASV, emphasis added)

A simple diagram and outline of verses 11–16 is as follows:

Diagram/Outline

- (v. 11) Fact of the giving of the gifted persons:
αὐτοὺς ἔδωκεν ...
- (v. 12) Reasons for the giving of the gifted persons:
1. πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων
2. εἰς ἔργον διακονίας
3. εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ
- (v. 13) Duration and goal of the giving of the gifted persons:
μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες (“till we all attain ...,” ASV)
- (vv. 14–16) Effects of the giving of the gifted persons:
1. negatively stated: ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι (“in order that we may no longer be children,” Eph. 4:14a [my translation])
2. positively stated: ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα (“but speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things,” Eph 4:15a [my translation])

Notice the relation and function of the conjunction of verse 13 (μέχρι [“until”], Eph 4:13a) and the function of the compound clause (ἵνα ... δὲ [“in order that ... but ...”]) of verses 14–16. Verse 13 indicates the duration and goal of the gifted persons’ activities in the church. Verses 14–16 give the results or effects, indicated by the ἵνα (*hina*) of verse 14a. The result is a corporate result. The activities of the gifted persons not only keep the saints from immaturity (v. 14), but also promote maturity or growing up, indicated by their “speaking the truth in love” (v. 15a). This is the first (and agreed upon) activity of all the saints in the passage. The saints are not passive. They receive the ministry of the gifted persons of verse 11 and, as a result, they commune with other saints, causing “the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16b). As Lincoln asserts:

So in this summarizing picture of v 16 both particular ministers and every member find a place. Each part of the body receives the energizing power it needs, and the proper growth of the whole body is in proportion to and adapted to each part. Each member has his or her distinct role in the well-being of the whole, and the unity in diversity depicted earlier in the passage is seen to be essential for the proper growth of the Church....

... It now becomes clear that, however significant the writer deems their role to be in this regard, ministers do not have exclusive claims to this function. In the building up of itself the whole body is involved.⁸³

This activity or ministry of the saints (Eph. 4:15–16) comes as a result of the ministry of the gifted persons of verse 11. The older way of describing this activity of the saints is called the communion of the saints.⁸⁴ All of the activities of this passage are done in the church, to the church, and for the church, empowered by “Him who is the head, *even* Christ” (Eph. 4:15b).

CONCLUSION

Much ink has been spilled over this text, some of it with heat. On the one hand, some who hold the older view have impugned those who hold the “every man’s a minister” view of Ephesians 4:12 with less than desirable motives. The opposite is true as well. Desiring not to enter the fray of determining the motives of others, what can we learn from our study of this crucial text.

First, good men disagree as to the intended meaning of Ephesians 4:12. This is obviously the case indicated by the references to various commentators above. Second, good men have not always disagreed about this text, at least as far as our study has indicated. Though it could be the case that the newer view was held by some prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, the evidence is still to be found. There are probably various reasons for the emergence of the newer view, though identifying such is beyond the scope of our study. Fourth, the

83. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 263–64.

84. See Owen above and 2LCF 27:1, which reads, “... being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces ...” The Confessions cites Eph. 4:15–16 at this point.

view advocated in this article has both well-founded exegetical and historical grounds. Though historical ground is not the authoritative basis for determining a text's intent, it can be a helpful assistant to its proper understanding. Fifth, not only does the view advocated here have good reasons for holding it, it seems to do justice to the broader context of Ephesians 4:1–16 as well.

Ephesians 4:1–16 contains a call to “walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1). This involves “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). How is this produced in the church? It all begins with Christ, the head of the church, gracing/gifting his people (Eph. 4:7). Though Christ gifts all his people, Paul first concentrates on apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). He gives three reasons why these were given (4:12), the duration/goal of their service to the church (4:13), and the effects produced by their ministry (4:14–16). Just as Paul begins with Christ (4:7), so he ends with Christ (4:16). And just as Paul begins with all the saints (4:7), so he ends with all the saints (4:16). The particular section we have been concentrating on, however, begins in verse 11 and the verb (i.e., “He gave”) upon which the rest of the passage hangs. The apostle is concentrating on the gifted persons of verse 11 through the end of the pericope. Page's comments are helpful at this point:

Although the pericope in which Eph. 4:12 appears begins in v. 7 with an emphasis on the grace that has been given to all believers, there is a transition in v. 11 to the teaching gifts that are of critical importance if the church is to reach the unity and maturity described in v. 13 and to avoid the immaturity and instability described in v. 14. The major topic addressed in vv. 11–16 is not the universality of giftedness but the importance of sound teaching, and it is in keeping with this emphasis to see v. 12 as a description of the three-fold goal of this teaching.⁸⁵

The passage has more to do with what the gifted persons do in order that the saints might become mature and stable. It has more to do with what the saints become than what the saints do. The saints become mature and stable by sitting under a faithful Christian ministry. Though this certainly affects the saints, it depends upon the faithful labors of local church pastors.

The view I have been defending demands a high view of the Christian ministry. It implies that in order for believers to become mature and stable, they must regularly sit under a faithful local church pastoral ministry. It demands that ministers perform all their pastoral responsibilities faithfully, e.g., leading in public worship,

preaching the word of God, and administering baptism and the Lord's Supper. It requires faithfulness in pastors and people alike. Growing in maturity and stability as Christians is a church-centered, life-long calling for all believers. Though in this life we will never “arrive,” our goal till Christ comes or we die is “to attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). This goal can be pursued only to the degree that pastors are committed to their churches and saints are committed to the same. ■

In Brief: The Sabbath vs. the Liturgical Calendar

Our desperate need of recovering the Sabbath is much more pressing, I believe, than whether or not we do or do not encourage yearly celebrations of the dominical feasts [i.e., the ‘church calendar,’ Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, etc.]. By giving up Sabbath observance for whatever reasons, we have unwittingly contributed to the quicker secularization of our culture, and have in so doing left a deep gap or vacuum in the spirit of both church and unchurched people for some kind of touch with traditional transcendent realities. If Sabbath observance is of no real consequence to church people, then the world has yet another practical argument for the peripheral nature of God and the transcendent.... And more to our concern here, if we neglect a whole-hearted observance of the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Resurrection Day, we do lose something of the transcendent; indeed, we lose a great deal of it in the very church itself.

Why fill in this deep, hurting gap with attempts at resuscitating ever more of the church year? Is there anything wrong with humbling ourselves and repenting of our abuse of the Lord's Day, and seeking to return to a happy keeping of it? I suspect that would make the currently popular bringing in of church seasons such as Advent and Lent quite superfluous. After all, these seasons were historically closely tied in to the Medieval Penitential System. Who needs them, when hearts and eyes of faith are turned Sabbath by Sabbath to our great High Priest, who through the power of His atoning blood and resurrection, continually presents us to the Father?

Douglas F. Kelly, “The Puritan Regulative Principle and Contemporary Worship,” in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century, Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, vol. 2, ed. J. Ligon Duncan et al. (Fearn: Christian Focus, Mentor Imprint, 2004), 94–95. ■

85. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” 43.