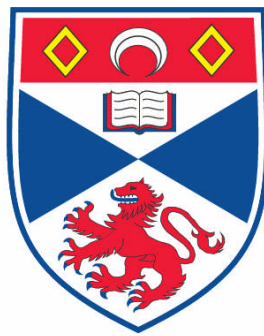


**"ALL OF YOU ARE ONE" : THE SOCIAL VISION OF GAL 3:28, 1
COR 12:13 AND COL 3:11**

Bruce Hansen

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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“ALL OF YOU ARE ONE”:
THE SOCIAL VISION OF GAL 3:28, 1 COR 12:13 AND COL 3:11

A thesis by
Bruce Hansen

presented at the University of St. Andrews
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD
on 28 June 2007.

I, Bruce Hansen, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date

Signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student in Sept. 2001 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in Divinity; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2001 and 2007.

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ABSTRACT

Paul's citation of an early baptismal tradition in Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:11 is as notable for its prominence in the Pauline corpus as it is for its ambiguity. A survey of the variety of views as to what Paul is denying and, conversely, affirming by this formula highlights the importance of identifying both the broad mythic vision into which Paul has set it as well as the social arrangements he advocates by means of it. This attention to how cultural symbols and stories correlate with social praxis is prompted by insights from the sociology of knowledge.

This thesis argues that in each instance Paul deploys the formula to support his vision for social unity in his churches that are composed of members from various social strata and subcultures who in Christ gain a new social identity that they are to express as family-like solidarity. The predominance of kinship terminology and expectations in Paul's exhortations to ecclesial unity lead me to propose a model of ethnic identity construction as appropriate for assessing the role of the baptismal unity formula in its Pauline usage.

A reading of each epistle in which the formula occurs demonstrates how the formula serves in each case to epitomize Paul's vision for social unity. Furthermore, the proposed model of ethnic identity formation serves to highlight how Paul warrants that social solidarity by appeal to the believers' fictive, genealogical connectedness and presumed shared origins and essence. Such contextualization of the formula within the social vision expressed in each epistle highlights how Paul patterns the believers' identity on Israel as reconfigured through the story of Christ Jesus' death and resurrection. This assessment of Pauline social identity formation depends on and contributes to apocalyptic understandings of Paul's gospel as well as the social emphasis of the so-called new perspective on Paul.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Formula

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)¹

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13)

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! (Col 3:11)

The formulaic affirmation that unity in Christ overcomes the social divisions, Jew versus Greek and slave versus free, etc. (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11), is arguably the most prominent refrain in the Pauline corpus.² Not only is this formula universally recognized in the three aforementioned verses, many also suspect its influence on the phrasing of Rom 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 7:18-22; 10:32; and Eph 6:8.³ Whereas such celebrated Pauline refrains as, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3, 9; Gal 3:6 citing Gen 15:6) and “The one who is righteous will

¹ NRSV is used throughout unless otherwise noted.

² “Un des autres cas remarquables est, bien entendu, celui de la transmission de la liturgie eucharistique. On y constaterait également la présence de variations significatives dans le cadre d’une structure commune.” Michel Bouttier, “Complexio Oppositorum: Sur Les Formules De I Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-8; Col 3:10, 11,” *NTS* 23 (1976): 10 n.2.

³ Regarding its influence on Rom 3:9, James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC 9; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 205; Rom 10:12, Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “Male and Female in Creation and New Creation: Interpretations of Galatians 3:28c in 1 Corinthians 7,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology* (ed. Thomas E. Schmidt et al.; JSNTSup 100; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 97 n.7; Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?,” in *Women, Authority & the Bible* (ed. Alvera Mickelsen; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986), 172; 1 Cor 7:18-22, S. Scott Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBLDS 11; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1973), 162-65; Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Woman,” *JAAR* 40 (1972): 293; 1 Cor 10:32, Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (ConBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1998), 153; Eph 6:8, Wayne A. Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *HR* 13 (1974): 180.

live by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11 citing Hab 2:4) are concentrated in Romans and Galatians, two epistles closely related in subject matter and argument, the unity formula occurs in three letters covering disparate topics and featuring distinct arguments.⁴ No other tradition, whether scriptural or from the earliest churches, occurs in the Pauline corpus so frequently and so widely as this thrice-repeated affirmation of reconciliation in Christ.

Notwithstanding the questions regarding Pauline authorship of Colossians, this thesis considers Col 3:11 alongside the other two instances of this formula because it clearly reflects the same tradition, is in some sense Pauline, and thus bears on an inquiry into how the saying functioned in the Pauline epistles and churches. It is not the intent of this thesis to contribute to the debate about the authorship of Colossians, which is ultimately insoluble on the evidence available to us. However, I do find reasonable the middle ground solution that suggests Timothy’s composing much of the letter with Paul’s authorization.⁵ This fits the available evidence, particularly Timothy’s inclusion in Col 1:1 as co-sender, as well as the spectrum--from taking dictation to authorized composition--now known to represent the ancient use of co-authors and secretaries.⁶ Nevertheless, unlike some who reflect this solution by referring to the author as “Paul and Timothy,” I will use only “Paul” for simplicity of style, because the personal

⁴ David G. Horrell, “No Longer Jew or Greek”: Paul’s Corporate Christology and the Construction of Christian Community,” in *Christology, Controversy and Community* (ed. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett; NovTSup 99; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 327: “While the form of the teaching varies considerably in these three epistolary contexts, the multiple appearance of a similar tradition shows its basic importance for Paul and for the Pauline churches.”

⁵ Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (trans. Andrew Chester; London: SPCK, 1982), 15-24. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 35-39; Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 15-20, 35-36; Hay, *Colossians*, 19-24, who all follow Schweizer.

⁶ E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2/42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

greetings in 4:7-18 present Paul as sole author, and because the authority behind the letter clearly was Paul's.⁷

Despite its obvious importance in Pauline thought, the formula's significance for Paul and his churches is not obvious. Commentary on the relevant passages frequently resorts to vague statements such as "in that new creation divisions of humanity are transcended and superseded."⁸ Yet important questions remain: Transcended and superseded with regard to what? Or in what spheres of life? What kinds of human division are overcome? How is the new unity to be understood and expressed? What were its practical social consequences for Paul's original audience?⁹ It is impossible to maintain that ethics pertaining to the believers' social status—e.g. slave or Jew—have entirely vanished as a concern in the relevant epistles or in any imaginable social reconstruction, so interpreters must clarify the nature of the transformation the saying affirms.¹⁰

Wayne Meeks and David Horrell, among others, have demonstrated how insights from the sociology of knowledge can assist biblical interpreters in correlating textual

⁷ Hay, *Colossians*, 24.

⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41. Cf. S. Scott Bartchy, "Power, Submission, and Sexual Identity among the Early Christians," in *Essays on New Testament Christianity* (ed. C. Robert Wetzel; Cincinnati: Standard, 1978), 58: "This new identity transcended race, sex, and social status." David Arthur DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), 230-31 asserts that Gal 3:28 declares "qualifications of race, social status and gender to be *dissolved* in Christ" (my emphasis).

⁹ Horrell, "Christology," 333, writes, similarly, "But what exactly does that phrase ["there is no longer Jew or Greek"] mean? To what extent does it imply a redefinition of former identities and a restructuring of former practices? That is not immediately apparent and a range of interpretations are possible."

¹⁰ William S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (69; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 108: "In practice, despite what Gal 3:28 may appear to claim, all distinctions between Jew and Gentile, male and female were not disregarded entirely within the Christian communities." Bouttier, "Complexio Oppositorum," 17: "Une interprétation enthousiaste de nos textes est encore contredite par la persistance d'une éthique fort concrète qui concerne la vie ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ du Juif et du Grec, de l'homme et de la femme, du maître et de l'esclave."

affirmations with a broader cultural vision and social practice.¹¹ In Meeks' words, "The comprehensive question concerning the texts that are our primary sources is not merely what each one says, but what it does."¹² Meeks' own inquiry into this baptismal unity formula demonstrates how a formulaic affirmation like this depends for its significance on the broader symbolic universe within which it is appropriated and on the particular social arrangements it supports. He says,

The very simplicity and universality of the structure fit it to carry communications of great variety . . . its actual significance in a given instance has to be determined. That can be done only by asking about its specific functions in the network of internal and external relationships of the community which uses this symbolic language.¹³

His application of insights from the social sciences to underscore the social functions of myths rightly warns us against posing false dichotomies between anthropological/ontological and social interpretations of the formula. Therefore, an interpretation of Paul's uses of this baptismal formula must investigate the broader mythic or symbolic frame into which he has set it and the social effects he intends by it.¹⁴ This concern for identifying the symbolic universe in which the formula is to be understood will organize my survey of the approaches NT scholars have taken to this Pauline *topos*. In so grouping interpreters, I will assess the merits of the myth within which they interpret the formula as well as their success in delineating the social aims Paul intends. This second concern for social consequences must address both what Paul

¹¹ Besides the works of Meeks and Horrell cited here, helpful introduction to biblical interpretation informed by sociology of knowledge may be found in Howard Clark Kee, *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Wayne A. Meeks, "A Hermeneutics of Social Embodiment," *HTR* 79 (1986): 176-86.

¹² Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 7.

¹³ Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 166.

¹⁴ Note Meeks' programmatic statement, "Here I want both to describe the main outlines of the underlying myth of reunification and to offer at least a few guesses about some social functions of that myth," "Image of the Androgyne," 183.

wishes to alter about the named statuses—Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female—as well as what sort of unity he envisions. However, before proceeding with this survey of scholarship, some formal observations about the three occurrences of the saying as we have them will help focus our interpretive options.

Gal 3:27, 28	1 Cor 12:13	Col 3:10-11
<p>ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.</p>	<p>καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνευματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν,</p>	<p>ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσις κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν, ὅπου οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, Βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δούλος, ἐλεύθερος</p>
<p>οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην οὐκ ἐνὶ</p>	<p>εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες</p>	<p>ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός</p>
<p>δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἔστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ</p>	<p>εἴτε δούλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι,</p>	
	<p>καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν</p>	

Formal Observations

Form critical analyses that locate the saying's *Sitz im Leben* in an early Christian baptismal liturgy have become widely accepted.¹⁵ As a comparison shows, each instance

¹⁵ Ibid., 180-182; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 181-184; Bouttier, "Complexio Oppositorum," 1-11; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 143; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (4 vols.; EKKNT 7; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991-2000), 3:207-208; Scroggs, "Eschatological Women," 291-92.

contrasts similar terms of social opposites with a form of unity that is identified with Christ. The Jew/Greek and slave/free dichotomies are common to all three occurrences. The pairings unique to the Gal 3:28 (male/female) and to Col 3:11 (circumcision/uncircumcision and Scythian/barbarian) will be discussed below. In each instance the traditional material stands out from its literary context such that the verses based on the formula (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11) could be excised and Paul's prose would read smoothly without them. This opposite tradition serves to buttress the surrounding argument. Furthermore, in Gal 3 and 1 Cor 12, the formula introduces terms that are irrelevant to Paul's argument and that seem to be present solely by virtue of their familiarity in the tradition. In Gal 3:28, the slave/free and male/female pair are extraneous to the issue of Jewish law observance. Similarly, in 1 Cor 12:12-27, where Paul develops his extended metaphor of the body to urge unity in diversity, the Jew/Greek and slave/free pairs in v. 13 neither fit that metaphor nor are they derived from the topics being disputed in the Corinthian church. Only in Colossians might there be some connection between the traditional Jew/Greek and slave/free pairs and Paul's broader argument. The Jew/Greek dichotomy may have some connection to the philosophy Paul engages (cf. 2:11), especially as Paul glosses that contrast with the parallel circumcision/uncircumcision. And the slave/free contrast may be further addressed in the Colossian *Haustafel*, 3:22-4:1. However, given that Colossians is later than the other two epistles, we can be confident of dependence on the tradition evident in the earlier ones.

The association of the formula with baptism and the believers' identity with Christ in each instance further suggests that this traditions' original *Sitz im Leben* may have been a baptismal setting. In both Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 12:13 the formulaic pairs are introduced with a reference to the recipients' baptism. The collocation in Gal 3:27 of baptism with clothing oneself (ἐνδύω) in Christ lends credence to the evocation of baptism also in Col 3:10, where the believers are similarly to cloth themselves (ἐνδύω) in their new identity

as defined by Christ. This logic of identity with Christ has governed the paranetic context in Col 3:1-10 and has been rooted in baptism in 2:12. Thus in all three occurrences the formulaic phrasing asserts the believers' new identity on the basis of their baptism and most likely recalls a familiar liturgical pronouncement from baptism. Presuming such a background helps explain how it could function for Paul as an authority supporting his argument.¹⁶ Furthermore, as proclamation at the initiatory rite of baptism, the formula would explicitly inform the social realignment ritualized in baptism.¹⁷ However, we encounter this formula not in a baptismal liturgy but as an authoritative citation to buttress an epistolary argument. Therefore, attention to the actual forms in which Paul deploys the formula will provide further clues as to how he fits it to his epistolary aims.

First, in each occurrence the saying turns on the implied tension between unity and diversity. The unity and diversity could be either anthropological or social, or both. That is, there are diverse kinds of people who through Christ are resolved into one kind of human or there are contrasting social groupings who become united into a new social group. Certainly both could be true, and either could be a function of the other. Resolution of human diversity into one kind of person could create one homogeneous group. Conversely, socialization into a new group identity could erode the bases for

¹⁶ Dissenting voices from this dominant view of the tradition history have failed to gain a following. Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (HDR 20; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), makes an engaging but unpersuasive case for an alternative tradition history in which a similar saying found in later gnostic Christianity actually reflects an earlier tradition which Paul found defective and altered to suit his theology. Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (JSNTSup 274; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 97-98; Gerhard Dautzenberg, "Da Ist Nicht Männlich und Weiblich: Zur Interpretation von Gal 3,28," *Kairos* 24 (1982): 183; Troy Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antithesis in Galatians 3:28," *JBL* 122 (2003): 111-15, each argue that the hypothesis of a tradition antecedent to Paul's epistles is an unnecessary and speculative complication and that we ought to view the formal similarity of these sayings as reflecting stock social categories. However, this view does not adequately account for either the stylistic peculiarities common to these occurrences nor for the cluster of motifs—e.g. baptism and body of Christ—that accompany each occurrence.

¹⁷ Meeks, *First Urban*, 153-57.

diverse anthropological classification. Moreover, to the extent that all anthropological classification represents social consensus and interests, even an anthropological understanding of this formula is ultimately an act of social construction.

Second, the very form of the saying emphasizes its social effects. The formula does not merely list various human types in a series--i.e. Greek, Roman, Jew, Egyptian, Galatian—but sets them in opposing pairs. Furthermore, the two pairs common to all three occurrences—Jew/Greek and slave/free—both inscribe a particular social vision; namely, they both encompass all of humanity as perceived from a position of relative privilege. Only Jews described humanity in the binary contrast of Jew versus Greek, with “Jew” designating the privileged identity of God’s elect and “Greek” meaning simply non-Jews, outsiders to Israel’s covenantal privilege. Similarly, slavery is the social status of being owned by a free person, a non-slave. Free people determined the status, rights and lives of slaves, not only by owning them but, also, by having created the social, economic and legal arrangements governing slavery. Under the Roman Empire, the binary opposition of slave versus free constituted a fundamental determination of status and options. This formal observation suggests that the tension implicit in the formula may be between social inclusion and exclusion, between social privilege and social marginalization.

However, two features of the tradition might appear to emphasize anthropology over social arrangements. The first is the pairing, unique to Gal 3:28, “there is no longer male and female,” that many have interpreted as endorsing androgyny, and the second is the insertion of “barbarian, Scythian” in Col 3:11 that appears to break the pattern of binary contrasts. But closer examination will demonstrate that both of these features support the social exclusion/inclusion thesis. Again, however, anthropological and social interpretations of the saying need not exclude one another, though it remains to be seen how they function together in each cultural and epistolary context.

Taking the Colossians variation first, we note that “barbarian, Scythian” is not this version’s only unique alteration. The restatement of the Greek/Jew dichotomy as “circumcised and uncircumcised” highlights the social inclusion/exclusion dynamic at work. Then, before proceeding to the slave/free pair as the tradition would suggest, this version includes “barbarian, Scythian,” an addition that most commentators rightly take as further elucidation of what precedes it; in other words, this addition provides extreme examples of “uncircumcised.” It furthers the exclusion/inclusion contrast of the Greek/Jew pair in several ways. First, the previous addition of circumcision/uncircumcision suggests a need to define for non-Jews what the Greek/Jew pair signifies. For those who would identify as Greeks rather than Jews, their conventional out-group was not Jews, but barbarians. Thus the inclusion of “barbarian” evokes the Greek/barbarian social exclusion to balance the Jew/Greek convention (cf. Rom 1:13-16). As is often noted, Scythian was the barbarian *in extremis*, so here the formula heightens the call for inclusion of members from the most excluded out-group.¹⁸ Second, David M. Goldenberg has presented persuasive evidence for a Jewish *topos* denoting the entire Gentile world using the synecdoche, “Scythian and barbarian” to refer to the extremes of the known world—Scythian naming the northern pale peoples and barbarian the southern, dark nations.¹⁹ Given this evidence, “barbarian, Scythian” in Colossians may be a restatement of the preceding term, “uncircumcised,” emphasizing its universal reach to the ends of the known world. Such a reading suggests that the modifications in the Colossian version highlight the formula’s social implication of including the outsider, even the extreme outsider.

¹⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 225-26.

¹⁹ David M. Goldenberg, "Scythian-Barbarian: The Permutations of a Classical Topos in Jewish and Christian Texts of Late Antiquity," *JJS* 49 (1998): 87-102. Cf. James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 29-30, 35-36, 45-50, 65-66.

This reading also helps explain why the order of the first pair Greek/Jew is reversed in Colossians as compared to Galatians and 1 Corinthians. This reversal is especially striking in the context of Paul's conventional use of this pair and of its frequency in Acts, in all of which Ἰουδαῖος precedes Ἕλληνα (this conventional pairing occurs seven times in Acts, five in Romans, and four in 1 Corinthians, including the baptismal formula). In the earlier epistles, Galatians and 1 Corinthians, the core of the tradition—Jew/Greek, slave/free--manifests a chiasmic poetics, with the privileged statuses, Jew and free, on the outside and the marginalized statuses, Greek and slave, abutting one another in the center. Using upper case "A" to represent privileged status and lower case "b" to represent the excluded status, the tradition has the form A b b' A'. In Colossians, however, "Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised," has the form b A A' b', enabling the further description of the outsider status, "barbarian, Scythian," to be juxtaposed to the term they modify, "uncircumcised," which is now on the outside of the chiasm and available for expansion. The standard slave-free pair then follows this in the traditional order where juxtaposition of "slave" to its immediate antecedent, "Scythian," is also felicitous, in that the only actual, northern, pale-skinned and yellow-haired barbarians that people in Colossae would have encountered would be among the legions of barbarian slaves in the urban centers of the Empire who had been captured in military skirmishes on the frontiers of the Empire.²⁰ Thus, this extreme ethnic outsider for both Jews and Greeks would also evoke slavery, the other social exclusion in the tradition.

The pair "male and female" in Gal 3:28 also fits the social exclusion paradigm. Like the other pairs it encompasses all of humanity in a binary pairing where differential privilege falls to one member at the expense of the other, according to the patriarchal norms of Greco-Roman and Jewish societies. However, since most scholars view this pair as alluding to God's creation of humanity as "male and female" in Gen 1:27, it is

²⁰ Barry W. Cunliffe, *Greeks, Romans and Barbarians: Spheres of Interaction* (London: Batsford, 1988), 77-78.

generally regarded as an anthropological statement revoking the sexual dimorphism created by God.²¹ It, thus, opens the door to a fundamentally anthropological interpretation of this formula.

Whereas Paul lists the first two pairs as disjunctions using masculine, singular substantives, οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἔνι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, the final pair breaks the pattern by replacing the “or” with an “and” and by shifting to neuter adjectives, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ. The conjunction ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ is exactly the LXX rendering of Gen 1:27, repeated of humans in Gen 5:2 and of all animals in Gen 6:19-20; 7:2, 3, 9, 16.²² Furthermore, this locution from Gen 1:27 is part of the dominical saying preserved in Mark 10:6 and Matt 19:4, showing at least the currency of this co-text in early Christian tradition. From this evidence, it is common to conclude that in denying that there is “male and female” in Christ, Gal 3:28 asserts that the work of Christ reconfigures creation itself, as Paul affirms with an echo of the formula in Gal 6:15, “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!”

However, it is not self-evident from the formula itself what Paul’s vision of new creation implies for humanity in Christ.²³ In fact, Paul’s specific characterizations of the

²¹ Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966); Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 181; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1990), 156-57; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 376-77.

²² The contention of Dautzenberg, "Da Ist Nicht Männlich," 182: “. . . die Form *arsen* ist über den Gebrauch in LXX und Neuem Testament hinaus weit verbreitet, so daß auch mit einer hellenistischen, von Gen 1,27 relativ unabhängigen Verständnismöglichkeit gerechnet werden kann,” is beside the point. The use of *arsen* by itself is not implicated by Gen 3:28. Cf. the unpersuasive case of Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision," 118-19, who depends on Dautzenberg in attempting to deny both the allusion to Gen 1:27 and the pre-Pauline baptismal origin of this saying.

²³ For instance, Ben Witherington, "Rite and Rights for Women - Galatians 3:28," *NTS* 27 (1981): 595-96; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 211, both argue that “there is no ‘male and female’” constitutes a rejection of the requirement to marry, since Gen 1:27 was predominantly understood as the basis for marriage and the command to be fruitful and multiply. This view finds support in the dominical tradition’s use of Gen 1:27

new creation are remarkably restrained, emphasizing primarily love and peace within the new community. Another echo of the formula, Gal 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love,” is parallel to Gal 6:15, cited above, and exemplifies this Pauline emphasis through the equation of “new creation” with “faith working through love.” As we will see below in the treatment of the formula in each epistolary context, Paul leaves any anthropological implications of this formula underdeveloped while he rigorously presses its implications for social reconciliation.

Furthermore, Judith Gundry-Volf has made a compelling case that the negation of “male and female” from Gen 1:27 ought not to be understood anthropologically but socially as demoting the prominence given to procreation. In her view, “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27c) must be coordinated with the immediately following imperative, “Be fruitful and multiply” (v. 28), which depends on the sexual dimorphism established in the previous verse.²⁴ She notes that this understanding of Gen 1:27-28 is supported by both rabbinical tradition and several recent OT scholars. In this understanding, “there is no male and female” refers not to the end of sexuality or gender but to the adiaphorization of marriage and procreation. Thus, a *paterfamilias*, married with children, would have no greater status than an unmarried woman or a widow. This

noted above, as well as in Mark 12:25 and parallels. However, neither of these authors provides adequate evidence for their suggestive readings. This lack is remedied in the careful study by Gundry-Volf, “New Creation” (see below).

²⁴ She follows, above all, Phyllis A Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them”: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *HTR* 74 (1981): 129-59; Phyllis A Bird, “Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen; Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991), 11-34. She also references David J. A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 94; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 25-48; Francis Watson, “Strategies of Recovery and Resistance: Hermeneutical Reflections on Genesis 1-3 and Its Pauline Reception,” *JSNT* 45 (1992), 79-103. To these I would now add Robert S. Kawashima, “A Revisionist Reading Revisited: On the Creation of Adam and Eve,” *VT* 56 (2006): 103-17.

pair, then, would reflect inclusion and the cancellation of privilege, just as do the other two pairs. Her case has further implications for this thesis in that “no male and female” would then be a variation on the dismantling of ethnic privilege inherent in the first pair, Jew/Greek, since ethnic identity is based on fictive kinship, a myth of consanguinity via procreation. Blood relation would give way to another basis for community as it is displaced from its prominence for shaping identity and solidarity.²⁵ The importance of ethnic identity for studying this formula will be further elaborated in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Previous Interpretive Approaches

My critical survey of approaches NT scholars have taken to this Pauline *topos* will assess how well each accounts for the formal features we have noted above, especially how each construes the rejection/affirmation structure of the formula. That is, an interpretation of this saying must account for the previous statuses that are reconfigured and the nature of the new unity that is affirmed. Furthermore, each treatment surveyed below coordinates the Pauline saying, either explicitly or implicitly, with a socially maintained symbolic order. I will assess the validity of these contextual frameworks and highlight how they prejudice interpretation.

Hellenistic Philosophy

Daniel Boyarin’s *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* and Wayne Meeks’ “Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” make justly influential cases for reading the Pauline unity formula as an instance of broader Hellenistic religious and philosophical speculation. Namely, they interpret the formula as a response to the perceived scandal of human particularity and diversity that led in

²⁵ Gundry-Volf, “New Creation,” does not take this step of correlating her insights with the type of unity urged by the formula; however, given that unity is the goal of the formula, an interpretation of what is negated about the opposing pairs must issue in a correlative description of the unity affirmed.

antiquity to speculation on the nature of an ideal, Universal or Generic Human.²⁶ This ancient speculation was especially preoccupied with mediating the problem of sexual difference, as is attested by the pervasive myth of primal androgyny from which human sexual dimorphism degenerated and towards which religious humanity longs to return. Whereas Meeks' article of necessity focuses only on locating Paul in the context of strategies for addressing sexual difference, Boyarin's book broadens the inquiry into ethnic and cultural differences, as well. Their ample documentation of this striving for universality and unity in Hellenistic thought and social practice certainly legitimizes consideration of how Paul's unity formula would have been received in that milieu. Later platonizing and gnostic development of this tradition as dissolving gender confirm this contextual chemistry.²⁷ The question, however, is whether Paul located the formula in the context of such Hellenistic speculation. On this point, Meeks is ambivalent while Boyarin is strongly affirmative.

Meeks' tracing of "some uses of a symbol in earliest Christianity," delivers on his sub-title with one exception, Pauline Christianity. After ably sketching the contours of the cultural concerns about sexual difference and introducing the myth of primal androgyny, Meeks' investigation compares the social appropriation of that myth in Paul's letters, among the Corinthian pneumatics, as Meeks reconstructs them from 1 Corinthians, and among later gnostic and encratite Christians. His findings support his thesis that a common symbol may have varied social implications depending on the community's

²⁶ Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 166: "The unification of opposites is a well-known motif alike in religious phenomenology and in the history of ancient philosophy." Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7: "Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy." Cf. Robert M. Grant, "Neither Male nor Female," *BR* 37 (1992): 5-14.

²⁷ E.g. 2 Clem. 12; *Gos. Thom.* 22; Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 3.13.92. Cf. Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 189-97; Bouttier, "Complexio Oppositorum," 12-15; Henning Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit der Söhne Gottes--Gal 3.26-29," *ZNW* 71 (1980): 80-85; MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 17-63.

broader symbol system and social structures. However, despite delineating the contours of the myth and its functions in these groups, Meeks fails to assess the formula's function in Paul's vision. Thus, his article does not consider the mythic context in which Paul presented the unification formula.²⁸ In fact, he doubts whether Paul even understood the formula against that same myth of primal androgyny.²⁹ Meeks leaves the reader with the impression that Paul only cited this formula in order to counter its misuse among the Corinthian pneumatics. Yet his reconstruction of the Corinthian conflict and Paul's engagement with it cannot explain the formula's presence in Gal 3:28 or Col 3:11. Despite having used the Galatians version of the formula as the basis of his form critical assessment of this tradition, Meeks does not assess how Paul uses it to advance his goals in Galatia. As we shall see in subsequent chapters of this thesis, Paul's strategic and positive deployment of the formula in all three epistles argues for its centrality in his ecclesial vision rather than its being a defensive necessity.

In contrast to Meeks, Boyarin views the baptismal formula as central to Paul's thought and invokes it as the hermeneutical key to understanding him. He presents a forceful case that Paul was unable to reconcile his absolute Jewish monotheism with the scandal of Jewish particularity and so coordinated the Hellenistic desire for the universal One, liberated from human particularity, with his belief in one creator God. Boyarin's Paul saw salvation as escape from human particularity by means of a universal human faith and spirit. In this view, Gal 3:28 affirms a universal human essence beyond the divisions of material, social existence. Although Boyarin exceeds Meeks in conforming

²⁸ Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Christ and Gender: A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal 3:28," in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums* (ed. Christof Landmesser et al.; BZNW 86; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 448-49, also notes this omission in Meeks and others.

²⁹ Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 203 n.153: "It also appears from this passage [1 Cor 11:2-16], if we are to take 11:7 at face value, that Paul himself did not—or did not always—accept the androgynous interpretation of Genesis 1:27 which, we have concluded, lay behind the baptismal language of Galatians 3:28—further reason for regarding that tradition as not of Paul's coinage."

Paul to the myth of primal androgyny, like Meeks he fails to explain what social vision Paul derived from this mythic frame. Instead of investigating how Paul deploys the unity formula to warrant a social ethos, Boyarin devotes the bulk of his book to exposing what he characterizes as the unfortunate and unintended social consequences of Paul's vision of uniform human spirituality.³⁰ Despite the strong and specific social vision encoded within Paul's letters, Boyarin casts him as an inchoate social visionary who was naïve regarding the social impact of his platonized vision.

Ultimately, Paul is a foil for Boyarin's social vision. Boyarin presents the polarity between platonic universals, on the one hand, and tribalism, consisting in embodied human particularity and solidarity, on the other, as being a universal, human dialectic governing social and political identity. Paul, for him, exemplifies the universalizing pole, despite Paul's noble attempts to maintain the dialectic. Rabbinic parochialism and exclusivism occupy Boyarin's other pole, with late 20th century Zionism being an extreme and malignant manifestation. Felicitously, Boyarin inhabits a post-modern, Hegelian synthesis embracing the dialectic. For Boyarin, appeal to common universals as a means to resolving social and political conflict inevitably normalizes a particular cultural expression as unmarked (e.g. patriarchy, maleness or European Protestantism) and thereby problematizes other particular identities (e.g. female or Jew). Equally, embrace of a particular culturally embedded social identity will produce disregard for other cultures leading to their marginalization where there exists a differential in political power. Boyarin sees Paul fleeing the ethnocentrism of his Jewish heritage only to default to the naïve hegemony of ideal universals.³¹

³⁰ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 9: "I will further claim that this very passion for equality led Paul, for various cultural reasons, to equate equality with sameness, and that, despite what I take to be the goodness of his intentions, his social thought was therefore deeply flawed."

³¹ Ibid., 234: ". . . if the Pauline move had within it the possibility of breaking out of the tribal allegiances and commitments to one's own family, as it were, it also contained the seeds of an imperialist and colonizing missionary practice."

Boyarin's post-structuralist, post-colonial culture criticism does not depend on his reading of Paul and can be appreciated or critiqued independently. It is however debatable whether Paul and his letters correspond to the universalizing pole to which Boyarin assigns them. To conform Paul to this characterization, Boyarin has to make several controversial interpretive moves that have been well critiqued elsewhere.³² These interpretive choices include consistently downplaying the role of the cross in Paul's assessment of the human condition, reading "faith" in a Bultmannian sense as a universal human existential capacity, defining "spirit" as the ideal disembodied human essence and not the Hebrew *ruach Adonai*, and conceiving resurrection in Paul to mean escape from the body.

Had Boyarin focused on the contours of Paul's social vision he might have recognized in Paul something very akin to the "diaspora identity" he, himself, promotes. Boyarin's social vision attempts to maintain the polarity between particularity and universality that he thinks Paul resolved toward the side of sameness--a universalism that fuels hegemony. Boyarin aims to valorize the body and embodied cultural distinctives without enabling ethnocentrism. He theorizes that such a virtuous yet strong cultural identity can exist only where the group is not socially dominant. Diaspora Judaism is his historical example of such benign social particularity. He highlights two types of traditional myths that anchor cultural particularity and enable the persistence of cultural groups—namely genealogical myths and myths of autochthony.³³ He dismisses the usefulness of myths of autochthony—myths identifying a people and their culture with a

³² John David Dawson, "Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Christian Identity in Boyarin, Auerback, and Frei," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 181-96; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, review of Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, *ThTo* 52 (1995): 290-93; N. T. Wright, "Two Radical Jews" (review of Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*), *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 3 (1995): 15-23; Judith Gundry-Volf and Miroslav Volf, review of *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, *Books and Culture* 3 (Jl-Ag 1997): 16-18.

³³ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 229. Though we will see below that in practice, these two types of myths are fused together.

specific homeland—because they are inherently oppressive, requiring the assimilation or removal of subaltern groups. With this observation he rejects Zionism. However, he seeks to rehabilitate genealogical myths from their complicity in modern racism. He finds genealogically based identities inherently to affirm the physical body and embodied cultural particularism as well as providing the necessary resources for socio-cultural survival and adaptation over time. He asserts that genealogical identities become malignant only when they achieve social dominance. He offers as his solution

a notion of identity in which there are only slaves but no masters, that is, an alternative to the model of self-determination, which is, after all, in itself a western, imperialist imposition on the rest of the world. I propose Diaspora . . . as a theoretical and historical model to replace national self-determination.³⁴

Renunciation of sovereignty, autochthony, indigeneity (as embodied politically in the notion of self-determination), on the one hand, combined with a fierce tenacity in holding onto cultural identity, on the other, might yet have something to offer.³⁵

The point would be precisely to avoid both the coercive universalism of France, the Pauline option, on the one hand, and the violence of a joining of ethnic particularism and state-power, contemporary Israel, on the other.³⁶

Boyarin's idealistic vision sounds remarkably like Paul's articulation of a new kinship community patterned on the self-sacrificial servanthood of the crucified Messiah. Boyarin's allegorical hermeneutic requires that Paul's church not be physical, socially marked or historical; therefore, he misunderstands Paul's invocation of the baptismal unity formula as erasing particularity rather than as rejecting dominance and marginalization in a socio-culturally diverse church. This thesis will examine Paul's construction of social identity and ethos in each epistle where he cites the baptismal formula to demonstrate that, like Boyarin, Paul sees ethnic identity as a fitting construct for enabling a society of servants.

³⁴ Ibid., 248.

³⁵ Ibid., 259.

³⁶ Ibid., 260.

Meeks and Boyarin represent the strongest mapping of the Pauline baptismal formula onto a Hellenistic religious background, yet we have found them wanting as interpretations of the formula in its Pauline context. Furthermore, Boyarin resists not only what he sees as Paul's movement towards platonism but also how any social identity becomes oppressive when it achieves social dominance and normativity. It is this combination of a drive towards uniformity together with social ascendancy that Boyarin rejects. As we saw above, he critiques Paul's construction of Christian identity because he finds in it the seeds of what later blossomed as hegemonic western Christendom. If, however, I can demonstrate that the baptismal unity formula in Paul's usage did not mandate uniformity but, rather, supported a diverse, reconciling community, then, perhaps, I will have reduced Paul's complicity in the later social history Boyarin rightly condemns. The key measure of how well this reading avoids Boyarin's critique will be to what extent Paul's social vision can be shown to support the continuation of pre-Christian identities within the church. Thus, an interpretation of Paul that highlights his advocacy of social diversity within his churches and that emphasizes Paul's critique of social power will go a long way towards addressing Boyarin's concerns. In responding to Boyarin's ethical challenge we will have to address the following concerns: What remains of Jewish identity (or any other particular social identity) within Paul's vision for social unity? Does Paul's zeal for cohesion in his churches launch an inevitable erosion of alternate social identities? What resources does his mythic vision provide for the preservation of such pre-Christian identities? If Paul did not envision unity as androgynous humanity, an anthropological sameness, then we must inquire as to what kind of unity Paul supports by means of this formula and in what mythic context he understood it. Other options that have been promoted, albeit without the rigor that Meeks and Boyarin have exhibited, will be considered below.

Boyarin, for his part, does not explain what sort of overarching social vision might embrace the multiple cultural identities he valorizes without eroding their bases for

perseverance. He emphasizes the preservation of particular embodied identities to the neglect of characterizing a pluralistic social ethos that would enable such multiple simultaneous diaspora identities. He criticizes Paul's response to the challenge of diverse cultural identities without explaining how his own social vision avoids tribalism or how it enables inter-group solidarity.³⁷ In fact, neither Boyarin nor Paul attend to the broader socio-politics of what over-arching values and arrangements might facilitate the particular kinds of identity construction they defend.³⁸ They both focus, rather, on reinforcing and renewing particular identities.

In the next chapter I will introduce resources from ethnic theory that will aid this assessment of Paul's construction of identity, and then in subsequent chapters those tools will be brought to bear on close readings of how Paul utilizes the baptismal unity formula in each of the epistles in which it occurs.

Gnosticism

As both Meeks and Boyarin have demonstrated, similar themes on the reconciliation of opposites both precede and postdate this Pauline baptismal formula. Their religious historical investigations of this motif proceeded on the basis of that observation. Dennis R. MacDonald has further demonstrated the fecundity of this field with his pioneering examination of the primary sources.³⁹ He focuses more than did Meeks or Boyarin on gnostic Christian developments in the second through fourth centuries.⁴⁰ Space will not

³⁷ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 290 n. 11: "Boyarin criticizes Paul's notion of universal incorporation into Christ as a basis for solidarity but has little to say on alternative ways in which solidarity might specifically be fostered."

³⁸ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, extrapolates from Paul's social vision implications for modern liberal political ethics while attending to the dangers of coercion raised by Boyarin.

³⁹ MacDonald, *No Male and Female*.

⁴⁰ Parallels are: 2 Clem. 12:2, Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 3.13.92-93, *Gos. Thom.* 22, *Tri. Trac.* 132,16-28. The first two items are church fathers citing it as a statement of their heretical opponents. Clement of Alexandria identifies its source as *Gospel of the Egyptians* and its use as that of "Julius Cassian, the founder of docetism" (*Strom.* 3.13.91,

permit an exploration of this post-Pauline history here, except to note two points of relevance to our investigation of the Pauline theme.

The first observation is that the gnostic uses of this motif analyzed by MacDonald are a particular development of the older and broader Hellenistic preoccupation with resolving opposites noted above. In some cases, the gnostic framework appears derivative of the myth of primal androgyny; whereas in other instances it reflects a speculative, platonized, cosmology.⁴¹ Both cases demonstrate how this tradition can be suited to a variety of mythic contexts. Like Meeks, MacDonald concludes that Paul's usage is at odds with these broader religio-cultural currents. And following Meeks he concludes that Paul cites the tradition in order to conform it to his preferred vision. To strengthen this case, MacDonald argues for the chronological priority to Paul of a gnostic version of the formula, despite the fact that all known parallels occur in later sources and appear to be modifications of topics already found in the Pauline epistles. Although certainly not to be ruled out *prima facie*, MacDonald's argument depends too much on historical speculation and has not won much assent, though his collection and analysis of the primary data has been highly valued. Even were such a thesis accepted, to be of value in interpreting Paul's preferred vision one would have to examine closely each of the arguments in which Paul cites this tradition so as to isolate the contrasts Paul would have intended.⁴²

MacDonald indeed attempts such a comparison of one Pauline instance. He reconstructs the form and meaning of the "original" gnostic version of a dominical saying as it supposedly circulated in Corinth. He then proposes how the Corinthian Christians had appropriated that saying, and how Paul in 1 Corinthians tries to reframe and reform

Foster). The 2 Clem 12:2 citation is especially interesting for MacDonald's thesis because the author does not dispute his opponents' attribution of this saying to the Lord and because of its early 2nd century date. *Gos. Thom.* and *Tri. Trac.* are themselves gnostic Christian documents among the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC II,2 and NHC I,5, respectively).

⁴¹ Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 188-89.

⁴² Gundry-Volf, "Christ and Gender," 449-50, for similar methodological observations.

the saying. However, all he actually demonstrates is that Paul resists a platonic, ontological understanding of unity and insists on embodied particularity and social unity. I concur with MacDonald's assessment of Paul's vision of social unity and note that he confirms my assessment of Meeks and Boyarin, above; namely, Paul did not conform the unity formula to Hellenistic, religious speculation about idealized unity. Paul's resistance to ubiquitous cultural tendencies does not demonstrate the anteriority of a particular version of this unity formula, as MacDonald tries to argue.⁴³ Moreover, like Meeks, MacDonald suggests that Paul only employed this formula in order to counter the faulty formula that circulated orally. Even if one were to grant MacDonald's reading of 1 Corinthians, his view does not account for the formula's function in the argument of Galatians or Colossians, as we saw also to be the case with Meeks' treatment above. Moreover, if the Corinthians had known the dominical saying as MacDonald reconstructs it, it is unlikely Paul's reworking of a tradition that they cherished as the words of their Lord would have persuaded them.

Paul's Response to Judaism

In contrast to the authors introduced above who coordinate the Pauline unity formula with Hellenistic religious currents, there is a stream of scholarship that interprets it as a direct rejoinder to some aspect of Judaism. Such a view receives strong support from the Jew/Greek dichotomy present in all three occurrences of the formula, as well as from the prominence of Paul's fight against circumcision throughout his letters.⁴⁴ Most commonly,

⁴³ Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit," 84: "Dafür ist das zugrundeliegende Motiv doch wohl zu sehr verbreitet gewesen, es kehrt in traditions-geschichtlich kaum zu vermittelnden Zusammenhängen wieder."

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90: "Schon die Gewichtung der Reihe—so sehr die Beibehaltung aller drei Gegensatzpaare notiert werden muß—legt den Akzent eindeutig auf die Antithese von Ἰουδαῖος/Ἕλληγν und ihre Aufhebung im σῶμα Χριστοῦ. Solche Betonung erklärt sich neben der gesamten Argumentation des corpus Paulinum auch aus der Gedankenführung des Galaterbriefs."

the Pauline formula has been read as a counter to the chauvinistic Jewish tradition evidenced in the *Tosefta*:

R. Judah says: There are three Benedictions which one must say every day: "Blessed be He who did not make me a Gentile"; "Blessed be He who did not make me a woman"; "Blessed be He who did not make me an uneducated man." (*t. Ber. 7:18*, Williams)⁴⁵

Although it is no doubt correct to read Paul as countering such sentiments of privilege, we ought not to posit Paul's direct dependence on a particular version of such views. First, we cannot ascertain whether Paul knew such a thanksgiving prayer, as we find it attested only in sources at least a century after Paul.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he was doubtlessly familiar with the prejudices so expressed.⁴⁷ Moreover, use of such self-privileging, binary oppositions to characterize the world was not unique to Judaism. The commonly noted Greek parallel to the Jewish thanksgiving cited above (" . . . that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian") and the widely attested synecdoche of using exclusive opposites to represent all people merely locate Paul within broad cultural norms and linguistic vernacular.⁴⁸ Contextualizing Paul's use of this formula within his debates with Judaism

⁴⁵ A. Lukyn Williams, *Tractate Berakoth* (London: SPCK, 1921), 84 n.4, notes the common variant for the third benediction, "who hast not made me a bondman," which conforms more closely to the slave/free pair in the Pauline formula. Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), 33; Witherington, "Rite and Rights," 594; Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (3rd ed; THKNT 9; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964), 90; Raphael Loewe, *The Position of Women in Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1966), 43; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 187.

⁴⁶ Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit," 85; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 217; Madeleine Boucher, "Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Cor 11,11-12 and Gal 3,28: The NT and on the Role of Women," *CBQ* 31 (1969): 53-54.

⁴⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 217: "Although it is difficult to say whether this prayer was already known to Jewish converts to Christianity in the fortieth year of the first century, its consciousness of religious male privilege was widespread not only among Jews but among Greeks and Romans as well."

⁴⁸ Relevant citations are listed in Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 167; Snodgrass, "Galatians 3:28," 170 n.39; Boucher, "Some Unexplored Parallels," 53-55; MacDonald,

cannot be limited to merely citing apparent parallels.⁴⁹ In line with how Meeks and Boyarin sought to locate the saying in a broader mythic context, so those sketching a Jewish background to Paul's usage must delineate a fuller cultural and social vision of what Paul is responding to and, conversely, advocating by means of this formula.

Robin Scroggs interprets the formula in terms of Paul's response to Judaism conceiving that contrast in classic Lutheran cum Bultmannian terms of earning salvation by works versus the leveling power of unmerited grace.⁵⁰ Such proposals struggle to account for Gal 3:28 not only because it is difficult to square the individualism inherent in this view with a call to corporate unity, but also because it is hard to make Paul's supposed opposition to "doing" the basis for social practice. Those interpretations that emphasize the formula's affirmation of salvation by faith alone, irrespective of one's social status, founder in their explanations of the unity affirmed. They are forced to read "all of you are one in Christ Jesus" in Gal 3:28d as meaning either "all of you are the same in Christ Jesus" or "all of you are equal in Christ Jesus" without sufficiently justifying such a rendering of εἷς.⁵¹ But the question "one what?" must be answered and

No Male and Female, 122-23. Cf. Bouttier, "Complexio Oppositorum," 4: "Au-delà des binômes réunissant les hommes jusque là opposés, il faut percevoir donc aussi l'idée de totalité." Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit," 85: "Diese Topik allerdings ist so sehr verbreitet, daß eine Herleitung von Gal 3 28a aus diesem Zusammenhang wenig Wahrscheinlichkeit besitzen dürfte."

⁴⁹ Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 82 (1962): 5: ". . . what is the significance in the context of Paul's epistles of these parallels. . . . what is the use that Paul makes of those parallels which he allegedly borrowed?"

"Paul's context is of infinitely more significance than the question of the alleged parallels. Indeed, to make Paul's context conform to the content of the alleged parallels is to distort Paul."

⁵⁰ Scroggs, "Eschatological Woman," 288: "God, in not counting up the merits of a man's prideful and/or desperate life according to the performance principle, has bestowed on him genuine human existence."

⁵¹ E.g. Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (13th ed; KEK 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 174-75: "An den Getauften sind die aus dem alten Äon stammenden metaphysischen, geschichtlichen und natürlichen Unterschiede sacramental, d.h. aber verborgen und real aufgehoben. Die Formulierung: "einen Juden oder einen Griechen gibt es nicht mehr" betont sehr stark die Wirklichkeit der Gleichheit aller in

coordinated with Paul's social vision in the epistle. Below in Chapter Three on Galatians, I will examine further the function of 3:28 in Paul's argument in Galatians and the difficulties faced by coordinating the unity formula with an "earning versus believing" soteriology.

Many studies that, contrary to Scroggs, seek to deny the relevance of Gal 3:28c to women's roles in society or church nevertheless share Scroggs' flawed assessment that in its epistolary and theological context the formula opposes a Jewish emphasis on meriting salvation through performance. Such authors insist that Gal 3:28, understood as proclaiming universal access to God's grace irrespective of social status, has no direct implications for social practice but speaks merely of life *coram deo*, "in the presence of God."⁵² These studies share the problem noted above, namely, that they have no adequate explanation for what one thing the believers become in Christ. Rather, either explicitly or implicitly, they turn "one" into "equal" or "the same." In fact, many of them do not even bring Gal 3:28d, "for all of you are one in Christ Jesus," into their discussion.

Scroggs, however, believes Gal 3:28 does have social ethical implications. Nevertheless, his interpretation suggests the difficulty inherent in providing a hermeneutical link between the doctrine of salvation he presents as Paul's and a Pauline social ethic. To support his argument that Gal 3:28 is the hermeneutical key to Paul's view of women's roles he ingeniously provides a hermeneutical link via a neo-Freudian

Christus Jesus. Positiv ausgedrückt, handelt es sich um den Sachverhalt, daß alle . . . in Christus Jesus Einer sind, nämlich Christus selbst." H. Wayne House, "Neither . . . Male nor Female . . . In Christ Jesus," *BSac* 145 (1988): 54: "In society these three pairs—none of which were ontologically unequal by creation—are unequally privileged, but in Christ's offer of salvation, Paul argued, there is no distinction. So then in Galatians 3:26-28, Paul was saying that no kind of person is excluded from the *position* of being a child of Abraham who has faith in Jesus Christ" (italics original).

⁵² E.g. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1981), 126-27, who concludes, "Our study of the context of Galatians 3:28 has shown that Paul was not reflecting upon relations *within* the body of Christ when he had the text penned. He was thinking about the basis of membership in the body of Christ" (italics original). Cf. the studies mentioned in the previous note.

critique of culture that assesses all civilizations as based on a manifestation of a “performance principle” that generates domination, repression and alienation. He thus makes the cancellation of the performance principle in Christ simultaneously “the end of human hostility, aggression, and domination” not only in Judaism but also in all cultures.⁵³ So for him, the baptismal formula supports a social vision of egalitarianism, “[t]he radical equality of man [sic] before God.”⁵⁴ Despite his attempt to construe his conclusions as fitting within Paul’s vision of the eschatological community, he still fails to describe the social unity Paul seeks. Equality is not the same thing as unity. The former is likely an anachronistic imposition of modern, liberal democratic ideals onto Paul; whereas the latter, unity, is explicitly Paul’s concern.⁵⁵ An adequate interpretation of Paul’s use of the formula must either characterize the unity he calls for or, with the anti-feminist interpreters, make a case that social unity is not actually his concern. In examining each argument in which Paul cites this formula, I will argue that he employs it precisely to support his case for ecclesial unity and identity and not particularly to explain individual salvation.

Rather than interpret Gal 3:28 against a developed construction of Pauline theology, Troy Martin treats it narrowly as a direct counter to the covenant of circumcision in Gen 17.⁵⁶ He draws the slave/free and male/female dichotomies into this orbit by observing that in Gen 17:12-13 slaves owned by Jews were subject to circumcision, whereas free resident aliens in Israel were not, and that only the male of the male/female pair was subject to circumcision, thus showing that all three pairs register a differential applicability of circumcision. Thus, Martin argues that Gal 3:28 makes baptism the replacement for circumcision as the entry requirement into the covenant people, “. . . the proclamation only pertains to the absence of these distinctions as requirements for

⁵³ Scroggs, "Eschatological Woman," 288.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁵ This is also the chief weakness of Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 205-41.

⁵⁶ Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision."

baptism in contrast to the requirements in the covenant of circumcision.”⁵⁷ Whereas circumcision did not apply to all dwelling in Israel, baptism applies to all who want to live in Christian community, slave or free, male or female. To do this however, Martin has to deny that ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ echoes Gen 1:27 and argue that it is merely a stylistic variation of the pattern expressed in the first two pairs.⁵⁸ His thesis requires that phrase to be merely a rejoinder to the covenant of circumcision’s male focus. In focusing the point of Gal 3:28 on determining candidates for baptism, Martin under-interprets its force and neglects its social implications.⁵⁹ In fact, he neither explores the social situation created by circumcision being differentially applied to these pairs nor does he connect 3:28 to Paul’s social vision for the church in Galatians. Nevertheless, one must appreciate Martin’s attempt to frame the saying explicitly within a cultural symbol system while assessing the significance of all three pairs in Gal 3:28 for the broader argument of the epistle. Many commentators neglect these important concerns.

Both Scroggs and Martin highlight the fact that interpreting Gal 3:28 and parallels within the broad context of Paul’s campaign for inclusion of Gentiles *qua* Gentiles

⁵⁷ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁸ His case against the echo of Gen 1:27 is weak. See n.12, above. Furthermore, he strives to argue that Gal 3:28 does not reflect a pre-Pauline baptismal formula because he wants to make the contextual case that Paul has created this saying specifically for his argument against the circumcision party in Galatia who are arguing from Gen 17. Not only is he unpersuasive, this aspect of his argument is beside the point. He could have argued just as well that the saying’s original aim was to replace circumcision with baptism as the ritual of covenant initiation, whether it was coined by Paul or other early Christians. Finally, he insists that this epistle concerns simply the renegotiation of the covenant ritual and not the cosmic, apocalyptic shift that is central to Paul’s case in Galatians. For him “no male and female” in 3:28 should be understood as supporting baptism’s displacement of circumcision and not as new creation disrupting creation.

⁵⁹ Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision," 124: “Galatians 3:28 articulates a common entrance requirement that ignores cultural, social, and sexual differences and provides for the full membership of all the baptized. It does not, however, explain how this full membership is understood.” An implication of his thesis is that somehow circumcised but foreign slaves in Jewish households were “full members,” whatever that means, but the wife of the household was not, as she could not undergo the ritual. Martin’s lack of social description further confuses his case.

together with Jews in the people of God makes intuitive sense yet is fraught with difficulty. In the end their approaches fail to characterize that Pauline vision in a way that can adequately explain how and why he utilizes the formula. The approach of Scroggs and others in that vein have been shown to be incapable of describing the unity envisioned by the formula in Galatians. They will also be found wanting as descriptions of Paul's gospel in Galatians. Martin hamstrings his investigation by narrowly framing the debate as being over rituals of initiation rather than over covenant identity more broadly. However, presenting Paul as responding to conflict over Jewish covenantal and ethnic identity could place the focus squarely on social dynamics.

Trends in Pauline studies over the last generation have seriously weakened the once dominant "earning versus believing" soteriology as the paradigm for understanding Paul's relationship with his ancestral tradition.⁶⁰ The contention is not that Paul would endorse earning merit before God, rather that the "earning versus believing" dichotomy is not the fight Paul saw himself engaged in. This shift in Pauline studies centers his debate with Judaism on the identity of God's covenant people and on how Christ's death and resurrection affect the Mosaic covenant. Thus, the background to his debate in Galatians, for instance, would not be primarily divergent views of how someone could receive salvation but, rather, who are God's elect.⁶¹ If, for Paul, salvation was identical with

⁶⁰ E.g. Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); repr. from *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁶¹ Bruce W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law: The Third Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism*, Durham, September, 1994 (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 75-97. *Pace* Peter Stuhlmacher and Donald A. Hagner, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), 42-44, 63-66, 86-88, 104-05, whose criticisms of this shift in Pauline studies frame the discussion in terms of individual soteriology and

inclusion in God's people, then the identity, ethos, and appropriate boundaries of the covenant people become concerns of the first order. Circumcision became a site of such controversy for Paul not because it implied achievement or merit but because it was central to the Jewish understanding of covenant identity. Paul argues that with Christ, the covenant has been renegotiated; therefore, the contours and character of the covenant people have been reconfigured. This approach to Paul's theologizing inseparably connects his soteriology to his ethics by means of corporate identity and ethos.⁶²

Two studies have shown the promise of this new perspective on Paul for locating Gal 3:28 within Paul's overarching vision. Ben Wiebe recognizes that Gal 3:26-29 caps Paul's argument that the church as a community of Jews and Gentiles constitutes God's new covenant people: "The new oneness between Jew and Gentile (and that of slave and free, male and female) becomes the focus of attention in fundamental continuity with the story of Israel in promise and covenant now finding fulfillment and renewal in Christ."⁶³ In other words, "all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28d) expresses reconciled community in contrast to the social exclusion of the dichotomized pairs. Wiebe traces how Paul's argument in Gal 3 includes non-Jews in God's promise to Abraham through Christ and apart from circumcision. Yet, it is not immediately clear how incorporation of non-Jews into Abraham's family and blessings abrogates the social divisions inscribed by slave/free and male/female. Wiebe rightly asks, ". . . in what sense "oneness" is to be understood."⁶⁴ He senses that if the mythic background to Paul's use of the formula is a

in terms of "believing versus doing/earning" or "monergism versus synergism" and, thus, are picking dogmatic fights without appreciating the covenantal and communal terms of the new discussion.

⁶² This summary of the so-called "new perspective" on Paul stands even if one accepts the corrections offered by Simon Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), that some exemplars of the new perspective neglect Jewish emphasis on faithful obedience as the basis of eschatological vindication.

⁶³ Ben Wiebe, "Two Texts on Women (1 Tim 2:11-15; Gal 3:26-29): A Test for Interpretation," *HBT* 16 (1994): 65.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

story of the covenant identity of God's people, then "this unity has precisely to do with transformed relationships in community."⁶⁵ However, he provides no more guidance as to how Paul envisions that community of transformed relationships. Therefore, he has to resort to vague descriptions about inferiority based on race being "transcended," "full participation in the people of God," or "mutual decision-making and communication."

David Horrell also locates Paul's use of the unity formula in the mythic context of Israel's covenant identity. He grounds Paul's renegotiation of that covenant identity in Paul's corporate Christology, thus identifying the frequent Pauline descriptor, "in Christ," as a statement of corporate, covenant identity. He summarizes, "Paul's emphatic and repeated declaration that in Christ there is no longer Jew and Gentile reflects not just a soteriological conviction, but a profound statement about the identity and unity of the new community which God has created, a statement which shapes and structures social interaction in the congregations" ⁶⁶

As to how the statement shapes and structures social interaction, Horrell offers some probative suggestions. First, he analyzes Paul's handling of divisions over eating habits in Rom 14-15, 1 Cor 8-10, and Gal 2 to show that when social expectations derived from identity apart from Christ threaten to divide the congregation, those extra-Christian identities and practices must cede to Christian identity. He argues that in each case, Paul puts the greater burden to compromise on the party with greater social power. In his earlier and fuller treatment of ethical crises in the Corinthian church, Horrell helpfully added that Paul's call for the "strong" to sacrifice their rights for the "weak" also derived from his Christology. That is, their corporate identity and life-style based in Christ are to be patterned after their self-sacrificial Lord.⁶⁷ Second, he notes that Paul's conceiving of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Horrell, "Christology," 343.

⁶⁷ David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 149, 204-05. Cf. Bouttier, "Complexio Oppositorum," 17-18.

the church in terms of Israel suggests that the ethnic overtones of Jewishness might carry over into the church's identity and social practice. He briefly highlights how Paul's kinship language supports that idea.⁶⁸ Here Horrell has provided a mythic context in which to situate Paul's use of the unity formula and has confirmed that understanding by tracing its social manifestations in Paul's paranses. Furthermore, by characterizing the social unity as religio-ethnic solidarity that must not be violated by other loyalties, he has provided a way to assess the Pauline implications for the slave/free and male/female dichotomies, as well. Those identities also must not disrupt the new primary loyalty in Christ. This thesis will build on Horrell's insights to demonstrate that in each epistle where the formula occurs, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and Colossians, it supports an ethnic vision of ecclesial unity wherein cultural conflict is to be governed by appeal to *imitatio Christi*, who functions as the archetypal son whose character is the guide for group ethos.

Ethnic Unity and Paul

At the outset of this chapter, I noted that both Meeks and Horrell remind us of the sociology-of-knowledge concern to inquire after what social arrangements this formula supports when understood in its cultural and mythic context. If the formula does indeed support a call to social unity, then we ought to find confirmation of that hypothesis in how the unity formula is related to images of and exhortations to social unity within each epistle. Treatment of the formula's place in the argument of each epistle in the following chapters will demonstrate that it primarily supports a call to social unity that can helpfully be characterized in terms of ethnic solidarity. The prevalence of ethnic imagery among Paul's conceptions of his communities will be seen as encouraging a model of ethnicity as a heuristic device. A theory of ethnicity appropriate for Paul and his readers will help us to recognize aspects of Paul's rhetoric that participate in this construction of a social

⁶⁸ Horrell, "Christology," 341.

identity which we otherwise might not have connected together as part of the same discursive strategy. In order to assess how the formula functions in each argument to call for ethnic solidarity and unity, I will delineate what ethnicity is and how ethnic discourse shapes social behavior. But before elaborating a theory of ethnicity, a brief survey of several other attempts to characterize Paul's social vision will further establish the need for such an approach. For the time being, I will presume a common sense definition of ethnicity as a presumption of extended kinship together with the social expectations deriving from that identity.

Social Unity in Paul's Churches

Apart from concern for interpreting the baptismal unity formula that is the topic of this study, there is ample evidence that ethnicity is an important part of how Paul conceived of his churches. Meeks' own pioneering attempt to provide social description of the Pauline congregations underscores the relevance of ethnic identity to that description. In order to avoid anachronistic imposition on the social information in Paul's letters, he seeks social phenomena in Roman antiquity with which to compare and contrast Paul's churches. He lights on the standard examples of the household, the voluntary association, the synagogue, and the philosophical or rhetorical school.⁶⁹

In contemplating the ancient household as a parallel to the Christian ἐκκλησία, Meeks finds one of its inadequacies to be its inability to account for the cohesion and interconnection between house churches across a whole city (e.g. Corinth), region (e.g.

⁶⁹ Meeks, *First Urban*, 74-84. For rehearsals of similar lists of possible ancient precedents of the churches see, John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 132-40; Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 17-22; Judith M. Lieu, "The Forging of Christian Identity," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 71-72.

Galatia), or the entire Pauline movement.⁷⁰ But were one to consider households as sub-units of an extended kinship or ethnic network, these problems diminish. An ethnic identity, like that of the Jews in antiquity, provides a close parallel for the citywide, regional, and empire-wide networked identity.

In fact, Meeks all but identifies the ethnic group in general and Israel in particular as the best fit. Along with the household, he also examines the synagogue as a parallel to the churches, noting that it complements the household model in just the areas where a generic Greco-Roman household falls short--a broad, trans-local cohesion and religious identity.⁷¹ Indeed, he notes that the primary Pauline term for the congregations, ἐκκλησία, seems to derive from the LXX rendering of the *qahal YHWH*, suggesting the appropriateness of seeking parallels between Israelite identity and the Pauline movement.⁷² As Meeks proceeds to analyze Paul's "Language of Belonging" and "Language of Separation," he repeatedly calls attention to the processes of acculturation, the language of fictive kinship, group identity formation vis-à-vis outsiders, and family-like affective bonding, all of which characterize both ancient Judaism and ethnic groups in general.⁷³

Similarly, Robert Banks' description of "Paul's idea of community" sorts through the same options for comparable ancient social phenomena, as well as Paul's primary metaphors for the church.⁷⁴ He comes a step closer towards identifying the ethnic group as a model for the early Christian congregations in that he lights on "family" as the parallel and not just "household."⁷⁵ He argues that family is the controlling metaphor

⁷⁰ Meeks, *First Urban*, 75-77. Cf. Karl Olav Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross-Cultural Comparisons* (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 91; Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 98-99.

⁷¹ Meeks, *First Urban*, 80-81.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 79, 86-88.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 84-107.

⁷⁴ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 17-32.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 52-61. Cf. Sandnes, *A New Family*, 65, 73-82.

behind a wide range of Pauline expressions. Unfortunately, Banks' study focuses solely on the congregations as discrete entities and eschews trans-local networks and relationships.⁷⁶ If, like Meeks, he had considered the broader field of inter-church relations that is manifest in the Pauline epistles, he might have noticed that the concept of an ethnic group embraces kinship networks and culture, as well as familial relations, and thus even more Pauline rhetoric than Banks recognized.

As indisputably enlightening and well-informed as these two studies are, neither Banks nor Meeks makes explicit the tacit models or theories activated in choosing their points of comparison between the churches and other ancient social groups. One can easily glean from their studies what terms of comparison were thought to be interesting—structures and terms for human authority, level of trans-local relationships between smaller groups, cohesion and acculturation, cultic ritual—but the rationale seems ultimately to be their erudite intuition. In fact, later in the same chapter when Meeks does employ social theories (sect theory, social cohesion, purity and boundaries) to analyze the Christian groups, these are not correlated with the previously analyzed features that were drawn from ancient phenomena.

Robert Atkins' ethnographical study of the character of the first Pauline assemblies notes this methodological gap in Meeks' study and rigorously employs social theory in an attempt to improve upon the work of Meeks and others.⁷⁷ He urges that further attention be paid to Paul's familial metaphors and, in particular, investigates the social function of Paul's metaphor of adoption, noting that it is a part of a broader discourse of fictive

⁷⁶ For instance, Banks is at pains to separate κοινωνία and cognates from the field of the family metaphor. I can only see this as stemming from an anachronistic, modern conception of the nuclear family. Sandnes, *A New Family*, 136-42, correctly makes the case that the κοινων- word group frequently characterized family relations in antiquity.

⁷⁷ Robert A. Atkins, *Egalitarian Community: Ethnography and Exegesis* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 10-11, 18-20, for his appreciative critique of Meeks.

kinship.⁷⁸ Despite making this observation, Atkins' study is governed by Mary Douglas' grid-group model of culture and does not invoke a model of ethnicity. His understandable reason for this is his stated purpose of transcending the anthropological bind between using categories native to the culture being studied (so-called emic categories) and the foreign analytical categories of the social sciences (etic categories). Douglas' grid-group model of culture was designed to negotiate this impasse. Atkins notes that reducing ethnocentrism in interpretation is a concern shared by ethnographers and biblical scholars. The primary purpose of his study is to demonstrate that anthropological methods developed to resolve these difficulties are transferable to biblical interpretation.

Philip Esler also has argued that Galatians can be fruitfully read as ethnic rhetoric in which Paul attempts to shape group cohesion and boundaries in his churches.⁷⁹ He rightly notes two virtues of making explicit one's social theory or model.⁸⁰ First, explicating one's understanding of how a society functions allows one to assess the adequacy of one's assumptions against what is known about the culture in which the text was produced, as well as against the text's own presentation. Moreover, in this way, one can more easily be held accountable by others evaluating the interpretation. Second, in making the hermeneutical leap from the Pauline vision to our own world, a model can provide the means for translating concepts between cultures, if it is shown that the model or theory employed is relevant and illuminating when applied both to the social world of the NT and to the interpreter's world. In this regard, it is worth repeating Esler's insistence that social-scientific models and theories are not granted ontic status by their

⁷⁸ Ibid., 172-75. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 536 n. 13; Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 53-54, note the neglect of familial terminology in studies of Paul's images for community.

⁷⁹ Philip Francis Esler, *Galatians* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁸⁰ Philip Francis Esler, "Introduction: Models, Context and Kerygma in New Testament Interpretation," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. Philip Francis Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 4-8. Cf. Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (London: Routledge, 1989), 8, regarding the importance of making models explicit in interpreting ancient cultural data.

practitioners; they are merely heuristic tools. “Either they throw up a set of new and interesting questions, which the texts themselves must answer, or they do not. Models which do not have this result will be discarded and replaced with others.”⁸¹

The main differences between this present study and Esler’s work on Galatians can be viewed in terms of scope and aim. In terms of scope, this study compares how the baptismal unity formula is deployed in three different epistles to build ecclesial identity and solidarity, whereas Esler examines one entire epistle as ethnic rhetoric without particular focus on the formula in Gal 3:28. Regarding the difference in aim between our studies, this project interprets these Pauline letters by grasping more clearly the social vision inscribed in them; Esler pursues the historical-critical goal of better understanding formative Christianity by using the NT documents as evidence. Simply stated, this study seeks to elucidate the Pauline vision inscribed in these literary-cultural productions, irrespective of how well it was actualized. Esler wants to approximate what actually happened. He helpfully summarizes his emphasis: “... although the Bible as a book plays a central role in Christian self-understanding, Christianity is not a religion of the book. Rather, Christianity is a religion of a series of revelatory acts to which certain texts bear witness in a manner which has subsequently been settled as authoritative.”⁸²

In his model of inter-cultural reading, it is the serendipitous experience of entering the foreign social world of the NT, via the biblical texts, that gives Christians fresh perspectives on how to live in their own culture. In an earlier essay, he is more explicit that such social scientific investigation may sometimes provide access to the revelatory events such that the scholar may correct the ideological distortions that have crept into the biblical text.⁸³ In that essay, he explicitly distances himself from Wayne Meeks’

⁸¹ Esler, “Models,” 7.

⁸² Esler, *Galatians*, 5.

⁸³ Esler, “Models,” 18. Such an assertion begs the question of the previous quote of what manner of authoritative witness has been settled upon.

proposal for a sociology of knowledge approach to NT interpretation.⁸⁴ Meeks' proposal is more consonant with the approach of this project in that it recognizes the biblical texts as cultural products and seeks to interpret them in relation to Christian theology and ethics.⁸⁵ All are agreed that respect for the text as a means of communication and as literary art demands sensitivity to the culture in which it was produced and which is embedded in the discourse every bit as much as the words on the page. But Esler's depiction of his difference with Meeks at this point expresses well the distinction between doing history and interpreting the NT:

This [Esler's own intercultural reading strategy] seems preferable to Meeks' own answer that sociology of knowledge readings of the New Testament are not so much interested in the determination of what really happened, the enterprise so decried by Frei, but rather in the meaning of what the actors did and said within their culture and their unique subculture since this seems too closely associated with interpretive readings of the texts.⁸⁶

The present study seeks to be "closely associated with interpretive readings of the texts." Yet such culturally attuned reading is dependent on and appreciative of the fruits of research into the social world of the NT.

Summary

To this point, we have seen that interpretations of the baptismal unity formula as an instance of Hellenistic concern for anthropological universals have proved incompatible with Paul's use of the formula. Furthermore, both the Pauline presentation of the formula in his arguments and scholarly attempts at social description of the Pauline churches point toward ethnic identity as a category for further inquiry. Moreover, readings of the formula as Paul's response to Judaism show renewed promise in view of the altered landscape of Pauline studies that focuses more on communal identity than on individualistic soteriology. Closer examination of each epistle in which the formula

⁸⁴ Ibid., 20 n.21.

⁸⁵ Meeks, "Social Embodiment."

⁸⁶ Esler, "Models," 20 n.21.

occurs will validate the thesis that the formula supports Paul's construal of the believers as a new ethnic group patterned on the identity of Israel as reenvisioned through Christ. But first, clarification of ethnic theory and rhetoric will enable us to better recognize Paul's discursive strategy when we turn to examining the Pauline texts themselves.

Chapter Two: Reading Paul Ethnically

Ethnic theory provides a heuristic lens that clarifies how Paul promotes social solidarity and unity in his churches. Furthermore, attending to Paul's ethnic rhetoric will illuminate the mythic and social contexts in which the baptismal unity formula gains its particular force in each epistle. To say that Paul employs ethnic reasoning is to note that he uses both the vocabulary and special logic of kinship in order to persuade his audience. Paul casts them as a new ethnic group. They have common ancestors (Abraham, the patriarchs, God the Father, even Paul) and a common homeland ("in Christ," "the kingdom of God," "new creation") from which their identity derives. These ethnic foundations also become the warrants for Paul's exhortation of appropriate behaviors and group boundaries. This ethnic ethos in turn reinforces the collective identity and solidarity in a recursive process.¹ Employment of ethnic theory, then, helps us attend not merely to what Paul says in each letter, but to what he does by means of it.² Such a socially oriented approach addresses the classic challenge of coordinating Paul's ethics with his theology.³ Sociology of knowledge perspectives emphasize that such a dichotomy is fallacious in that social practice is governed by communal stories and

¹ David G. Horrell, "From ἀδελφοί to οἶκος θεοῦ: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity," *JBL* 120 (2001): 294: ". . . kinship language shapes social relationships and is simultaneously reproduced in the context of those relationships."

² Following Meeks' assertion cited above in Chapter One, p. 4: "The comprehensive question concerning the texts that are our primary sources is not merely what each one says, but what it does." Meeks, *First Urban*, 7. Cf. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 38.

³ Esler, Galatians, 45, 215-18; John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 26-34, 73-75, 220-34. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 18: "Theology is for Paul never merely a speculative exercise; it is always a tool for constructing community."

symbols that attain greater verisimilitude through the practices they authorize.⁴ Similarly, the criticism leveled at E. P. Sanders for his isolation of “getting in” from “staying in” in his characterization of Jewish and Pauline “patterns of religion” is also redressed by ethnic theory in that social identity, ethos and boundaries are mutually constituting social dynamics.⁵

A theory of ethnic identity construction enables us to connect aspects of Paul’s discourse we might not otherwise have perceived as linked. First, the concept of an ethnic group will integrate various aspects of how Paul characterizes the believers. For instance, his pervasive labeling of them as brethren together with his exhortations to harmony internally (e.g. Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 10:32-33; 11:33; Col 3:12-17) and collective honor externally (e.g. 1 Cor 6:1-6; 14:23; Col 4:5-6) may be seen as the logic of ethnic solidarity. Similarly, warranting ethical appeals in the character of illustrious forbearers, whom the members together represent, as Paul often does (e.g. Gal 2:20; 3:6-9; 1 Cor 4:15-17; 10:1-13; Col 2:6, 20) is typical of ethnic rhetoric. Each of these and other particular aspects of Paul’s discourse take on greater significance for identity formation when seen as contributing synergistically to an ethnic social vision.

Most importantly for this thesis, analysis of Paul’s ethnic vision for social unity in his churches will address the questions posed in my previous chapter: What one thing do the believers in Christ together become? Into what mythic framework has Paul set this baptismal unity formula? What are the social practices and ethos it supports? Ethnic

⁴ Kee, *Knowing the Truth*, 21; citing Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 89: “What symbols do, he declares, is to function in such a way as ‘to synthesize a people’s ethos—the tone, character and quality of life, its moral and aesthetic style and mode—and their worldview—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order.’” Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 39-59.

⁵ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 33, 73-74; James D. G. Dunn, “The Theology of Galatians: The Issue of Covenantal Nomism,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 1: *Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 130; Robert H. Gundry, “Grace, Works and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Bib* 66 (1985): 8-9.

theory allows us to perceive how Paul presents the believers as one new people whose identity and ethos cohere as ethnic solidarity. Thus, the mythic framework for Paul's utilization of the unity formula is the story of this people's formation, heritage and future, including the symbols, cultural resources and practices that instantiate that story; for instance, baptism and the Lord's Supper.⁶ Paul uses the baptismal unity formula to reinforce this identity as he writes to strengthen and unify these communities in Christ.

Defining Ethnicity

Ethnic groups are not static, objective categories to which people happen to belong. Rather, "ethnic identity is *socially constructed and subjectively perceived*."⁷ Summarizing his research on the Lue ethnic group of Thailand, anthropologist Michael Moerman states, "Someone is a Lue by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and of acting in ways that validate his Lueness."⁸ This conclusion highlights that the only general "objective feature" enabling observers to identify ethnic groups is the testimony of those who create the group. An ethnic group is constituted by people who mutually recognize each other as members of that group. That is, it is an inter-subjective reality that may be observed by outsiders as the ethnic actors live according to their corporate identity. Ethnic groups distinguish themselves from their neighbors by various strategies, and certain commonly used markers—somatic features, language, religion, shared cultural forms—have been proposed and found wanting as a basis for defining ethnicity.⁹

⁶ On this symbolic and community constituting function of baptism and the Lord's Supper see, Meeks, *First Urban*, 150-62; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 80-88.

⁷ Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19, italics original. Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. Fredrik Barth; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 10, calls this inter-subjective nature the "primary feature" of ethnic groups.

⁸ Michael Moerman, "Ethnic Identification in a Complex Civilization: Who Are the Lue?" *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965): 1222.

⁹ Cynthia K. Mahmood and Sharon L. Armstrong, "Do Ethnic Groups Exist? A Cognitive Perspective on the Concept of Cultures," *Ethnology* 31 (1992): 1-14; Moerman, "Lue," 1215-30; Gary G. Porton, *Goyim: Gentiles and Israelites in Mishnah-Tosefta* (BJS 155;

Modern genetics has confirmed the observations of anthropologists that actual biological descent is not the basis of ethnicity.¹⁰ What is important is the collective will to actualize as a group identity. Without a collective will to exist, an ethnic identity will dissolve. Shaye Cohen affirms this consensus:

Sociologists agree that ethnic or national identity is imagined; it exists because certain persons want it to exist and believe that it exists. It can be willed into and out of existence. So far all agree. However, exactly what needs to be imagined to create and maintain an ethnic or national identity is the subject of ongoing debate and discussion.¹¹

Cohen demonstrates this subjective dynamic of ethnicity through an analysis of Jewish identity in Roman antiquity.¹² He searches ancient sources for evidence of objective criteria by which one could have distinguished Jews and concludes that looks (somatic characteristics), clothing, speech, names and occupations were not reliable factors for identifying individual Jews. He observes that it was repeatedly assumed that Jews could pass as non-Jewish Romans and vice versa. His study concludes that Jews were most readily recognized by one another and by outsiders by two factors—association and Torah observance. They had an identity because they actively formed groups and

Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 288-89; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-18.

¹⁰ For rejection of race and ethnicity as biological categories, N.H. Barton, "Population Genetics: A New Apportionment of Human Diversity," *Current Biology* 7 (1997): 757-58; Andrew Marshall, "Slicing Soup," *Nature Biotechnology* 20 (2002): 637; Barbar Cohen, "Census, Race and Science," *Nature Genetics* 24 (2000): 97-98; Svante Pääbo, "Genomics and Society: The Human Genome and Our View of Ourselves," *Science* 291 (2001): 1219-20; Morris W. Foster and Richard R. Sharp, "Race, Ethnicity, and Genomics: Social Classifications as Proxies of Biological Heterogeneity," *Genome Research* 12 (2002): 844-50; Pamela Sankar and Mildred K. Cho, "Genetics: Enhanced: Toward a New Vocabulary of Human Genetic Variation," *Science* 298 (2002): 1337-38; Eliot Marshall, "Cultural Anthropology: DNA Studies Challenge the Meaning of Race," *Science* 282 (1998): 654-55; Peter Aldhous, "Geneticist Fears 'Race-Neutral' Studies Will Fail Ethnic Groups," *Nature* 418 (2002): 355-56; Nell Boyce, "All the Difference in the World." *U.S. News & World Report* 133, no. 18 (11 Nov 2002): 80.

¹¹ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 31; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25-68.

promoted a common ethos. Similarly, Nils Dahl, in his exploratory essay, "The Nations in the New Testament," observes the bewildering variety of features by which named people groups, both in antiquity and in the present, distinguish themselves from others and concludes, "One might almost say that a nation is made up of persons who consider themselves, and who are considered by others to be a nation."¹³

Yet to argue that ethnic identity is self-ascriptional and socially constructed does not thereby undermine the reality that ethnic identity is also ascribed by birth. One is born into the ethnic group of one's parents. The collective will to exist pre-establishes the ethnic context into which one is born. Each succeeding generation and the individual members of it must negotiate their way in a poly-ethnic social world, preserving tradition or modifying cultural practice and norms, reinforcing or relaxing proscriptions on inter-group traffic, reclaiming or rejecting their ethnic heritage. In other words, ascription by birth leads to self-ascription. The central role of birth in promulgating the ethnic group provides the myth of interrelationship with its credibility. Ethnicity is not actual kinship but fictive kinship. In differentiating ethnicity from actual kinship, which he refers to as an aggregation of families, Benedict Anderson says that the members of this "imagined community . . . will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."¹⁴ An ethnic group has projected the concept of kinship beyond the limits of actual familial verifiability, rendering it a symbolic kinship, in which ascription by birth reinforces the presumption of consanguinity.

¹³ Nils A. Dahl, "Nations in the New Testament," in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World* (ed. Mark E. Glasswell and Edward W. Fasholé-Luke; London: SPCK, 1974), 61. Dahl uses the term *nation* as the catchall category for named groups in the NT.

¹⁴ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. ed; London: Verso, 1991), 6.

For instance, Danish-Americans do not constitute an ethnic group in the United States because there is no motivation to maintain a separate identity from the broader white anglo-saxon protestant (WASP) identity. But the WASP identity has been maintained in distinction from other groups who look identical and also derive from northern Europe, such as Irish Catholic or Russian immigrants. The WASP identity has also been maintained in distinction from groups who look different, such as blacks and Hispanics. Furthermore, in the last generation, the WASP-Irish Catholic divide has largely given way to the more inclusive ethnic identity of white northern European, whether Protestant or Catholic. This broadening arose because both groups shared a common out-group that was gaining power—African-Americans in the 1960s—and more recently newer non-white immigrants.¹⁵ The Irish-Catholic ethnic identity in America persists but in a much more attenuated form than a generation ago. Certain social settings can make it more salient, bringing it to the fore; but in the face of increasing non-European immigration and the rise of ethnic politics, Irish-Catholics and WASPs have conjoined as white northern-European Americans. This phenomenon highlights a further dynamic which will be developed below—the possibility of holding simultaneous multiple ethnic identities.

Clearly, in Paul's epistles we glimpse the churches at a very early stage of formation when converts are adopting a new identity and identity formation via procreation is not yet established. So the dynamics of collective identity formation are evident in the chaos of social realignment. We see this in the social crises addressed in each of the epistles under consideration in this thesis—Galatians, 1 Corinthians and Colossians. Pleas for solidarity in the face of challenges to the believers' status and in the midst of confusion about appropriate behavior are prominent in each epistle. We will see below that in each case the baptismal unity formula counters threats to their solidarity and supports a plea

¹⁵ Martin Kilson, "Blacks and Neo-Ethnicity in American Public Life," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 240-43.

for unity in their common identity. These epistles reflect a process of self-ascription and social construction in differentiation from a poly-cultural context; however, my choice to identify this social process as “ethnic” remains to be explained.

The Need for Clarity

In the absence of objective bases for a categorical ascription of ethnicity, social scientists have compared the strategies and processes of ethnic group formation with those supporting other types of cultural identities, such as occupational, religious or linguistic groups. Within this broader field of cultural identity formation, certain strategies stand out as typical of ethnic groups. This isolation of what uniquely constitutes ethnic identity construction is important if the modifier “ethnic” is to have any analytical value. Given the universal testimony of ethnic actors that such an identity is a powerful, foundational aspect of their self-perception that governs much of their social and political interactions, it is of great import to social scientists to distinguish the dynamics of such identity construction from cultural group formation in general.

Whether or not there could or ought ever to be a universal definition of ethnicity, students and scholars of ethnicity must at least make their theories and models explicit so as to better define the scope and aims of their study. For instance, anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen asserts that “ethnicity should always have the same meaning lest it ceases to be useful in comparison.”¹⁶ If concepts are not employed consistently, apples get compared with oranges. Anthropologist Fredrik Barth, a pioneer in the theory and methodology of studying ethnicity, asserted this same requirement in his introduction to a famous collection of the results of fieldwork that tested his theories, “In the following set of essays, each author takes up a case with which he is intimately familiar from his own fieldwork, and tries to apply *a common set of concepts* to its analysis.”¹⁷ Barth states, “A

¹⁶ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto, 1993), 13.

¹⁷ Barth, "Introduction," 10; italics added.

categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background.”¹⁸

Barth’s reference to ethnic identity constituting someone’s most fundamental identity is precisely the aspect of ethnic identity that generates such immense interest. What is it about these social constructions that generate such influence over other cultural dynamics? The final clause of Barth’s statement above suggests an answer-- “presumptively determined by his origin and background.” It is this presumed aboriginality of ethnic identity that seems to account for its power. Yet these common origins do not objectively exist but are simply presumed and given an aura of factuality by the group culture. Were the label “ethnicity” to be limited solely to those groups who demonstrably and objectively share common roots, the field would be much simplified. However, as noted above, anthropological, biological and historical investigations have shown that the vast majority of extant, practicing ethnic groups do not fulfill this objective criterion. It is the social construction of this presumed common origin that is so powerful and intriguing to social scientists.

In this regard, also, we find the identity urged in each Pauline epistle treated below to constitute a foundational identity, trumping other loyalties, and expecting difficult social reorganization.¹⁹ Such stakes will become evident when we examine the accounts of controversy over eating habits and circumcision in Gal 2, Paul’s guidance regarding marriage and dining habits in 1 Cor 7, 8 and 10, and his rejection of counterfeit identities in Col 2.

Genealogy and Autochthony

In the previous chapter, I noted Daniel Boyarin’s observation that ethnic identity is generally based on myths of genealogy and autochthony.²⁰ That is, common origins are

¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹ Meeks, *First Urban*, 78-79.

²⁰ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 222, 229, 252.

typically expressed in terms of common ancestors or common homeland. This distillation reflects the main stream of ethnic scholarship regarding ethnic identity construction whether in ancient, tribal or modern worlds. Anthony D. Smith's oft-cited six-point definition of an ethnic group is exemplary in this regard. He asserts that for a group to be considered ethnic it requires:

1. an identifying name or emblem;
2. a *myth* of common ancestry;
3. shared historical memories and traditions;
4. one or more elements of common culture;
5. a link with an historic territory or 'homeland';
6. a measure of solidarity, at least among the élites.²¹

We note that his items 2 and 5 support Boyarin's summary of ethnicity in terms of genealogy and autochthony. Boyarin's distillation receives even greater support when we note that those two items seem to be the most essential of Smith's six criteria of ethnicity. Many non-ethnic cultural groups have proper names (Smith's item 1), e.g. Democrats or Stoics. Similarly, Smith's items 3, 4 and 6, shared memories and traditions, elements of common culture and a measure of solidarity, are necessary for any cultural group to persist but are not uniquely ethnic. Ancient worshippers of Artemis or modern Oakland Raiders football fans would meet those criteria without being therefore ethnic. Furthermore, ethnic groups generate shared historical memories and traditions, elements of common culture and solidarity on the basis of their genealogical and territorial connection. Therefore, even though all six elements of Smith's definition are necessary for the creation and persistence of an ethnic group, myths of autochthony and shared genealogy are strategies unique to ethnic identity construction. Smith himself in an earlier work noted, "In many ways the *sine qua non* of ethnicity, ... myths of origins and descent provide the means of collective location in the world and the charter of the community which explains its origins, growth and destiny."²² This refinement of Smith is also

²¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13; italics original.

²² Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 24.

endorsed by the classicist Jonathan M. Hall, who has surveyed the field to glean a model of ethnicity suitable as a heuristic tool in his studies of ancient, Greek identity.²³

Despite the clarity and heuristic value of this definition, there has been an academic allergy to assessing ethnicity in terms of genealogical reckoning.²⁴ This resistance has largely been due to the painful history of 19th and 20th century racisms. The noun “ethnicity” is a *novum* in English. “Ethnicity” and “ethnic” have come to prominence in scholarly literature as a replacement for the problematic term “race.” Social scientists observe that this change has transpired in the post-WWII era.²⁵ However, wide use of the adjective “ethnic” extends back into the 19th century. The Holocaust singled out consciences the perfidious influence of essentialist theories of race. Outrage at American anti-black racism and South African apartheid further stigmatized preoccupation with genealogical definitions of race. Nevertheless, the switch to “ethnicity” or “ethnic group” from “race” merely substituted an undefined term for a wrongly defined term.²⁶ Using the term “ethnicity” rather than the tainted term “race” is only an improvement for social scientific analysis if it is given a sufficiently precise and flexible definition to enable the study and comparison of various ethnic groups in diverse times and contexts.

²³ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 25.

²⁴ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 229: “Traditionally, group identity has been constructed in two ways: as the product of either a common genealogical origin or a common geographical origin. The first type of figuring has a strongly pejorated value in current writing, having become tainted with the name ‘race’ and thus racism, while the second is referred to by the positive, even progressive-sounding, ‘self-determination.’” Cf. Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 4-16, 19-20; Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 13-14.

²⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 17 n.46, in finding the first attestation in 1941, corrects OED, which places it in 1953. “Ethnicity” first appeared in OED in 1972. Cf. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Introduction,” in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1; Elizabeth Tonkin, Malcolm Chapman and Maryon McDonald, “Introduction - History and Social Anthropology,” in *History and Ethnicity* (ed. Elizabeth Tonkin, Malcolm Chapman, and Maryon McDonald; ASA Monographs 27; London: Routledge, 1989), 14-15.

²⁶ Tonkin, Chapman and McDonald, “Introduction,” 14; Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19-20.

Boyarin's suggestion of a "diaspora identity" based on putative genealogy apart from claim to a particular territory suggests a further possible refinement to this model. Whereas ethnic groups in practice seem always to link their origins and identity with a homeland, this criterion is not unique to ethnic groups. Theoretically, an ethnic group could have a myth of genealogy without a mythical home territory and still constitute an ethnic identity; whereas there are in fact geographically determined social identities that have no pretense of kinship, e.g. New Yorkers. Boyarin's reflections provocatively suggest how the strategies of preservation and solidarity necessary for non-territorial ethnic groups, i.e. diaspora identities, might differ from those of ethnic groups whose self-conception includes a vision of possessing and controlling their homeland. Singling out myths of genealogy as *the* criterion of ethnic identity has the virtues of clearly defining what the modifier "ethnic" implies and of providing a heuristic model for assessing the various social and discursive strategies ethnic groups employ to construct their identity on the basis of that myth.

Hall also tips his analysis in favor of focusing on the criterion of genealogy. His stated definition of ethnicity includes both genealogy and shared homeland: "Ultimately, the definitional *criteria* or 'core elements' which determine membership in an ethnic group—and distinguish the ethnic group from other social collectivities—are a putative subscription to a myth of common descent and kinship, an association with a specific territory and a sense of shared history."²⁷ However, he immediately follows this definition with a discussion of the centrality of myths of descent to ethnic identity construction, noting that this feature of ethnicity was recognized already by Max Weber who characterized ethnic groups as "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs . . . ;

²⁷ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9.

conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.”²⁸ In his earlier work on ethnicity, Hall also focused ethnic ascription on the genealogical criterion:

The boundary is set by the criteria of ethnicity which are phrased in the form of a yes or no question—normally, ‘can you, or can you not, claim descent from *x*?’ It is the value of the response, affirmative or negative, that dictates group membership or exclusion.²⁹

Genealogy and Autochthony in Paul

Separating the criterion of genealogy from that of autochthony will prove illuminating in our assessment of Paul’s vision. The case is clear that he construes the believers genealogically as kin, but appeal to a specific territory appears absent. However, we will see that ethnic foundations in a homeland have not been entirely rejected by Paul; rather they have been tellingly reconfigured in Christ. Here I will first survey the genealogical reckoning present in Paul’s rhetoric that I will examine in greater detail in exegetical sections in the following chapters. After this summary of genealogical identity construction in these three epistles, I will summarize how Paul’s gospel has reconfigured autochthony in Christ.

The obvious genealogical foundation to the believers’ identity in these epistles is Paul’s appeal to God as their father. He does not need to persuade them of their identity as God’s children but can unproblematically invoke that identity as part of the symbolic world in which his rhetoric functions. This is clear in all three epistles under consideration here: Gal 1:1, 3, 4; 4:6; 1 Cor 1:3; 8:6; 15:24; Col 1:2, 3, 12; 3:17. In the symbolic universe of Paul’s letters this line of descent is striking in that there are no ancestors between the believers and God their father. Their identity as God’s children is solely a function of their identity with God’s beloved son, Jesus Christ. They become

²⁸ Max Weber, *Economy and Society; an Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (4th ed; trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al.; 3 vols.; New York: Bedminster, 1968), 1:389. Cited by Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 26; Hall, *Hellenicity*, 10.

²⁹ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 24-25.

children of God by incorporation into Christ, receiving the Spirit of the son. For example, “for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith” (Gal 3:26) or “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”” (Gal 4:6). The same dynamic is present in 1 Cor 1:2-3, 9; 8:6; Col 1:12-13. This dynamic of becoming a child of God the father through incorporation into Christ is so foundational to Paul’s soteriology that his frequent allusion to the believers being “in Christ” necessarily also evokes the genealogical basis of their corporate identity.

Besides this foundational genealogical myth, Paul also reminds the believers of other shared ancestors whose iconic status further grounds their corporate identity. He claims Abraham as their ancestor (Gal 3:6-29), identifies the church with ancient Israel (Gal 6:16; 1 Cor 10:1-2; 12:2; Col 1:12-14; 2:11) and presents himself as their earthly father (1 Cor 4:14-15) and even as their mother (Gal 4:19). This proliferation of ancestors is not a problem for ethnic theory as mythic genealogies frequently present ancestors from various generations or branches of the family tree for purposes correlated to that ancestor’s iconic status. For instance, ancient Israelites could appeal to their roots in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or to one of the twelve tribal patriarchs or to Moses or King David depending on what aspect of their identity is emphasized. We will assess the rhetorical reason for his evocation of various genealogical connections when we examine those passages in subsequent chapters of this study.

A further prominent aspect of Paul’s genealogical construction of the believers is his most frequently invoked name for them—“brothers and sisters.”³⁰ Each time he refers to them in this way he reinforces their genealogical identification. His usage is especially

³⁰ For tabulation of the frequency and distribution, see Reidar Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters: Christian Siblingship in the Apostle Paul* (JSNTSup 265; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 3-4, Appendices 1 and 2. Cf. Horrell, "Social Transformation," 299; Vincent P. Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), 16; Sandnes, *A New Family*, 74; Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 55.

striking in its insistence. Whereas metaphorical reference to fellow members of a non-ethnic group as “brothers” is not unusual in antiquity, in none of our sources is it used nearly as frequently as in Paul, nor do any other examples express expectation that the social implications of that term would be fulfilled in everyday life.³¹ We will see below that by this term Paul registers its full range of social and emotive connotations. Paul’s usage of “brother and sister” is most similar to that found in ancient Jewish sources and is widely assumed to be derived from Jewish usage.³² That parallel supports the view that Paul’s usage is genealogically based, ethnic rhetoric.

In appropriating aspects of Israelite identity for his churches, Paul reconfigures the inheritance of covenant blessings as being through Christ. But in contrast to ethnic Israel, the Pauline churches’ identity has no territorial focus. In this regard, Boyarin’s “diaspora identity” is an apt description. Even though a geographic homeland is not specified for Paul’s communities, their identity does have a home location of sorts that is partly derivative of the Jewish ethnic homeland. The geographic aspect of ancient Jewish identity focused on the Temple in Jerusalem.³³ Certainly, their eponym Ἰουδαῖοι, the vision inscribed in their Scriptures and their national longing was for the promised

³¹ Sandnes, *A New Family*, 82; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 107-12, 267, 74-84; Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family: Early Christian Communities and Surrogate Kinship* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2001), 21-25; Wayne O. McCready, “Ekklēsia and Voluntary Associations,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996), 63, 66; Branick, *House Church*, 16-17.

³² Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 59-80; W. von Soden, “ἀδελφός, ἀδελφή, ἀδελφότης, φιλάδελφος, φιλαδελφία, ψευδάδελφος,” *TDNT* 1:144-46; Meeks, *First Urban*, 87; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 112-15; Eva Marie Lassen, “Family as Metaphor, Family Images at the Time of the Old Testament and Early Judaism,” *SJOT* 6 (1992): 247-62.

³³ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 419-21; Alan F. Segal, “The Jewish Experience: Temple, Synagogue, Home, and Fraternal Groups,” in *Community Formation in the Early Church and the Church Today* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 21-24; Richard Bauckham, “The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why,” *ST* 47 (1993): 142-43.

territory. Yet within that land, the focus was Jerusalem and within that the Temple because there God's presence intersected their identity. All else derived from their God and his promises. Just as Paul reconfigured Abrahamic descent in Christ, so he presents the Spirit-filled, eschatological community of believers as the Temple founded upon Christ (1 Cor 3:10-17; Gal 2:9, 18; Col 2:7).³⁴ The presence of God's Spirit among all peoples and beyond the Temple seemingly reorients the believers' identity away from Judea. In Gal 4:26, Paul relocates their home from earthly Jerusalem to "Jerusalem above" who is also their mother. Thus, participation in Christ becomes the reference point for both genealogical and geographical aspects of their ethnic identity, and Paul's frequent repetition of "in Christ" may be considered to have a locative as well as genealogical aspect.

Furthermore, the land that Israel possessed by inheritance has become in Paul's letters an inheritance that ultimately includes a new heavens and a new earth, or "all things." This lies ahead in the unspecified future as the "golden age" that God their father will ultimately bring about in Christ. In the meantime, their call is to unity and behavior in accordance with their new ethnic identity while they faithfully wait for the consummation of all things.

Indices of the Genealogical Criteria

Positing presumed common ancestors as the criterion of ethnicity locates the other indicators of ethnicity, such as common language, customs or boundary markers, as social shorthand that signal the presence or absence of the criterion of putative kinship. These indices of ethnicity vary from group to group and can change significantly for a

³⁴ Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways," 143; Richard N. Longenecker, "Paul's Vision of the Church and Community Formation in His Major Missionary Letters," in *Community Formation in the Early Church and the Church Today* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 78-79. Paul Sevier Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960; repr., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 90: "Just as in Christ, God had disclosed the true meanings of Abrahamic sonship, so too he had transformed the meanings of temple worship."

particular group without threatening the persistence of that group.³⁵ Group boundaries are far from the stable, rigid fences between groups that both members and observers often assume them to be. They are permeable, though on prescribed terms.³⁶ They expand and contract to include more or fewer people. They are liberalized or rigidified to make crossing them more or less common. Indices may be renegotiated when formerly distinct groups are merged through the “discovery” of common ancestors.

Yet through all this, an ethnic identity persists, often with minimal awareness on the part of the members or surrounding groups of how elastic the group actually is. What remains stable is the group’s definitional criterion of association with a particular genealogy, usually fixed by means of the group’s proper name derived from the name of an ancestor or ancestral homeland, e.g. Ἰουδαῖοι or Israel. When a group ceases to be defined by the criterion of ancestry, it ought no longer to be classified as an ethnic group but according to its new basis, be that religion, geography, culture, etc. This is the thesis of Hall’s *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, in which he traces the early creation of a Hellenic ethnic identity that, over time, lost its ethnic criteria and became a purely cultural category. This could be seen as definitional sophistry, yet for examination of how identities are created and maintained by the actors, it provides the basis for discriminating between and comparing the strategies peculiar to certain kinds of groups (here, ethnic) and other strategies of social cohesion.³⁷ Examination of how various cultural indices are

³⁵ This distinction between the criteria and indices of ethnicity comes from Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 119-20. Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20; Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9-10, adopts this distinction from Horowitz. Esler, *Galatians*, 80, independently of Horowitz or Hall, uses the term “indicia of ethnicity” in the same way.

³⁶ Barth, "Introduction," 9-10, 16, 21.

³⁷ This point underscores a difference between Esler’s study of social identity in Galatians and this inquiry. Esler frames his analysis in terms of a more general theory of social identity (that of Henri Tajfel; see Esler, *Galatians*, 40-57); whereas this study focuses on the strategies particular to ethnic groups. In this regard, the works are complementary. Esler, *Galatians*, 77-82, notes ethnic identity is but one variety of social identity. Social

deployed with respect to the criterion of genealogy may illuminate their function in creating and maintaining the ethnic identity.

It is widely noted that Jewish proscriptions on eating with or marrying non-Jews constituted two of their chief boundary mechanisms that enabled them to resist assimilation. Restating this fact would hardly be novel. But locating these boundary mechanisms in a model of ethnicity as indicia of common descent provides analytical tools for assessing how these features function within a broader discourse and among all the dimensions of that identity. Further, as Esler notes, appreciation of how ethnic boundaries function differentially to regulate inter-group relations enables nuanced description of how assimilation and acculturation vary in different social arenas.³⁸ The linkage between particular indices of an ethnic identity and the genealogical criterion of that identity will not be self-evident but must be asserted. For instance, Torah and arguments from Torah established why circumcision was an indicator of Abrahamic descent. Other ethnic groups in the ancient Near East practiced circumcision, but it held different cultural significance for them than it did for Jews. Similarly, vegetarianism might be based on health considerations, religion, or ethnic identity. Its significance will be embedded in a broader cultural discourse. Ethnic discourse is recognized, in the first instance, by the linking of group characteristics or desired collective behaviors to a genealogical foundation. Apart from a claim, implicit or explicit, that group members are the authentic descendants of a mythic ancestor(s), rhetoric may not be considered ethnic.

This distinction between criteria and indicia is an etic model imposed for the purpose of analyzing how ethnic groups construct themselves. For members of the ethnic group, their genealogical roots, the practice of their cultural norms and their significance form a

identity theory provides a broader and needed context for the development of ethnic theories; cf. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 17, regarding “ethnicity as a *specific type* of cultural identity” (italics original).

³⁸ Esler, *Galatians*, 86-88. Cf. Barclay, *Diaspora*, 88-98, on multi-dimensional description of assimilation and acculturation.

seamless, organic whole. They are, together, what it means to be a Jew, or a Greek, or a Serb. For instance, 2 Maccabees describes the evils of Antiochus thus:

Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus . . . People could neither keep the Sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews. (2 Macc 6:1, 2, 6)

These particulars are aspects of what the author of Maccabees considers essential to Jewish identity. Our approach does not override that emic perspective but provides a heuristic tool for focusing on the ethnic basis of this identity. It distinguishes between the assumed relationship with the ancestors and the various practices that are indicia of that relationship, enabling us to discern ethnic warrants for those practices.

We can see the connections Paul makes between the believers' characteristic behaviors and their genealogically constructed identity through what Wayne Meeks calls Paul's "language of separation." Meeks mentions Gal 4:1-11 as an example of this language by which Paul casts the believers as a distinct community within the surrounding society.³⁹ In that passage, the believers' genealogical identity (carried forward from 3:26, 29 and emphasized in 4:6-7) is the basis for their liberation from slavery to "elemental spirits" (4:3, 8) and simultaneously for the rejection of false indices of their identity (4:8-10). When Paul further elaborates behaviors commensurate with their identity as sons of God and sons of Abraham in Gal 5:13-6:10, he continues this coordination of their ethos with their genealogical bond by using the terms "brothers and sisters" (5:13; 6:1), "inherit" (5:21), and "family of faith" (6:10).

The vice and virtue lists of 1 Cor 6:9-11 and Col 3:5-17 similarly construe these behaviors as reflective of their ethnic identity ("inherit" in 1 Cor 6:10; "God the Father" in Col 3:17). Likewise, in 1 Cor 5:9-13, a person "who bears the name brother or sister" (v. 11) but refuses the sexual ethics consistent with that identity is to be excluded from

³⁹ Meeks, *First Urban*, 94-96.

the community (cf. the “false brothers” of Gal 2:4), showing how the expected behaviors are indices of the familial status “brother or sister.”⁴⁰ Above all, on the basis of their presumed kinship, Paul urges familial concord, as, for example, in 1 Cor 1:10-11:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

That this ethos of harmonious unity suggests an ethnic identity becomes even clearer when viewed in its ancient social context. Our modern liberal individualistic social context often obscures from us the force of Paul’s exhortations. Much of his social vision seems today like benign counsel to be nice and tolerant--“Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another” (Gal 5:26) or “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33).⁴¹ However, in the ancient Mediterranean world, such deference to others was reserved for social allies, above all for family members.⁴² Ramsay MacMullen writes, “. . . *Philotimia*. No word, understood to its depths, goes farther to explain the Greco-Roman achievement.”⁴³ This love of honor was pursued competitively in a zero-sum game, resulting in what social scientists refer to as an agonistic culture.⁴⁴ Competition and envy

⁴⁰ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 300-02.

⁴¹ Reidar Aasgaard, "Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul: Its Role and Character," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. Halvor Moxnes; London: Routledge, 1997), 179-80: “Such advice seems to be of a rather general character, and may—from our modern point of view—be applied to most human relationships. But was this true in Antiquity?”

⁴² DeSilva, *New Testament Culture*, 212-23.

⁴³ Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. To A.D. 284* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), 125.

⁴⁴ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 32-33; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.:

energized all of public life. Pursuit of honor was possible only collectively.⁴⁵ If one's family were dishonorable or dishonored, one could not rise above that. In the ambient society of Paul's day, individuals were not assessed on the basis of their own merits so much as assigned a place in society on the basis of their family and social connections.⁴⁶ The family was "a haven in a heartless world."⁴⁷ The ancient ideal was harmony and mercy within the family and competition for honor with everyone else. Thus, Paul's directions to show mercy, care for the weak, place the honor of others ahead of your own, maintain unity and peace, all reflect an ethos that in antiquity would be appropriate only within the family or clan.

Where Paul has traced the ethos of his congregations onto the template of Jewish identity, the ethnic aspect of their identity will likewise be evoked. Most noticeable was the early Christians' strict monotheism and avoidance of the cultic worship that was ubiquitous in the Greco-Roman world (1 Cor 6:9-10; 10:1-22). In standard Jewish form, Paul combined this taboo against idolatry with a stereotype of Gentile sexual immorality that the believers were to shun as much as idol worship. Paul's references to society beyond the boundary of the church as τὰ ἔθνη further highlights his construal of the believers according to Israel's identity (1 Cor 5:1; 12:2).

Paul also promotes characteristics of the believing community that derive from their particular genealogy. They are not Jews; their ancestral claim on the blessing of Abraham is via Christ (Gal 3:14). As illustrious ancestors validate the character and claims of an

Hendrickson, 1991), 29; MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 76-77 DeSilva, *New Testament Culture*, 29.

⁴⁵ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 20, 93, 153, use the alliteration "gender, generation, and geography" to refer to this reality. By the second two items they mean to whom one is born and where one is born, which we have seen above to be the calculus of ethnicity. On p. 168, they write, "...first-century Mediterranean persons were fundamentally embedded in groups, primarily kinship and fictive kinship groups."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁴⁷ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 33, 60.

ethnic group who, in some sense, embodies that founder in the present, so the ethos of Paul's churches derives from Abraham, Christ, and from Paul, himself. In Gal 3:6-9, Paul features "faith" as the chief familial characteristic to be derived from Abraham. That faith is further revealed and defined in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:22-26), who incorporates the believers into Abraham's line of descent on the basis of faith. Furthermore, Christ's faithful death on the cross for others becomes the mainspring of their corporate ethos (Gal 2:20; 5:6; 6:14; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Col 3:12-17).⁴⁸ Christ is not an ancestor; rather, he is the first-born son whose character is the model of sonship. Imitation of him, then, is an ethical warrant rooted in family identity. Imitation of Paul follows a similar logic. First, he faithfully embodies the character of Christ for his churches (1 Cor 11:1). Second, he is a parent to those believers who first heard the gospel through his ministry (1 Cor 4:14-16; Gal 4:19).

In these several ways, we see that Paul corelates the ethos of his churches to their genealogically grounded identity. In terms of ethnic theory, these characteristics may be construed as indices signaling the group members' status as kin.

Consubstantiality: Commensality, Connubiality and Common Cult

The common ethnic preoccupation with descent and autochthony highlights that ethnic groups emphasize their common essence.⁴⁹ Derivation from primordial progenitors or territory suggests consubstantiality. "Consanguinity refers to a notion of kinship that uses blood as a metaphor."⁵⁰ According to Barth's definition which we cited above, an ethnic ascription is a person's "basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background."⁵¹ This nearly universal prioritization of ethnic solidarity above other ascriptions is what leads many anthropologists to argue for a primordial basis

⁴⁸ Hays, *Moral Vision*, 27-32.

⁴⁹ David Konstan, "Ancient Greek Identity," 30; Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 10-11.

⁵⁰ Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 7.

⁵¹ Barth, "Introduction," 10.

of ethnicity apart from any social instrumentality.⁵² Even social scientists who do not subscribe to primordial theories of ethnicity nevertheless agree that ethnic groups typically practice certain cultural strategies that maintain this sense of consubstantiality.

For example, Manning Nash singles out connubiality (endogamy), commensality, and common cult as his “trinity of the deep or basic structure of ethnic group differentiation.” Nash notes how commensality is “... the propriety of eating together indicating a kind of equality, peership, and the promise of further kinship links stemming from the intimate acts of dining together, only one step removed from the intimacy of bedding together.”⁵³ Attributing such importance to table fellowship is particularly relevant to the ancient Mediterranean world where dining together implied a social alliance rather more strongly than it does in late-modern western societies. The tendency for ethnic groups to use exclusive dining practices as a boundary marker of group membership calls attention to the presumed consubstantiality of ethnic groups, as does the practice of endogamy, which, as Nash notes, is tied to dining habits. Endogamy further reinforces the myth that the group is actually genealogically defined.⁵⁴ Given the genealogical self-conception of ethnic groups, it is natural that social practices foundational for marriage arrangements and family maintenance would regularly feature as indicia of ethnicity.

Furthermore, the religious bond of a common cult also often incorporated cultural dining habits that further cemented social identity. Beyond the commensality of corporate worship, the sharing of common gods, special knowledge and religious values further enhance ethnic solidarity. Religious groups are not necessarily ethnic groups and

⁵² Francisco J. Gil-White, "How Thick Is Blood? The Plot Thickens...: If Ethnic Actors Are Primordialists, What Remains of the Circumstantialist/Primordialist Controversy?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (1999): 789-820.

⁵³ Nash, *Cauldron*, 11.

⁵⁴ Regarding endogamy and ethnicity see Paul R. Brass, "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation," in *Ethnicity* (ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 86; repr. from *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 18-20, 22-26; Esler, *Galatians*, 82.

religious groups both today and in antiquity may be multi-ethnic. However, social scientists register for us that along with shared table and marriage restrictions, common religion is a typical ethnic praxis. Together these strategies evoke the members' shared essence and thereby validate the foundational myth of consanguinity.

We will see below in our detailed treatment of each epistle that Paul presses upon his churches these typical indices of ethnic identity--commensality, connubiality and common cult. Paul's strident opposition to divided table fellowship in Gal 2:11-14 shows Paul's insistence that the new community maintain the social practice and symbol of a shared table. His marriage instructions in 1 Cor 7 reveal a presumption of endogamy within the community of believers, stated explicitly in v. 39. The traditions, rituals and guidance for corporate worship in these epistles exemplify their common cult. The ethnic symbolism of consubstantiality reflected in these strategies becomes explicit in Paul's metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. We will assess this metaphor in greater detail in the context of Paul's argument for unity in 1 Corinthians in a later chapter. However, at this point I want to surface that this metaphor participates in the typical symbolism of ethnic unity. Paul associates this image of the believers as one body with each of the traditional ethnic indices treated in this section—table, marriage, and worship (1 Cor 6:12-20; 10:14-22; 11:17-34; 12:12-31; Col 3:15). Furthermore, two recent works have demonstrated the frequent use of the body metaphor in antiquity to picture the ideal of fraternal harmony.⁵⁵ This convention confirms that Paul's body metaphor is part of the broader ethnic rhetoric we have been sketching and that it supports this typical ethnic strategy of emphasizing indices that symbolize a shared essence.

⁵⁵ Sandnes, *A New Family*, 119-30; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 56, 82-85, 100, 102, 106, 182.

Ethnic Discourse

The link between cultural indices and the group members' genealogical roots is asserted via ethnic discourse, usually in the form of history. We saw above that both Smith and Hall include a shared sense of history in their characterizations of ethnic groups. Smith has pursued that aspect of ethnicity in depth, comparing ethnic rhetoric of diverse groups, both modern and ancient, in order to synthesize and generalize about how ethnic identities are asserted and argued. He summarizes:

that the 'core' of ethnicity, as it has been transmitted in the historical record and as it shapes individual experience, resides in a quartet of 'myths, memories, values and symbols' and in the characteristic forms or styles and genres of certain historical configurations of populations. . . . Special emphasis is laid on what is termed the '*myth-symbol*' complex, and particularly the '*mythomoteur*' or constitutive myth of the ethnic polity . . .⁵⁶

Further, he emphasizes that this myth-symbol complex entails "peculiar claims about the group's origins and lines of descent. These claims and this complex provide the focus of a community's identity and its *mythomoteur*, or constitutive political myth."⁵⁷

Smith distinguishes two types of myth corresponding to two varieties of ethnic groups. Regarding pre-modern eras, he designates the two types of myth as "dynastic" and "communal."⁵⁸ The former tend to support the identity and legitimacy of elites, aristocracies, or dynastic groups whose identity and privilege are to be insulated from

⁵⁶ Smith, *Origins*, 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 57-68. He adjusts his categories slightly for modern ethnic identities in the context of the nation-state where the distinction is between "genealogical" and "ideological" types of descent; cf. Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 70-71. Nevertheless, the former type, even in modern examples, tends to legitimate elite establishments, whereas the latter tend to infuse more broad-based sentiments and collective action. Hall's appropriation of Smith for ancient Greek genealogies adopts his terms "genealogical" and "ideological" types of descent. But as both types involve genealogical reckoning, I find labeling only one "genealogical" confusing and have opted for Smith's "dynastic" versus "communal" genealogical labels. His main distinction between pre-modern and modern instances of these modes seems to be that modern nation-states often reflect both types working in tandem with varying amounts of inherent tension. Smith, *Origins*, 58; Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 70-82.

those of the populations over whom they rule. Smith labels these social bodies “lateral-aristocratic *ethnie*.”⁵⁹ They are “lateral” because the members tend to be more concerned about identifying with aristocratic members of other *ethnie* than with the common population of their realm. Conversely, “[i]n contrast to the more fluid and open aristocratic type of *ethnie*, demotic or vertical communities emphasize the ethnic bond that unites them against the ‘stranger’ or ‘enemy’.”⁶⁰ These “vertical-demotic *ethnie*” tend to employ myths of the communal variety that “focus on an image of the whole community rather than a privileged lineage or state institution.”⁶¹ With its emphasis on an entire people, inclusive of all social strata, it is both less viable and less imperative to delineate bloodlines, however specious. Hence the genealogical aspects of this sort of myth tend to embrace mythic ancestors as the ground for common cultural distinctives. In this sense, the communal myth involves more ideological or spiritual genealogical trajectories than the dynastic myth. We can affirm that Paul deploys ideological and spiritual genealogies for the believers (e.g. Gal 3:6-9, 26-29; 4:4-7, 19, 24-31; 1 Cor 10:1-4; 15:20-24, 45-50; Col 1:3, 12-15).

Among the communal myths, Smith discerns two further sub-types: political and religious. Historically, the more explicitly religious a communal myth the more it penetrates all strata of society, effectively mobilizes for action, and enables longevity of the ethnic group. Here from another angle we see the role of religion in ethnic identity construction that we noted above. Smith presents ancient Judaism as one of his representative pre-modern *ethnie* that exemplify use of such a religious, communal myth.⁶² This study will adopt his categorization of the ancient Jewish myth type and also apply it to the Pauline Christian identity. Clearly, the communal identity Paul advocates

⁵⁹ Smith, *Origins*, 79-83. Smith prefers the French noun *ethnie* to the more cumbersome English *ethnic group*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 64, along with Arab Muslims, Armenians, the Irish, and Byzantine Greeks.

is religious, rooted as it is in the exclusive monotheism of Judaism modulated by the worship of Jesus Christ. Paul's frequent appeal to the social definition implicit in their religious rituals—the Lord's Supper, baptism—make their common cult central to their identity.

In order to examine “the special qualities and durability of *ethnie*,” Smith asserts, “one has to look at the nature (forms and content) of their myths and symbols.”⁶³ Typical content of religious, communal ethnic myths includes an ideological or spiritual genealogy and a strong in-group/out-group contrast designated by indicia correlated to the genealogical and religious identity. In terms of form, ethnic discourse is first a story, a common history that legitimates the group identity and provides its unique sense of dignity. That common history need not be formally recounted often, but it forms the foundational narrative in terms of which conventional allusions and symbols become significant to the members. Smith writes,

...the myths coalesce and are edited into chronicles, epics and ballads, which combine cognitive maps of the community's history and situation with poetic metaphors of its sense of dignity and identity. The fused and elaborated myths provide an overall framework of meaning for the ethnic community, a *mythomoteur*, which ‘makes sense’ of its experiences and defines its ‘essence’. Without a *mythomoteur* a group cannot define itself to itself or to others, and cannot inspire or guide collective action.⁶⁴

The Hebrew Scriptures for the Jews and those same Scriptures in conjunction with Christian *kerygma* for the early church function as such elaborated myths. Baptism and the Lord's Supper ritualize those mythic foundations that are also evoked by prayers, liturgies, and hymns. We will see Paul's frequent appeal to just these resources to establish the believers collective identity and to warrant their particular ethos.

Smith delineates four typical consequences of mythically motivated ethnic collective action. They are special identity, special dignity, specific territories, and specific

⁶³ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

autonomy.⁶⁵ Each of these requires brief explanation and correlation with the ethnic theory elaborated above. By special identity, he means that the embodiment of the ethnic myth “sharpens boundaries between communities and points up similarities between members and differences with non-members. Moreover, the myth of descent suggests a rationale for these differences.” He notes the similarity between this consequence and Barth’s emphasis on ethnic boundaries. His second consequence, special dignity, refers to how the myth establishes and enhances the group’s sense of status or worth vis-à-vis other groups. Here the myth grants “status confirmation—for dominant communities—or status reversal—for suppressed minorities.”⁶⁶ This sense of ethnic pride accords well with the emphasis above that ethnic groups are self-ascribing, inter-subjective realities. In other words, group members will seek to maintain an identity that is desirable to them, even if dominant groups marginalize it.⁶⁷ Smith’s emphasis on the mandate for a specific territory as a typical consequence of ethnic myth-symbol complexes derives from his definition of an *ethnie* as a group identified by “a link with an historic territory or ‘homeland’,” and conforms to the observations of ethnologists and to ancient Judaism, in particular.⁶⁸ I have made a case above for removing a territorial claim from criteria of ethnicity, in order to promote the special case of a “diaspora identity.” Furthermore, I have suggested a way that Paul’s vision of the community as the new temple of God has displaced geographical fixation. Finally, Smith highlights the typical ethnic claim to a specific autonomy, which “is not any freedom; it is a collective liberty in which the self’s laws are those of the nation-to-be, and a specific liberty for that community in those conditions.”⁶⁹ This is the ethnic mandate that members conform to the cultural norms

⁶⁵ Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 68-70.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁷ Esler, *Galatians*, 52-53, refers to such strategies as “social creativity.”

⁶⁸ Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 13. Barclay, *Diaspora*, 413; Bauckham, “The Parting of the Ways,” argue that this geocentric focus on Jerusalem and the Temple was a powerful social and symbolic link common to diverse and distant Jewish communities.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 70.

legitimized by their foundational myth. Such freedom for pursuing their collective ethos is precisely the kind of freedom Paul urges in Gal 5:13, “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another” (cf. 1 Cor 9:1, 19; 10:29). This differs from special identity, which emphasizes particular, contextually salient, boundary markers. Autonomy is the freedom to embrace and exhibit all aspects of their tradition and its significance to them for their own sakes, apart from which aspects function as boundary markers enclosing this cultural “content.” In other words, special identity concerns differentiation from outsiders, whereas autonomy is the full ethos practiced within the group.⁷⁰

To summarize, ethnic discourse draws upon mythic historical traditions to ground a group’s characteristic culture and boundary markers in genealogical roots. This discourse informs praxis and creates for the group a special identity, dignity, vision for a homeland and mandate for a particular, corporate way of life. The presence of an ethnic mythic substratum to discourse may be discerned by the presence of genealogical references or conventional symbols pointing to them.

An Example from Hellenistic Judaism

John Barclay’s landmark study of the Jewish Diaspora in the ancient Mediterranean implicitly confirms the viability of this model for assessing Jewish ethnic identity. He concludes his careful analysis of the variegated Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world with a synthetic chapter, “Jewish Identity in the Diaspora: A Sketch,” in which he argues for a core ethnic identity, which all its diverse manifestations

⁷⁰ This distinction between salient boundary markers vis-à-vis the social context, on the one hand, and the full cultural tradition as viewed by insiders is precisely James Dunn’s point in defending himself from those who misinterpret his focus on Jewish boundary markers as being a reduction of the entire Mosaic law and Jewish ethos to circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance. E.g. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 210.

held in common.⁷¹ Despite the local variations his study has documented, he presents some ubiquitous features that render recourse to the logism “Judaisms” unhelpful.⁷² He groups these common features into three concentric categories, which can be seen to correlate rather well with the ethnic theory I have outlined thus far. Barclay does not shape his chapter around a theory of ethnicity but rather according to his intuitive organization of social dynamics reflected in the ancient literature in which he had immersed himself for this project. This correlation confirms the applicability to ancient Judaism of our insights gleaned from ethnic theory, thus giving us greater confidence that they may also be appropriately and fruitfully applied to the apostle Paul.

At the “core” of Barclay’s concentric circles of ancient Jewish identity is what he calls “the ethnic bond.” He defines ethnicity as “a combination of kinship and custom, reflecting both shared genealogy and common behavior.”⁷³ His definition accords with our proposal of genealogical criterion and corporate practice based on it. Barclay’s third and outer concentric circle emphasizes four specific, common behaviors that were most distinctive of Jews within the broader Greco-Roman milieu—namely, avoidance of idolatry, dietary restrictions, male circumcision, and Sabbath observance. These items may be designated as indicia of ethnicity that also demarcate the group’s boundary vis-à-vis other groups in a poly-ethnic setting.

What remains is Barclay’s second and middle concentric layer, which he calls “social and symbolic resources.” Here he elaborates on those customs and common behaviors that he linked with genealogy in defining ethnicity, some of which he also selected as the “practical distinctions” constituting the outer layer. In other words, between genealogical core and particularly salient boundary markers there is the full culture and ethos of the Jewish people, just as we saw above in Smith’s emphasis on special autonomy for the

⁷¹ Barclay, *Diaspora*, 399-444.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 401.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 402.

ethnie. Barclay's survey certainly could not compile an encyclopedic list of Jewish cultural features, even if the literary and material record were more complete, so he selects those resources that, in his view, feature most prominently in the literary record as reinforcing their ethnic identity. He treats the Jewish characteristics of focusing on the temple and the homeland, the calendrical activities of festivals, feasts, and Sabbath, the web of social networks linking far-flung communities, the Scriptures and the figure of Moses as the chief "supporting strands" surrounding the ethnic "central thread."⁷⁴ Barclay astutely regards these aspects as more than social phenomena needing description but as "social and symbolic resources" and sees that they undergird social and ideological processes. In other words, ethnicity is a discursive and socially dynamic process, and these indices are part of a web of self-perception that is ultimately defined genealogically.

In comparing Paul's writings to those of contemporary Judaism, Barclay calls Paul "An Anomalous Diaspora Jew" because he forges a communal identity patterned on that of Israel and just as particularistic but with radically redefined boundaries.⁷⁵ Barclay argues that Paul does not follow the universalizing, Hellenizing tendency of some Jewish writers, but appropriates and reconfigures the essential indices of Israel.⁷⁶ Barclay notes, as I have above, that Paul redraws genealogy and redefines the believers as being God's new Temple.⁷⁷ Though he does not explicitly employ ethnic theory, Barclay's analysis confirms the validity of reading Paul in terms of the ethnic theory outlined above and as forging a new ethnic identity patterned on that of Israel.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 413.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 381-95. "Paul radically expands—indeed threatens—the boundaries of that community, yet is far less open to any such cultural engagement. Although he creates and addresses communities which cross ethnic and cultural boundaries, Paul's theology employs traditional Jewish categories" (389).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 387-88, 390-92. "Paul does not spiritualize Israel's heritage but transfer it from one community to another" (390 n.20).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 386, 388-89.

Acculturation, Assimilation and Ethnogenesis

The ethnic criterion of descent functions as a boundary in that a member of the group must be able to claim descent from certain ancestor(s) in a way that is recognized by other group members. Conventional indices signal the presence of the presumed criterion, which, in day-to-day life, remains in the background. The selective nature of such indices means that the boundary is not a solid wall isolating members from people of other ethnicities, but that the indices function more like border checkpoints.⁷⁸ As international borders can be more or less restrictive in who is allowed passage, so ethnic boundaries can relax or constrict. And what serves well as a boundary in one setting may be utterly useless in another. For instance, a hypothetical vegetarian ethnic group might emphasize their dietary practice as a defining boundary in the context of omnivorous ethnic groups. But in a poly-ethnic setting where several groups are vegetarian, that same group would need to emphasize a different aspect of their culture as a boundary marker if they want to remain distinct, while not necessarily relaxing their commitment to vegetarianism. Barth notes that the salient boundary markers “are not the sum of objective differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant.”⁷⁹

Because of this selective nature of boundaries, minority ethnic groups have segmented assimilation in their social contexts. As John Barclay notes, the Jews in Rome were highly acculturated and partially assimilated to Roman society, occupying positions at every status and economic level in society. Nevertheless, by maintaining a few key boundary markers, namely, circumcision, dietary proscriptions, and Sabbath, they preserved their distinct identity. In this regard, Barclay writes,

In general, a minority ethnic group is far more threatened by assimilation than acculturation, since the former subverts the basis of its existence. As

⁷⁸ The metaphor of border checkpoints comes from Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 98-99. Esler, *Galatians*, 86-92, makes good use of this dynamic in nuanced discussion of Jewish social interaction and table fellowship regarding Galatians.

⁷⁹ Barth, "Introduction," 14.

the sociologist Sharot notes: while substantial or even total acculturation of a subordinate ethnic group need not necessarily involve substantial assimilation, substantial assimilation will always involve substantial acculturation.⁸⁰

Barclay's study has shown that a group can be assimilated in many aspects of social life, yet maintain its identity by means of a few well-chosen boundary markers.

Boundaries both stipulate who are members of the group and the terms on which members may or may not interact with non-members. This suggests that boundaries are porous in two different ways. First, non-members can become members, or vice versa, and the boundaries set the terms of such a change in identity. This means that boundaries are permeable to personnel. The biblical character Ruth is paradigmatic in this regard. Second, members are not isolated from non-members but interact with them in accordance with the proscriptions and prescriptions encoded in the boundary. This means that boundaries are permeable to social interaction and the goods, ideas and culture that come with it. Barclay, Esler, and Cohen all have demonstrated that despite well-entrenched boundaries that ensured their perseverance as an ethnic group, the Jews of antiquity participated robustly in their social contexts culturally, intellectually, economically, politically, and militarily. As Barth has observed, ethnic boundaries do not prohibit social interaction so much as they channel and structure it.⁸¹ We observe such governed interaction with the outside world in Paul's advice to his churches (Gal 6:10; 1 Cor 5:9-10; 7:12-16, 21-24; 9:19-23; 10:25-28; Col 3:18-4:1, 5-6, 11). Martin Hengel's observations regarding the Jewish Diaspora in Ptolemaic Egypt also exemplifies this function of ethnic boundaries:

⁸⁰ Barclay, *Diaspora*, 92, citing Stephen Sharot, *Judaism: A Sociology* (Newton Abbot, England: David & Charles, 1976), 3.

⁸¹ Barth, "Introduction," 10, 14-16. "[Ethnic boundary markers] may be of great relevance to behaviour, but they need not be; they may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity. There is thus an obvious scope for ethnographic and comparative descriptions of different forms of ethnic organization" (14).

Despite this completely external 'Hellenization,' which was not just limited to language and literary education, but covered large areas of daily living, the Jewish Diaspora did not become unconditionally assimilated to its Hellenistic environment. Jews might undergo the customary gymnasium education, make the acquaintance of Homer and classical poetry, and pursue other rhetorical and philosophical studies; they might visit the theatre and games, maintain business contacts with non-Jews and even embark on successful careers in the administration of the Ptolemaic state, but they did not adopt Greek polytheistic religion. They kept the Sabbath holy, avoided unclean food and went to services in the synagogue in which a rhetorically polished lecture, fashioned in the form of a diatribe, increasingly came to occupy the central position, alongside prayers and hymns, and made the educated Jew feel that he was a representative of the true philosophy.⁸²

Barclay's gradation of assimilation according to quality and quantity of social contacts helps to describe how boundaries may be more or less restrictive. In certain cultural settings, certain barriers will create more overall social distance than others. For instance, in Greco-Roman society, the Jewish limitations on table fellowship and prohibitions against idolatry touched on core concerns in civic society. Thus, despite broad social interaction in many other arenas, the Jewish people were seen to be a people apart because of the disproportionate weight given to these boundary markers in that society. In most societies, the typical ethnic boundary markers of endogamy and restrictive table fellowship will be high quality (on Barclay's scale) or heavily weighted factors against assimilation despite a high quantity of social interaction in less weighted areas, such as education, places of employment or business transactions. Instances of what sociologists refer to as vestigial or symbolic ethnicities occur when the boundaries have minimal social impact because, to use Barclay's scales, they are low in quality and/or quantity.⁸³ We will see below that Paul, in his prioritizing the family of believers over extant kinship loyalties, in his radical inversion of honor valuation, and in his

⁸² Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (London: SCM, 1980), 101.

⁸³ Herbert J Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2 (1979): 9-17; cf. Nash, *Cauldron*, 15, regarding the "minimal action" necessary for an ethnic group to avoid vanishing.

rejection of participation in Greco-Roman cults, urges weighty boundaries, even though they allow for more liberal participation in society than did those of Judaism.⁸⁴

Donald Horowitz, who developed the analytical framework of criteria versus indicia for studying ethnic identity construction, categorizes various modes of assimilation and ethnogenesis, and provides examples of each from ethnographic case studies.⁸⁵ He differentiates two types of assimilation: amalgamation and incorporation. In the first instance, two extant groups unite to form a new group ($A+B \rightarrow C$). By incorporation he means that one group adopts the identity of another ($A+B \rightarrow A$). He also recognizes two types of ethnogenesis: division and proliferation. Division means that “[o]ne group divides into two or more component parts” ($A \rightarrow B+C$), and two new identities are created while the former one vanishes. Proliferation occurs when the former identity persists but one or more new groups split off from that identity ($A \rightarrow A+B$) or, most commonly according to Horowitz, when two extant groups both lose members who create a new group ($A+B \rightarrow A+B+C$). This implies that group C is constituted by members drawn from both A and B and can thus be analyzed as an instance of amalgamation, as well ($A+B \rightarrow C$). Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians, “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32), where the church is made up of Jews and Greeks, reflects just this social process.

Horowitz’s study not only classifies these social phenomena, but, by noting the distinctive logic of each, also calls attention to the various strategies, mechanisms, and justification of each type of change. For instance, when assimilation takes the form of incorporation ($A+B \rightarrow A$) there will likely be a political or evaluative connotation of the supremacy of A to B. It is the dominant culture group. This is evident in the Hasmonean incorporation of the Idumeans into the Judean *ethnos*, where the *Ioudaioi* were clearly culturally and politically dominant. A century later, Herod the Great could be derided for

⁸⁴ Barclay, *Diaspora*, 393.

⁸⁵ Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," 111-40.

his Idumean ancestry, highlighting the fact of continued marginalization of this group within the *ethnos*.⁸⁶ Yet, incorporation does not always leave the assimilated identity intact within the dominant group, as was the case with the Idumeans. Stephen Mitchell's study of evidence for ethnic groups in Roman Asia Minor from about 200 BCE to 400 CE finds a movement from a diversity of particular, local, ethnic groups throughout the region to a Greco-Roman homogenization by the end of the period.⁸⁷ He attributes this process of assimilation and vanishing ethnicities to the progress of cultural Hellenization and to Roman administrative reorganization that affected every area of life.

Amalgamation (A+B→C), however, in creating a new, larger identity, offers more possibility for the merger of equals as well as the persistence of the older ethnic sub-groupings within the new unity. Hall recognizes such a process in the joining of ancient, mutually hostile, tribal identities around the Aegean Sea to form the Hellenic ethnic identity in the face of the Persian threat. This amalgamated ethnic identity proved stable and strong for centuries, even as the particular, conjoined, ethnic identities (Dorian, Ionian, Akhaian, etc) also persisted for centuries.⁸⁸ Horowitz affirms that due to dynamic ethnic boundaries "multiple ascriptive identities are the rule, particularly where the several identities are at different levels of generality."⁸⁹ In the case of the Pauline congregations, they were drawn from both Jews and non-Jews, forming a new group in which previous identities persisted (e.g. Gal 2:11-13). It is the presence of the diverse identities within the churches that created many of the disputes Paul addresses in his

⁸⁶ Cohen, *Beginnings*, 18.

⁸⁷ Stephen Mitchell, "Ethnicity, Acculturation and Empire in Roman and Late Roman Asia Minor," in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex; London: Duckworth, 2000), 117-50.

⁸⁸ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 47-51; Konstan, "Ancient Greek Identity," 31. Konstan follows Hall in referring to this composite ethnic group as an "aggregative identity," whereas Horowitz's term is "amalgamation."

⁸⁹ Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," 118.

epistles. Negotiating these social dynamics is a major goal of each of the Pauline epistles we will examine in this study.

Ancient historians and modern ethnographers note the common phenomenon of multiple overlapping or concentric ethnic identities.⁹⁰ Horowitz's analysis of mechanisms of ethnogenesis and assimilation demonstrates how such occurrences might arise. The genealogical criterion of ethnicity can permit multiple ethnic identities in that family trees branch out to accommodate many ancestral lines. This ability of ethnic theory to explain the phenomenon of overlapping identities is especially helpful in reconciling Paul's insistence on unity in the churches with his affirmation of continued particularity and difference within the congregations. It provides a way to conceptualize Paul's social vision for a united church populated by Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, male and female. Christian unity is only threatened by previous social identities when certain of their indices are in direct conflict either with each other or with defining indices of their new identity in Christ. In cases of such conflict, members are forced to decide which identity is primary and which must compromise.⁹¹ Therefore, it will be important for this thesis to

⁹⁰ For modern ethnography on this point, other than Horowitz, see Charles F. Keyes, "The Dialectics of Ethnic Change," in *Ethnic Change* (ed. Charles F. Keyes; Publications of Ethnicity and Nationality of the School of International Studies University of Washington 2; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 6; John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity* (ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7-8, 11; Michael Banton, "The Actor's Model of Ethnic Relations," in *Ethnicity* (ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); repr. from "Modelling Ethnic and National Relations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17 (1994): 2-7, 9-10.

⁹¹ The Antioch incident in Gal 2:11-21 is an instance of such conflict. Bengt Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity in the Early Church?" *RB* 105 (1998): 416, analyzes this conflict in terms of identity: "For Paul there exists no general and exclusive contrast between being a Jew and being a Christian, as if a Christian Jew would not be allowed to adhere to Jewish traditions and do what other Jews are doing—to judge from 1 Cor. 9:20 he is of the contrary opinion. But in this concrete case, Paul demands, it must be made clear which group membership has priority, and what identity one confesses, as these two ethno-religious identities here happen to exclude each other."

attend to how Paul's letters reflect negotiation of such identity-based conflict within his churches.

We will see that Paul does not require anyone to reject his or her given cultural identity, be it Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, upon baptism into Christ. But he is absolutely clear that solidarity with the new community must take precedence over intra-ecclesial divisions produced by those antecedent identities.⁹² To submit again to boundaries that would divide the church is tantamount to rejecting Christ and submitting again to slavery to the "elemental spirits of the world" (Gal 2:14; 4:3, 9; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 11:17-22, 29; Col 2:8, 20). Thus, Paul's triple re-use of the baptismal unity formula supports a vision where the various opposed identities mentioned are not erased but are united in a new primary community comprised of reconciled diversity.⁹³ It remains to be seen, through examination of each of the epistles in which Paul uses the baptismal formula, in what ways those pre-existing social identities become attenuated by their incorporation into Christ. However, even at this point, these methodological reflections suggest the terms of such negotiation and attenuation, namely, the identification and re-negotiation of group indices and salient boundary markers.

Because Boyarin presumes that Paul's ontology and hermeneutic necessarily erase particularity and difference, he does not explore how Paul envisions the social embodiment of his churches. He does not speculate about the interplay between multiple overlapping identities in either Paul's or his own vision, even though they must exist in his vision, at least; e.g., those who are both Jews and women. Moreover, he does to Paul the very thing he complains Paul does to Judaism. In theorizing as to what kinds of identities have the resources to persist within pluralistic society, he effectively

⁹² Barclay, *Diaspora*, 385-86.

⁹³ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 251: "The comprehensive formula in Gal 3.28 (unity of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female) could then be heard to speak to the racial, cultural, social and sexual prejudices which bedevil the church as well as wider society."

dismisses the value of Pauline Christian identity. According to Boyarin, a diasporized identity must not only eschew social dominance but it must also have a physically embodied boundary feature. Yet it appears arbitrary for him to consider boundary markers as varied as circumcision, female anatomy, and one's sexual behaviors to be "physically embodied," while Christian baptism or the Lord's Supper do not qualify. Anthropologists have made it abundantly clear that ethnic groups utilize a great variety of modes to signal their boundaries—dress, language, food, dance, cult, etc. (see above pp. 41-43. 53-56)—and that those boundaries can change over time without loss of group identity or historical continuity. What is key according to the ethnic theory outlined above is simply that a group's indices, however they are expressed, are correlated with its constitutive myth. Boyarin's judgment regarding what cultural strategies must be protected (Jewish, feminist and gay) and which are inferior (Pauline), appears in social science perspective to be special pleading. He argues that if circumcision is not definitive of the Pauline ecclesial identity, then Jewish identity is erased in Paul's vision.⁹⁴ Yet circumcision is not significant for the identity of female Jews without this fact undermining the persistence of male Jewish identity. Similarly, the uncircumcision of non-Jewish members of Paul's churches need not imply the rejection of the Jewishness of circumcised members. Boyarin's essentialism can account for only one social identity at

⁹⁴ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 32, "What will appear from the Christian perspective as tolerance, namely Paul's willingness—indeed insistence—that within the Christian community all cultural practice is equally to be tolerated, from the rabbinic Jewish perspective is simply an eradication of the entire value system which insists that our cultural practice is our task and calling in the world and must not be abandoned or reduced to a matter of taste. The call to human Oneness, at the same time that it is a stirring call to equality, constitutes a threat as well to Jewish (or any other) difference. While it is not anti-Semitic (or even anti-Judaic) in intent, it nevertheless has had the effect of depriving continued Jewish existence of any reality or significance in the Christian economies of history." Here Boyarin mistakes Paul's resistance to circumcision as a boundary marker for the Christian community for Paul's reduction of cultural particularity to "a matter of taste." If Paul, in actuality, advocates social solidarity rather than uniformity, then it need not deprive "continued Jewish existence of any reality or significance." Cf. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 195-197.

a time rather than for the reality of multiple, interacting social identities. He recognizes this reality but provides no framework for examining such social dynamics.⁹⁵ Social scientists, such as the ethnic theorists cited in this chapter, make abundantly clear that maintaining multiple, overlapping social identities is the norm.

David Horrell, in his book *Solidarity and Difference*, also responds to Boyarin's challenge. Horrell deploys insights from political theory to account for both identity and distinction within a setting of pluralistic social solidarity. He highlights points of formal correspondence between Paul's social vision and that of modern liberal social ethics to show that both insist on a non-negotiable framework of solidarity within which differences may be sustained, even as they are attenuated by the broader social contract.⁹⁶ Both visions trace a sphere for regulated interchange between distinct cultural communities who nevertheless maintain their boundaries within their shared over-arching communal identity. Boyarin presumes the existence of some such liberal pluralistic society within which distinct cultural identities can flourish, yet he denies Paul the possibility of envisioning an analogous arrangement. Horrell, in contrast, borrowing the concept of metanorms from social ethicist Seyla Benhabib, explores the dialectic between social solidarity and difference. Metanorms are the fundamental values rooted in a group's constitutive myths. These core values do not legislate particular objective ethical norms; rather, they govern ethical reflection that discerns appropriate behavior in any given situation.⁹⁷ In this regard, Horrell's approach shares the sociology of knowledge perspective that also underwrites my use of ethnic theory. In both cases, a constitutive

⁹⁵ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 245, "Rather than the dualism of gendered bodies and universal souls, or Jewish/Greek bodies and universal souls--the dualism that, as I have argued throughout this book, is offered by Paul--we can substitute *partially* Jewish, *partially* Greek bodies, bodies that are *sometimes* gendered and *sometimes* not. It is this idea that I am calling diasporized identity" (italics original). I shall argue that Paul's vision supports persistence of just such an attenuated identities.

⁹⁶ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 197-98, 202-203, 282-284.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62, 131, 201-202, 222, 274, 279.

myth shapes social identity and provides the key reference points for negotiating a social ethos that is not fixed but dynamically reproduced in varied social contexts. Such emphasis on both the historical continuity and dynamic social construction of cultural groups allows for more nuanced social description than Boyarin's essentialism can account for.

For Horrell, the myth of participation in Christ's death and resurrection, ritualized in baptism and the Lord's Supper, provides the well-spring of Christian metanorms; namely, social solidarity in Christ and sacrificial other-regard like Christ.⁹⁸ He reads Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 12:13 as affirming the social implications of baptism, as I do.⁹⁹ My employment of ethnic theory tracks closely with Horrell's analysis of both the mythic basis and social implications of Paul's vision. Yet whereas he focuses primarily on Paul's christology as the foundational myth shaping the churches, this thesis equally emphasizes the broader ethnic myth of incorporation into Israel's history and identity via incorporation into this Jewish Messiah whose advent reconfigures the story of Israel.¹⁰⁰ Presenting Paul's vision for his churches in terms of this ethnic myth helps to account for the specifically ethnic ways he characterizes the believers' solidarity and other-regard. Their union with Christ creates a people who understand themselves as kin and as a reconfigured Israel. This Jewishness of Christ and of those in Christ also colors the ethos Paul presents in ways that the Christological myth, narrowly defined in terms of death and resurrection, cannot

⁹⁸ Ibid., 99-110, 129-30, 181, 241-45, 274.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 104-106.

¹⁰⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 18-19, 133-65; idem, "Christology," 341-42, does clearly register that Paul grounds the believers' corporate identity in the Scriptures of Israel as heirs to their covenant identity. Yet he subordinates this ethnic dimension to the Christological basis of their identity because it is solely by being "in Christ" that Gentile believers may identify with Israel and because it is the Christological identity that warrants Paul's radical reconfiguration of Israel's covenant identity. This emphasis is correct and it serves Horrell well in his broader goal of correlating Pauline social ethics with contemporary political and ethical theory inasmuch as the metanorms he derives from participation in Christ—social solidarity and other-regard—are more readily coordinated with pluralistic, multi-cultural social norms than are the particularities of banning worship of other Gods and sexual immorality.

account for, as Horrell also notes.¹⁰¹ Thus, the story of Christ is embedded in the story of Israel and is a fresh chapter in that story. Ethnic theory enables me to read Paul's vision for the church as the construction of a particular ethnic group in accordance with its foundational myths.

This thesis will argue that with the baptismal unity formula Paul does indeed assert the primacy of unity in Christ and refuse to allow indices of other identities to cause division within his churches. Such a vision does not amount to the erasure of those other cultures or identities. The ethnic theory I have introduced above suggests two key questions for assessing the persistence of previous identities within the Pauline churches. First, what aspects of identity in Christ does Paul consider inviolable and thus to be norms before which conflicting indices of other identities must cede? That is, in Horowitz's diagram of amalgamation, $A+B \rightarrow C$, what indices of 'C' are non-negotiable? Or to use Horrell's terminology, what are the metanorms of Paul's ethical reflection? My analysis reaches the same conclusion as Horrell that social (ethnic) solidarity in Christ and Christologically defined other-regard are the core of Paul's ecclesial vision, his metanorms that govern ethical reflection. Furthermore, I concur with Horrell in noting that Paul enforces the typical Jewish boundaries against idolatry and sexual immorality as continuing in Christ. Second, how does Paul negotiate conflicts that arise between previous identities now incorporated together in Christ? That is, what becomes of identities 'A' and 'B' when key indices of 'A' and 'B' are mutually exclusive, though not in conflict with 'C'? We will see in this case also that identification of solidarity and other-regard as Pauline metanorms grounded in identity with Christ proves critical in explaining Paul's ethical reasoning.¹⁰² Thus, Paul's ecclesial vision does not involve the erasure of previous identities, but simply their attenuation by their commitment to Christian solidarity and other-regard and by the bans on idolatry and sexual immorality.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 149-152.

¹⁰² Ibid., 5, 131, 197-98, 201-202, 242, 274, 279.

In this regard, it is helpful to note the difference between conflicts over table fellowship and conflicts over circumcision reflected in Paul's letters. As we will see below in more detail, the conflict over circumcision in Galatians is an instance of Jewish Christians seeking to impose this index of Jewish identity upon the non-Jewish members of the church. To use Howorwitz's categories, their vision for ecclesial identity is closer to incorporation ($A+B \rightarrow A$) than amalgamation ($A+B \rightarrow C$), since they want the Galatian Gentile converts to adopt Jewish cultural identity (ῥουδαίξειν, Gal 2:14). Paul objects to this not because he opposes Jewish believers being circumcized but because he rejects making circumcision an index of identity in Christ. On this point there is for Paul no inherent conflict between Jews maintaining this Jewish identity marker and embracing Christian identity, so long as they do not seek to impose it on non-Jews.

Initially, one might expect a similar resolution to the issue of table fellowship. Each sub-grouping could eat their own kind of food, while not imposing their norms on others. However, the social dynamics of table fellowship differ from those of circumcision. This difference derives both from the Lord's Supper tradition and from the general social significance of meals. Paul assumes that eating together as an expression of shared identity in Christ is non-negotiable. The shared food provokes for Paul a different kind of negotiation where one or both groups must accommodate the sensibilities of the other. It appears impossible for each group to maintain their own dietary norms and still eat together. The differences between how Paul engages conflict over table fellowship in the Antioch incident (Gal 2:15-21) and in Corinth (1 Cor 8-10) will prove revealing for assessing how Paul adjudicates the conflicting indices of social identities present within the Christian community. It will become clear that Paul does not have a static set of rules or arrangements that he imposes in each church, rather he engages in situationally nuanced reflection governed fundamentally by his commitment to enabling social unity within his culturally diverse churches through the practice of Christ-like sacrificial love.

Summary

In Chapter One, I argued that Paul's three-fold recycling of this baptismal unity formula must be assessed within the mythic context in which Paul sets it and with regard to the social purposes for which Paul deploys it. In particular, interpreters must be able to describe the unity Paul is urging both in terms of his symbolic framework and in terms of social practice. Failure to specify Paul's social vision in this way leaves the formula untethered from its epistolary context and malleable to unwitting anachronistic impositions or ideological distortions. Furthermore, Chapter One marshaled preliminary evidence suggesting that the formula may function within Paul's broader vision for communal identity construction and social unity. To this end, the present chapter has sought to articulate a theory of ethnic identity and rhetoric that has been shown to be relevant for studying social identities in Paul's world. I have proposed an understanding of ethnic identity that is at its core genealogically construed. That genealogical foundation produces a myth of common essence and of essential characteristics that motivate a corporate ethos. In this praxis, the genealogical myth authorizes the normative ethos that, in turn, instantiates the genealogical self-understanding of the members. This recursive social process builds and reinforces group identity and solidarity.

I have noted that typical of such ethnic identity construction are the practices of common cult, common table, and endogamy, practices which reinforce the primordial sense of ethnic solidarity. I have made initial suggestions as to how Paul's epistles reflect each of these strategies that we will see further confirmed in later exegetical chapters of this thesis. Furthermore, I have noted Paul's pervasive use of familial terminology and his expectation of attitudes and behaviors typical of ancient familial solidarity. Paul, however, has attenuated the typical ethnic logic of autochthony to such an extent that it is barely perceptible in his rhetoric. Whereas Paul's urging of social identity and unity dominates his rhetoric, there is barely a hint of concern for a homeland. What hints are

present seem indefinitely deferred and entirely dependent on corporate unity in the present for their ultimate fulfillment by God.

In the studies that follow, I will demonstrate that the baptismal unity formula primarily serves to support Paul's case for this corporate, family-like unity in each epistle. In this sense, it will be seen to epitomize his vision of ethnogenesis in which formerly distinct and mutually alienated identities are united into a new, primary, social identity in which their previous identities are subordinated to the new solidarity, yet persist within that new community. Conceiving of this unity in terms of ethnic identity construction also will enable me to respond to Boyarin's critique that Pauline ecclesial identity necessarily leads to the eradication of pre-Christian social identities.

Each of the following three exegetical chapters is a reading of one of the epistles in which the baptismal formula occurs with an eye to the formula's function within that epistle. These chapters do not follow a set template; rather, I have allowed the unique style and issues of each epistle to shape my treatment. However, in each case, I make two main points. The first is that the unity formula primarily serves to support Paul's argument for social unity in the churches. The second is to highlight the insights that derive from assessing that unity in terms of ethnic identity construction. That is, I am testing a hypothesis for how to characterize the social unity Paul urges and the rhetorical strategies by which he does it. This procedure fulfills the concerns raised in my introductory Chapter One by making explicit both the mythic context in which the formula gains its significance and the social vision it supports. I trust that the ensuing readings will vindicate themselves from any suspicion of social science reductionism, as this thesis does not at all diminish the foundational theological vision from which Paul's social redescription derives. But given the extent to which Paul presumes shared theological foundations with his addressees, it is noteworthy that much of his rhetorical labor is over the social vision arising from those convictions.

Chapter Three: Gal 3:28 and the Household of Faith

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)

Introduction: Gal 3:28 in Epistolary Context

In the smoke from fires raging over such controversies as the identity of Paul's opponents in Galatians, how to characterize Second Temple Judaism and the meaning of δικαιοσύνη and πίστις Χριστοῦ, it is easy to lose sight of the extent to which Galatians emphasizes social unity in Paul's churches. Yet Paul's extended assessment of social cohesion in and among the churches frames his central scriptural arguments in Gal 3-4, where most scholarly debate is focused. This framing calls attention to corporate dynamics in those central arguments as well. Paul's recollection of threats to unity in the Jerusalem and Antioch churches in 2:1-21 precedes these contested central chapters, which are then followed by warnings about a parallel threat in Galatia (5:1-12), together with guidance for their corporate solidarity (5:13-6:10). Moreover, the climax of ch. 3 in v. 28d, ". . . all of you are one in Christ Jesus," suggests that social unity has been Paul's concern throughout the exegetical arguments of that chapter.¹ To support the thesis that the baptismal unity formula epitomizes Paul's vision for ethnic unity in the church, I will demonstrate the centrality of 3:28 to Paul's argument for church unity, *per se*, in Galatians. Along the way, I will highlight how that unity conforms to our model of ethnicity as well as how conceiving of that unity in ethnic terms further clarifies Paul's goal of preserving the Galatian churches' particular identity and solidarity in Christ. In order to better focus on the social dynamics inherent in Paul's rhetoric, I will examine the more explicit social concerns in Gal 2, 5 and 6 before turning to the central chapters, Gal 3-4, where dogmatic concerns often obscure their social nature.

¹ Betz, *Galatians*, 181, observes that Gal 3:26-29 is "the goal towards which Paul has been driving all along."

Disunity in Jerusalem and Antioch: Gal 2:1-14

Whether or not the actual characters were identical, Paul portrays the controversy in Galatia as a continuation of previous battles he fought in Jerusalem and Antioch. Thus, he recounts these earlier episodes in such a way as to feature what is advantageous for the argument he is about to make.² In 1:11-23 he develops the point stressed in his epistolary introduction, “Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father” (1:1), to establish the independence of his gospel and apostolate from the Jerusalem apostles.³ In telling of the Jerusalem visit, he stresses that he “went up in response to a revelation,” clarifying that he was not summoned by superiors. Furthermore, his fourfold reference to the Jerusalem apostles as “those who seem [to be something] (οἱ δοκοῦντες)” together with his aside, “what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality” (2:6), make clear that, in his mind, he was present as a peer and not as a subordinate.⁴ Therefore, it is puzzling to find the apparent insecurity expressed in 2:2: “I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain.”

² Richard B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E Keck; vol. 11; ed. Leander E Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 221, 230; Betz, *Galatians*, 103-04; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 120. Pace Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002): 62-72, 144-54, who argues that Paul's narrative examples in 1:11-2:21 are not analogous to the Galatian situation but serve solely to demonstrate steadfast resistance to illegitimate social pressure, irrespective of its character. His case requires him to neglect the explanatory comments Paul makes himself as he narrate these events, e.g. 2:2, 15-21. Furthermore, by neglecting the sections of Galatians he categorizes as narrative, 1:13-2:21; 3:6-4:11; 4:22-30; 5:19-23, he is able to ignore the theme of unity and its implication that Galatians reflects an intra-Christian debate.

³ James D. G. Dunn, "The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem According to Gal 1 and 2," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 110, 118-19; repr. from *NTS* 28 (1982): 461-78.

⁴ Hays, "Galatians," 210, 216-17; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 33-35; Dunn, "Relationship," 121.

Clearly, the outcome he feared would have been for the Jerusalem apostles to insist that all Gentile converts, including Titus, be circumcised. Given Paul's self-presentation in Gal 1, especially his assertion, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!" (1:8), it is difficult to imagine that he would have submitted to such a decision. Therefore, the outcome Paul fears is not returning to Antioch and any other churches he has established to explain to them why, contrary to his earlier preaching, they must be circumcised; rather, he fears a permanent split between the circumcising and non-circumcising churches.⁵ The withdrawal of endorsement from the Jerusalem apostles would have resulted in the establishment of separate Gentile and Jewish churches. For Paul this separation would amount to the cancellation of his entire previous ministry, not because he granted the Jerusalem leaders authority to make such a judgment but because a united church of Jews and Gentiles together is for Paul the essential goal of the gospel.⁶ Happily for Paul, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, and Peter, James and John endorsed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

⁵ Hays, "Galatians," 223; Dunn, *Galatians*, 93-94; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 49; Martyn, *Galatians*, 193.

⁶ Martyn, *Galatians*, 193: ". . . that development would have destroyed this assumption that the one 'truth of the gospel' is in fact bringing into being one church of God made up of former Jews and former Gentiles (3:28; 6:15). If the Jerusalem church had failed to perceive that grand picture, the result would have been that his work was not bearing fruit *as a branch of the vine*" (italics original). My only dispute with Martyn's statement is his use of the word "former," as will become clear below. As Martyn's vine and branch metaphor highlights, Paul's concern is both the manifest unity of the church and the church's continuity with Israel and her Scriptures as the fulfillment of God's promises. The commentators listed in the previous note also view the ecclesial unity sought by Paul as having historical (with Israel), translocal, and local dimensions. Between the publication of his 1982 article and his 1993 commentary (Dunn, "Relationship," 115; Dunn, *Galatians*, 93-94) Dunn appears to have shifted from affirming solely Paul's concern for the Gentile churches' continuity with Israel to affirming also the importance to Paul of contemporary unity among churches. Cf. Simon J. Gathercole "The Petrine and Pauline Sola Fide in Galatians 2," in *Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive* (ed. Michael Bachmann; WUNT 182; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 313.

However, this solidarity began to unravel when Peter was in Antioch eating with Gentile believers. The re-segregation of Peter and the other Jewish believers in Antioch following a warning from representatives of James exposes the fragility of the agreement reached previously in Jerusalem. Explanations of this souring of relations between Paul and Jerusalem fall into two main camps: 1) the initial agreement was ambiguous enough to allow for varying interpretations, or 2) James, followed by the others, reversed himself.⁷ Although either is possible, the first option is more economical and, thus, preferable. Reasons promoted for the second option, such as James' recanting the earlier agreement, are either that the Jerusalem church was coming under increasing persecution for their subversion of social norms or that James was seeking revenge for having been publicly shamed by Paul during the Jerusalem visit.⁸ The latter option that James was avenging lost public honor, while characteristic of ancient, Mediterranean agonistic culture, is difficult to square with how the Jesus movement was counter-cultural in exactly this arena.⁹ The hypothesis of increasing social pressure on the Jerusalem church for ethnic loyalty has merit.¹⁰ Jesus' crucifixion and Saul's persecution of the churches testify to such a possibility in that nationalistic and politically volatile period. However, the evidence available regarding the earliest Palestinian churches suggests that they accepted persecution without swaying from the faith and viewed it as being consistent with following the crucified Messiah.¹¹ Moreover, Paul has already characterized James

⁷ For the first option see, Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 140-41; James D. G. Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-18)," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 155-56; repr. from *JSNT* 18 (1983): 3-57; Martyn, *Galatians*, 220-22. For the second option see, Esler, *Galatians*, 135-39; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 53-56; Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," *NTS* 17 (1971): 204-06.

⁸ Esler, *Galatians*, 135-36, proposes both reasons.

⁹ Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 408-10.

¹⁰ Dunn, "Incident," 7-11.

¹¹ Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 131.

as taking a stand against the “false believers” (2:4), confirming James’ willingness to resist such pressures. So if another explanation is available, it is preferable.

Paul’s retelling of these episodes hints at the source of ambiguity in the initial agreement. The change of concern from circumcision to commensality between the episodes (Jerusalem, 2:1-10; and Antioch, 2:11-14) suggests where the parties may have differently understood their agreement. If Titus’ presence in Jerusalem exemplifies the nature of their agreement, James may have understood it as allowing Gentile believers to remain uncircumcised and to eat with Jewish Christians in settings that uphold Jewish dietary practices (e.g. Lev 17:10-15). In other words, Gentiles could eat in Jewish homes, but Jews should not compromise Levitical purity by eating at a non-Jewish table.¹² Paul, on the other hand, along with Peter and Barnabas initially, construes Titus’ reception in Jerusalem as emblematic of the removal of all social barriers between Jews and Gentiles in the church. Thus, they ate together in Antioch in a manner that Jews would characterize as Gentile-like (ἐθνικῶς, 2:14bc).¹³ Yet there remains an ambiguous middle ground of mutual recognition with “separate-but-equal” social arrangements.¹⁴ Peter does not advocate circumcision in overt violation of the Jerusalem agreement; he is, rather, sliding into that middle ground.¹⁵ The operative question was, and remains, what

¹² Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 402, 411-14. Gathercole, “Galatians 2,” 315, 22, 24, fails to distinguish these settings and their respective dietary practices, thus undermining his argument that there was no ambiguity in the Jerusalem agreement regarding commensality. Furthermore, if, as Gathercole argues (pp. 319, 26-27), there was no disagreement between Peter and Paul regarding the social implications of the gospel, then it is hard to see how recounting the Antioch incident serves as an analog to the Galatian situation.

¹³ Robert Jewett, "Gospel and Commensality: Social and Theological Implications of Galatians 2:14," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (ed. L. Ann Jervis et al.; JSNTSup 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 248-49; Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 405-06.

¹⁴ Hays, "Galatians," 232: “In effect, the Jerusalem agreement had acknowledged a separate-but-equal Gentile mission, but it had not addressed the problem of social relations and table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.”

¹⁵ Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 410; *pace* Esler, *Galatians*, 137-38. Paul’s assessment of Peter’s motivation, “for fear of the circumcision faction” (2:12),

commonalities were implied in the “right hand of fellowship (δεξιός κοινωνίας).” All agreed to some sort of solidarity, but the practical implications were not sufficiently clarified. Recognizing that James’ interpretation, embodied in Antioch by Peter’s separation, would lead to two functionally separate churches, even if they endorsed one another at a safe social distance, Paul sees the victory achieved in Jerusalem slipping away.¹⁶ He recounts how he publicly and dramatically intervened to staunch this critical hemorrhage lest his gospel die there in Antioch.

Paul has constructed a key link between the Jerusalem and Antioch scenes with his phrase, “the truth of the gospel” (2:5, 14). For Paul the truth of the gospel requires unrestricted social intercourse between Jews and Gentiles in the church.¹⁷ Had he compromised on this point, his apostolic career would have amounted to nil (2:2) and there would not have been a gospel remaining for the Galatians (2:5). Given the consonance on this point between these two episodes and the baptismal unity formula in 3:28, we might consider that formula to state “the truth of the gospel” and this scene to be

does not necessarily imply Peter’s complete capitulation to advocating circumcision, merely that members of this faction were present, as previously (2:4), pressing for their social vision and challenging violations of Jewish norms such as dietary laws. If the circumcision faction and Paul occupy extreme positions on a spectrum, Peter and James are somewhere in between, being buffeted first one way and then the other without decisively identifying with either pole. Nanos, *Irony*, 221-22, in denying that the influencers in Galatia could be fellow Christ-believers argues that it is unthinkable that believers in the gospel of Christ could become dissuaded from full inclusion for Gentiles. Yet isn’t that precisely what Peter and Barnabas exemplify here and what Paul addresses in 2:15-21? Nanos has evaded this point by discounting the value of these narrative passages for constructing the identity of the influencers in Galatia. However, on pp. 221-22, Nanos is considering hypothetical possibilities. Certainly, Paul’s examples in Gal 1-2 validate just the possibility Nanos rejects.

¹⁶ For a survey of the extensive debate over how to characterize the crisis recounted in Gal 2:11-21 with conclusions similar to those presented here, see Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 399-411.

¹⁷ This is the thesis of Jewett, "Gospel and Commensality." Cf. Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 414; Hays, "Galatians," 231-35; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 168-69.

an elaboration of that aphoristic saying.¹⁸ In the Jerusalem episode, 2:1-10, Titus' presence, clearly an intentional ploy by Paul, creates an embodiment of the unity formula as Jews and a Greek gather in social unity. Paul specifically calls Titus "Greek" (Ἕλληνα, 2:3), anticipating "Jew or Greek" in 3:28. Similarly, the Antioch crisis contradicts the formula by asserting the social distance between Jews and Gentiles; whereas the formula announces "there is no longer Jew or Greek . . . for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."¹⁹

Another telling linguistic link between the Antioch and Jerusalem incidents is Paul's use of the verb "compel" (2:3, 14). We can surmise that in 2:3 the compulsion would have been in the form of an order from the recognized leaders for Titus either to be circumcised or be banished from the Christian assembly. But in what way could Peter's separation of himself from eating at a common table be fairly construed as compelling Gentiles to live like Jews (2:14)? It clearly would not constitute compulsion if one accepts a certain level of social segregation within the church.²⁰ But it is precisely Paul's point that the truth of the gospel requires unreserved social unity. Given the presumption of social unity, the only way for Gentile believers to maintain table fellowship with Peter and his fellow Jews would be to "live like Jews."²¹ Thus, in Paul's view, Peter presents the Gentile believers with the choice between violating the truth of the gospel by eating separately or living like Jews in order to preserve the unity of the church.

¹⁸ Mark D. Baker, *Religious No More: Building Communities of Grace and Freedom* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 81: "For Paul the truth of the gospel is that 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (3:28)." Cf. Jewett, "Gospel and Commensality," 249-50; Martyn, *Galatians*, 243.

¹⁹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 120-21, 201-202, also reads Gal 2:11-14 as exemplifying Paul's metanorm of social solidarity that is likewise expressed in 3:28.

²⁰ Dunn, *Galatians*, 129; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 47.

²¹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 120: "Thus, from Paul's viewpoint, this withdrawal constitutes a demand, if congregational fellowship and unity are to be restored, that the Gentiles ἰουδαίῳ ζῆναι . . ."

Paul's battle for unrestricted table fellowship is an indicator that the believers embody a new ethnic group. We saw in Chapter Two, above, that commensality is a typical practice of ethnic groups, especially in traditional cultures. The social symbolism of eating together in the ancient Mediterranean pronounced that those who ate as equals were either kin or actual social equals who were friends. Given that these participants were clearly not social equals but derived from distinct segments of society, their common meal reflected their new identity as kin. Paul's description of the advocates for circumcision, and presumably separate dining arrangements, as ψευδᾶδελφοί further underscores that their divisiveness is a violation of familial solidarity. True brothers would not act in such a way; thus, their behavior has shown them not to be brothers at all. Furthermore, Paul's refusal to allow a separate Jewish table reinforces his vision that this new family is in continuity with historical Israel. In some sense Paul's position seems contradictory in that they are not to live like Jews regarding food scruples but they must be intimately attached to Jewish members in order to embody their eschatological ethnic identity.²²

If the precedent were to be set that Gentiles must live like Jews for the sake of unity, that capitulation would enshrine the boundary markers of one particular culture as normative for the church. Such a result would appear to reify that cultural identity as part of the church in violation of the baptismal unity formula that asserts, "There is no longer Jew or Greek." However, one might respond that by requiring Jews to live like Gentiles for the sake of unity, as Paul here urges on Peter, the dominant Hellenistic culture has become normatively identified with the gospel. However, it is not as simple as that. Of course, to one of Paul's opponents in Jerusalem or Galatia it might appear that way. But

²² Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 87-88; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), xxxviii, xl; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 298-99; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 97-98; Martyn, *Galatians*, 574-77.

other aspects of his presentation of the believers' identity and ethos would have been perceived in their Hellenistic world as particularly Jewish, such as exclusively worshipping the God of the Jews and reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, as a group including members from various social strata and subcultures, their practices of open table fellowship, sacrificial service to others outside of patronage or natural kinship relationships and promoting the honor of others would mark them as a peculiar group in the context of Greco-Roman cultural norms. This vision for social inclusion constitutes the unity affirmed by the baptismal unity formula that conversely rejects maintaining traditional social boundaries within the church community.

Furthermore, the social exclusion Paul seeks to overcome presupposes power dynamics where certain members are able to marginalize others. In this instance, the power to exclude resides primarily with the Jerusalem apostles, even though Jewish identity is a marginal identity in the broader Greco-Roman world. The localized power differential is evident from the compliance of Barnabas and all the rest of the Jews in the Antioch church (2:13).²³ I will further examine Paul's sensitivity to such inner-church social power dynamics in my chapter on the baptismal formula in 1 Corinthians.

Recalling the modes of assimilation and ethnogenesis introduced above (Chapter Two, pp. 69-74), I note that Paul here advocates amalgamation ($A+B \rightarrow C$) over incorporation ($A+B \rightarrow A$). Whereas incorporation usually involves a political or evaluative assessment of the superiority of A to B and thus endorses the culture of A, amalgamation focuses on the new identity being created as distinct from and preferable to A or B while still accepting the continuance of those previous identities. We will see

²³ Martyn, *Galatians*, 245: "One recalls again that at this time the church—taken as a movement in Palestine, Syria, and Cilicia—was predominantly Jewish, Gentile members being a minority. The corporate withdrawal of the Jewish members in Antioch was a move taken by a powerful majority. It had the effect of compelling the Gentile members—a small weak minority—to observe the Jewish food laws at the common table, as though those laws were essential to the life of God's redeemed community."

below that Paul's apocalyptic gospel critiques and disrupts all cultures (Gal 3:23-25; 4:1-11). Yet in the day-to-day practicalities of sorting out life together, aspects of those previous identities come into conflict and must be negotiated in accordance with the myths and ethos of the new identity. As Paul's letters demonstrate, this process is not straight forward. It is, nevertheless, the process of community formation and identity construction evident in these letters. In the next section of Galatians, Paul provides a provisional answer to the question of what cultural norms the church community ought to adopt in preserving unity in the face of cultural conflicts.

Paul's Speech: Gal 2:14c-21

Paul's stylization of his speech to Peter in 2:14c-21 allows him to exit his narration of these events and to present a more explicit case for the truth of the gospel.²⁴ This speech links the preceding narrative with Paul's scriptural arguments in Gal 3-4 by both previewing the main terms of the ensuing case and, as address to Peter, demonstrating how their commonly held convictions about the cross support Paul's position on table fellowship.²⁵ The speech's dual horizons of the Antioch episode and the Galatian circumcision dispute demonstrate that Paul sees both crises as reflecting the same underlying theological problem.²⁶

Paul builds to the climax of his argument in v. 21b, "For if righteousness is indeed through the law, then Christ died in vain." This conclusion must be unacceptable to Peter and to Paul's Jewish-Christian interlocutors in Galatia; otherwise, his argument would

²⁴ Regarding the ambiguity as to precisely where Paul's summary of the Antioch episode ends and his address to those in Galatia resumes, Betz, *Galatians*, 114, notes, "Paul addresses Cephas formally, and the Galatians materially." My only quibble with Betz would be to refine his view with insight of Martyn, *Galatians*, 246-47, that Paul is materially addressing fellow Jewish-Christians, namely the rival missionaries present in Galatia.

²⁵ Betz, *Galatians*, 114; Hays, "Galatians," 230-31, 236; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 82-83.

²⁶ As noted above, n. 15, Nanos, *Irony*, is only able to deny these parallels between the Antioch and Galatian situations by dismissing the relevance of this passage.

end with a thud instead of a bang. In other words, Paul can presume the necessity and efficacy of Christ's death to be common ground for all parties.²⁷ In Paul's view, Peter and the Jewish-Christian missionaries in Galatia have failed to grasp the earthshaking implications of the cross of Christ. Beginning with their shared affirmation that Jesus, the Messiah, died on the cross for their justification (2:16, 20b; cf. 1:4a), Paul argues that re-establishing Jewish social boundaries within the church constitutes a *de facto* admission that "Christ died for nothing" (2:21c).²⁸

Paul's presentation of the problem to Peter reveals his unstated premise. In v. 14b Paul sketches the two options for table-fellowship that Peter has alternately embodied: either they eat together on Gentile terms (ἔθνικῶς) or they eat together on Jewish terms (Ἰουδαϊκῶς).²⁹ In either case, Paul presumes they eat together, as his language of compulsion demonstrates (see above, pp. 89-91). His difference with Peter at this point is precisely this presumption. Peter seems to endorse separate-but-equal tables as an acceptable compromise. So in vv. 15-16 Paul recounts to Peter the basis for their previous concurrence that the gospel demanded a relaxation of law observance for the sake of

²⁷ B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 105; Martin Hengel, *The Atonement: A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1981), 47, 55; Martyn, *Galatians*, 263-73; Dunn, "Theology of Galatians," 133. My emphasis on Paul's rhetorical strategy differentiates this analysis from Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), whose important study seeks to uncover the relationship between Paul's gospel and his reading of scripture. Here I merely note that Paul argues for the insufficiency of law observance on the basis of agreement about the cross of Christ; whereas Watson strives to show that Paul derives his view of the law through how scripture, itself, reveals the law's powerlessness. My study attends to the surface features of Paul's argument; Watson probes for the hidden contours of Paul's thought that underwrite his argument.

²⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, 126-27.

²⁹ Horrell, "Christology," 337: "For Jews and Gentiles to share unbounded table-fellowship requires one of two things: for Jews to live ἔθνικῶς or for Gentiles Ἰουδαΐζειν. Since the former has already taken place, on the theological grounds that being righteous comes through Christ and not Torah, it makes no sense now to require the latter"

unity.³⁰ Their encounter with Christ had demonstrated the ineffectiveness of law observance in producing righteousness.³¹ Paul expects all parties to agree that even law-abiding Jews become righteous only through believing in Christ (καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, “even we trusted in Christ Jesus”).³² He, therefore, draws the conclusion at the end of v. 16, “no one will be justified by the works of the law.” His rhetorical strategy is simply to press shared gospel convictions to their logical conclusion. Law observance that could not justify “Jews by birth” certainly could not be effective for “Gentile sinners” (v. 15).³³ He answers the question he posed at the end of v. 14, “how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” by demonstrating the inherent self-contradiction in such a practice. The advantage formerly attributed to living in a Jewish manner (ἰουδαίξειν) has been exposed as being without merit.³⁴

These social implications of righteousness through Christ explain the question Paul raises in v. 17, “But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?” To understand how pursuing justification in Christ could result in being “found to be sinners,” one need only recall the context of this speech. Peter and the Jewish Christians in Antioch have been found by the men from James to be eating with “Gentile sinners,” in violation of Jewish standards of righteousness.³⁵ Paul’s unspoken assumption here is that being justified in Christ includes

³⁰ For discussion of the extent to which the Antioch church relaxed or abrogated the law in their behavior, here described as ἔθνικῶς, see Holmberg, "Jewish Versus Christian Identity," 404-07; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 133-40; Dunn, "Incident," 25-36. Sufficient for the present argument is the observation of Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 77 n.4: “But it is clear that neither they [the Antiochean Christians] nor Peter were living as Jews should (ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, v. 14) and this suggests an obvious neglect of some of the purity-rules in the law.”

³¹ For the translation of ἔργα νόμου as “law observance,” see Martyn, *Galatians*, 260-63.

³² Translation is that of Hays, "Galatians," 237, who rightly rejects the NRSV’s rendering of καὶ as a conjunction when it clearly is adverbial here.

³³ *Ibid.*, 236.

³⁴ Martyn, *Galatians*, 246-49, 263-73; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 80-81.

³⁵ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 78-79; John H. P. Reumann, "Righteousness (NT)," *ABD* 5:746-73; Hays, "Galatians," 241; Dunn, *Galatians*, 141-42.

eating together with Gentiles who are also justified in like manner; otherwise they could avoid being “found to be sinners” by gathering separately, as Peter has begun to do. Jewish Christian refusal of table fellowship with Gentile believers amounts to an assertion of the Gentile believers’ unrighteousness and a denial of the truth of the gospel. Thus, Paul’s speech not only reaffirms what we have seen previously—that “acting consistently with the truth of the gospel” (v. 14) involves social unity between Jews and Gentiles—but he has also shown how the cross of Christ mandates such unity by its implicit judgment on the law. If one re-establishes the social division between Jews and Gentiles in the church, one is in violation of God’s work, as Paul warns in v. 18, “But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor.”³⁶ This is precisely what Peter is doing by retreating from his practice of unrestricted table fellowship.³⁷

In contrast to rebuilding the wall that law observance creates between Jews and Gentiles, Paul asserts that he has died to the law (v. 19). This drastic statement, though shocking to his Jewish hearers, is fully consonant with his argument here. If the law would count as sinners any who flaunt its demands—here dietary proscriptions and circumcision—then Paul stands under its judgment. He accepts that judgment and identifies both with “Gentile sinners” and with Christ who in his death also received the law’s negative verdict (3:13). Thus he can summarize, “through the law I died to the law” (2:19a) and “I have been crucified with Christ” (2:19c). Between these two negative clauses in 2:19 stands their complementary affirmation, “so that I might live to God.” Whereas living to/for/by the law would suggest a life ordered around the law’s precepts,

³⁶ Horrell, "Christology," 336 n.49, glosses “transgressor,” “Either of the Law, based on his current practice, or (rather more attractive, in my view) of the will of God, which now summons people to live ἐν Χριστῷ and not ὑπὸ νόμον. This latter view probably makes better sense of the verse, and of v. 19 which follows (esp. its contrast between dying to the Law and living to God)”

³⁷ Hays, "Galatians," 241-42.

“living to God” (θεῶ ζῆσω) is a frustratingly vague characterization of how one ought to live. Certainly those who uphold the law would assert that they are living to/for God. However, it is precisely the social division that law observance would force upon the church community that Paul sees as counter to God’s will. Whatever else Paul may imagine as involved in “living to God,” here it entails, at minimum, embracing uncircumcised, Gentile Christians in unrestricted table fellowship. In other words, Paul sees the situation as a binary choice between obeying the law or obeying God, and that obedience focuses primarily on how he esteems and relates to Gentiles.³⁸ Paul’s case forces a binary opposition between righteousness from the law and righteousness from the cross.

This norm of “living to God” seems to be the first answer to what cultural norms are to govern intercultural unity in the church. He further characterizes this “living to God” in v. 20 as Christ living in him and as ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ.³⁹ Christ himself

³⁸ Richard B. Hays, "Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 289: “. . . Paul argues so vehemently against the law because he sees it as a threat to the unity of the new community in Christ. This hypothesis illuminates the argumentative force of Paul’s narration of the Antioch incident (2:11-21). Just as Cephas’ scruples about the law divided the community at Antioch, so the advocates of circumcision in Galatia threaten to shatter the unity of the community, a unity which is rightly grounded in their common unity with Christ (3:26-29).”

³⁹ For the sake of focus I will limit myself to a few comments in support of rendering πίστις Χριστοῦ as “faithfulness of Christ.” Here I note that since the context concerns *how* believers are to live, the faithfulness of Christ more adequately addresses that concern than the traditional translation that requires “live” in “live by faith in Christ” to mean “have life” rather than “conduct life.” For overview of this debate consult the essays by Richard B. Hays, James D. G. Dunn and Paul J. Achtemeier in E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay, eds., *Pauline Theology*, vol. 4: *Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler, E. Elizabeth Johnson, and David M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 33-92. The essays by Dunn and Hays are now reprinted as appendices in Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 249-97. For a concise summary of the debate that favors the subjective genitive reading, see B. Longenecker, "Covenant Community," 79-83. For commentaries that incorporate the “faith(fulness) of Christ” perspective into their interpretation see, Martyn, *Galatians*, 251-52, 259-60, 263-75; Sam K. Williams, *Galatians* (ANTC; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997); Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992); Hays, "Galatians," 181-348.

seems to be the pattern for “living to God” in much the same way as the law itself was formerly seen to be. Paul proceeds to specify what aspects of Christ’s character are to the fore in this pattern of life, namely, “who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20d), echoing 1:4a, “who gave himself for our sins” (cf. 3:13). Christ loved sinners and sacrificed himself for them, just as Paul is calling Jewish Christians to do for their Gentile “sinner” fellow believers. The content of the shorthand phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ is filled out by Paul’s final gloss on the phrase in 2:20de, “. . . the life I now live in the flesh I live in faith, that is to say in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up to death for me.”⁴⁰ On the view that πίστις Χριστοῦ is best rendered as a subjective genitive or a genitive of authorship, the concluding clause describes how that faith(fulness) appears.⁴¹ The phrase “faith of [Jesus] Christ,” used twice in 2:16, can then be seen to be shorthand for the gospel message of Jesus’ faithful death on the cross on behalf of people. Martyn notes that this equation of the faith of Jesus Christ with Christ’s death is evident in the parallel between 2:16 and 2:21.⁴² Both verses begin with a denial that justification can come through the law followed by a counter-point stating the true

⁴⁰ Translation of Martyn, *Galatians*, 246, 259.

⁴¹ Ibid., 270 n.171; N. T. Wright, "Gospel and Theology in Galatians," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (ed. L. Ann Jervis et al.; JSNTSup 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 230 n.20, both classify this grammatical construction as a genitive of authorship or origin rather than as a subjective genitive. R. Barry Matlock, “Detheologizing the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *NovT* 42 (2000): 1-23, challenges the subjective genitive reading of this phrase (he does not consider the genitive of authorship or origin) and argues for greater linguistic precision in assessing the lexical semantics at play. In challenging the presence of the subjective genitive in Gal 2:16, Matlock asks, “What is the link between talk specifically of πίστις (‘faithfulness’) and a particular relation to Χριστοῦ (‘subject’)?” (p. 12). My reading addresses this by highlighting Paul’s rhetorical focus here on how believers are to live, together with his presentation of Christomorphic life in opposition to conformity to the law, thus coordinating the believers’ manner of life with Christ’s death.

⁴² Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.

source of justification. In 2:16 the authentic source of justification is πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; in v. 21 it is Christ's death.⁴³

While not giving precise guidance for how to navigate tricky cultural conflicts, this foundational charter for the church's ethos does provide a pattern of life within which such crises can be assessed. We will see more clearly in 1 Corinthians what can only be glimpsed here. The pattern of Christ's self-giving for the redemption of others suggests that in settings of differential power or privilege, the privileged members ought to be the ones who sacrifice their status for the sake of unity. This exposes them to condemnation from their extra-ecclesial community who may "find them to be sinners" or some other locution. Yet this is exactly the pattern that Paul presents as Christ's and his own.⁴⁴

Finally, this grounding of their corporate ethos on Christ, "the Son of God" (2:20), may be seen as typically ethnic. Ethnic discourse justifies the normative behaviors of the group in the character of its ancestors. Here Christ is not an ancestor but the ideal Son who defines their sonship. Thus, in his own way, Christ reveals the normative character for this family.

Urging Unity: Gal 5-6

Recent scholarship on Galatians has brought fresh solutions to the long-standing problem of how the parenthesis of Gal 5-6 relates to the previous four chapters of the epistle.⁴⁵ John Barclay's pioneering study combines insights from the sociology of knowledge with recent approaches to Paul's letters in order to propose an integrated

⁴³ However, R. Barry Matlock, "'Even the Demons Believe': Paul and Πίστις Χριστοῦ," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 307-308, makes the counter point that inasmuch as "faith in Christ," the objective genitive reading, also evokes Christ's death the parallel is equally meaningful.

⁴⁴ These conclusions cohere with the argument of Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, that solidarity (my 'ethnic unity') and other-regard are the Pauline metanorms governing ethical reflection (see above Chapter Two, pp. 77-79).

⁴⁵ For surveys of this scholarship see, Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 9-35; Hays, "Christology and Ethics," 268-72.

reading of the entire epistle in which Paul's parenesis can be seen as urging the ethos appropriate to the identity Paul has established for the Galatian believers in Gal 1-4.⁴⁶ Barclay's title, "Obeying the Truth," is taken from Gal 5:7, "You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?" Noting how that verse picks up the theme, "the truth of the gospel," from 2:5, 14, he argues that the obedience characterized in Gal 5-6 is precisely the behavior commensurate with the gospel defended in Gal 1-4. As we saw above, "the truth of the gospel" demands social unity among the believers. Barclay argues that Gal 5-6 articulates an ethos of communal harmony and solidarity concordant with their radically transformed corporate identity in Christ. In his view, Gal 5:5-6 express in condensed form what it means to "obey the truth" (v. 7). Barclay sees these verses as summing up what Paul's argument in Gal 3-4 has achieved and as setting the agenda for the parenesis that follows.⁴⁷ Their new identity is inaugurated by faith (2:16; 3:1-14, 22-26), so, too, is their new life-style guided by faith according to 5:5-6, "For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love."⁴⁸

Paul's chief concern throughout 5:1-6:10 appears to be that the believers maintain harmonious relationships with one another in the church community. This emphasis corresponds with Paul's insistence in Gal 2 on social unity expressed in unrestricted table

⁴⁶ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 94. In view of the prominence Barclay gives to 5:5-6 in his analysis of Paul's parenesis in Galatians, as well as taking his title from 5:7, it is surprising that he demarcates the parenesis as being 5:13-6:10. He evaluates the various proposals for where the parenesis begins in Galatians, 5:1, 6 or 13 (pp. 23-26), but never explains his choice of 5:13. Hays, "Galatians," 306; Martyn, *Galatians*, 432-33, 446-47, 467-68, have argued that 5:1 is the conclusion of Paul's exegetical argument beginning in 4:21 and that the parenetical section begins in 5:2. Such refined epistolary analysis is unnecessary for this thesis; thus, I will follow the general convention of referring to 5:1-6:10 as the parenetical section of Galatians.

⁴⁸ Hays, "Christology and Ethics," 276-80, argues that the ethical entailments of πίστις in Galatians correspond with the subjective genitive understanding of πίστις Χριστοῦ.

fellowship. In Paul's vision, obeying the truth produces social solidarity. The programmatic statements in 5:6, 13 both characterize the life granted to believers by Christ as governed by love for one another rather than by status divisions, e.g. circumcision versus uncircumcision (5:6), or self-indulgent autonomy (5:13). To buttress this vision, Paul epitomizes the entire law by the command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (5:14).

In contrast to love of neighbor, Paul continues in 5:15, "If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." These two alternatives, loving one another versus destroying one another, shape Paul's depiction of the way of the Spirit versus the way of the flesh in 5:16-24 where he features prominently vices that disrupt the community in contrast to virtues that promote harmony.⁴⁹ The five conventional vices that begin Paul's list, "fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery" (5:19b-20a), are the only exception to this focus on communal concord, expressing, rather, group boundary concerns. As well as being Paul's sincere conviction, they serve him rhetorically by addressing the Jewish worry that disregard for the law would lead to moral decline into these stereotypical Gentile sins of immorality and idolatry.⁵⁰ Having registered his rejection of these cardinal vices, he focuses on those things that would tear the community apart, "enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy."⁵¹ His list of "the fruit of the Spirit" notably contains no virtues to balance the vices of immorality and idolatry but solely virtues to balance the vices of discord.⁵² "Love" heads his list, which can be read as explication of that chief

⁴⁹ Ibid., 286: "Not only is the list of 'works of the flesh' heavily weighted toward offenses against the unity of the community, but the vice and virtue lists of 5:16-24 are also bracketed by clear directives against conflict in the church (5:13-15; 5:25-6:5)."

⁵⁰ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 153; B. S. Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," *JBL* 51 (1932): 2-5; B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 73; Martyn, *Galatians*, 496-97.

⁵¹ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 153-54; Esler, *Galatians*, 228; Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," 5.

⁵² Easton, "New Testament Ethical Lists," 5.

virtue that is also the main topic he announced in summarizing the law as loving your neighbor as yourself.⁵³

Having coordinated the way of love with the Spirit, Paul can summarize, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit” (5:25). Here their reception of the Spirit as the basis of their new life in Christ (3:1-5, 14; 4:6) becomes explicitly the guiding force of their ongoing comportment in Christ.⁵⁴ The remaining exhortations in the parenetic section deal concretely with how believers are to treat one another in the church community, specifying what it looks like to be “guided by the Spirit.”⁵⁵ The deference and concord urged here would immediately be viewed in antiquity as the unique social ethos of family. That interpretation of this ethos as signaling kinship is confirmed by the fact that Paul has designated this Spirit that animates their corporate life as the Spirit of the Son (4:6). Similarly, in 4:29 Paul has rendered them genealogically as “born according to the Spirit.” Paul concludes this parenthesis in 6:10, “So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith,” picking up the emphasis on service from his previous summary statements in 5:6, 13 and characterizing their solidarity in terms of family.⁵⁶ Finally, Paul calls them brothers and sisters (5:11, 13; 6:1) to reiterate that these are behaviors and attitudes

⁵³ R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 260; B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 71; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 132-33.

⁵⁴ Barclay, , 155, considers “5.25 as the ‘introduction’ or ‘heading’ which establishes the purpose of the following remarks: they spell out more exactly what it means to ‘walk in the Spirit’ and, as we shall see, often do so by drawing directly on the virtues listed as the ‘fruit of the Spirit’.”

⁵⁵ Regarding the maxims of 5:25-6:10, Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 168 writes, “Only by a careful observation of Paul’s emphasis—the points to which he returns and on which he lays most stress—can we see the issues that lie behind these maxims, viz. Paul’s overriding concern for the unity and harmony of the Galatian churches which he believes to be under a most serious threat.”

⁵⁶ Esler, *Galatians*, 224: “While the verse [5:13] presents *in nuce* the contents of 5.13-6.10, the description of his addressees as brothers (*adelphoi*) constitutes the first in a sequence of explicit and implicit fictive kinship references in the passage which will culminate in ‘the house-members of the faith’ at 6.10.”

commensurate with their new identity as family. Paul's parenesis accords with the ethnic theory outlined above in that we can see that his rhetoric presents the norms as befitting those who claim this particular ancestry.

The echo of "there is no longer Jew or Greek" (3:28a) in 5:6a, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything," suggests that 5:6b, "the only thing that counts is faith working through love" fills out what it means to be "one in Christ Jesus" (3:28d). Paul here implicates the unity formula of 3:28 in his parenesis on preserving that unity. This connection validates reading 5:1-6:10 as expressing Paul's vision of the baptismal formula's social implications.⁵⁷ The formula's contrast between solidarity and exclusion alerts us to those same alternatives throughout the social dynamics catalogued in Paul's parenesis. Those dynamics are not merely individual attitudes or behaviors but may be correlated with the formula's expression of identity-based exclusion versus solidarity.⁵⁸

Social Identity in Apocalyptic Perspective

In framing this socio-ethical vision in terms of the dichotomy between flesh and Spirit (e.g. 5:16-17), Paul infuses their identity and ethos with apocalyptic currents. This cosmological mythic setting to his argument has run through the entire epistle (1:4, 11-12; 2:20; 3:23-26; 4:3-7) and includes this Spirit versus flesh dualism (3:3; 4:29). J. Louis Martyn has been the leading voice in recent years to stress the apocalyptic character of Paul's theology in Galatians. This has been a needed corrective to the view that Galatians is the one epistle in which Paul's apocalyptic perspective is suppressed.⁵⁹ By apocalyptic,

⁵⁷ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 168; B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 74; Martyn, *Galatians*, 554; Hays, "Christology and Ethics," 289.

⁵⁸ B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 77: "Ethnocentrism and egocentrism are not different matters in Paul, but are one and the same phenomenon carried out on two different levels of existence . . ." He observes that both are rooted in "narcissistic self-referentiality" and that Paul's parenesis applies to both. Cf. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 208.

⁵⁹ J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 31 (1985): 410-12, locates himself vis-à-vis Käsemann and Beker on this issue of the

Martyn does not mean the particular literary genre consisting of apocalypses but a cluster of theological concepts including special revelation, cosmological dualism (two competing spheres or powers, e.g. the Flesh and the Spirit), eschatological dualism (two distinct aeons separated by a decisive act of God's judgment), and the imminent triumph of God over his cosmic foes.⁶⁰ The absence of discussion in Galatians of Jesus' return, final judgment, or general resurrection has misled previous commentators to view Galatians as not being particularly apocalyptic in outlook. Martyn's innovation has been to recognize that in Galatians, Paul has brought the primary apocalyptic motifs to bear not on the parousia but on the crucifixion. The cross is the end of the world for believers (2:20; 6:14). The cross marks the division of the aeons (1:4; 6:15). The cross is God's victory over his foes--Sin, the flesh, and the law (3:13, 22-23; 4:4-6; 5:24). "The motif of the triple crucifixion--that of Christ, that of the cosmos, that of Paul--reflects the fact that through the whole of Galatians the focus of Paul's apocalyptic lies not on Christ's parousia, but rather on his death."⁶¹

Because this use of the adjective "apocalyptic" invites confusion, a word of clarification is in order.⁶² Regarding the derivation and use of this adjective, John Collins writes,

Since the adjective "apocalyptic" and the noun "apocalypticism" are derived from "apocalypse," it is only reasonable to expect that they indicate some analogy with the apocalypses. A movement might reasonably be called apocalyptic if it shared the conceptual framework of

character of Paul's apocalyptic theology in Galatians. For the view that Galatians is the exception to Paul's otherwise apocalyptic perspective, see Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 57-58.

⁶⁰ Richard E. Sturm, "Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic': A Problem in Biblical Criticism," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (ed. Joel Marcus et al.; JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 17-48; cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 97-105. B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 43-46, refers to these same motifs as "the eschatological frame of Paul's letter."

⁶¹ Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies," 420.

⁶² B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 22. For an overview of the history and causes of such confusion see Sturm, "Defining," 17-48.

the genre, endorsing a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts. ... We should remember, however, that the argument depends on analogy with the apocalypses and that the affinity is always a matter of degree.⁶³

Collins applies the adjective to the eschatology found in Paul's epistles and the Gospels, as well as to social movements.⁶⁴ We see in Collins' three-point summation of the apocalyptic "conceptual framework" substantial overlap with Martyn's emphases. Both highlight the importance of revelation inherent in the Greek etymology of "apocalyptic." Collins' heavenly world presupposes the spatial dualism of Martyn's competing spheres of power. And his eschatological judgment asserts the temporal dualism of aeons divided by God's judgment present in Martyn's scheme. These same elements comprise Sturm's summary of the state of NT research into the core concepts that constitute apocalyptic theology as well as Wayne Meeks' synthesis of the defining characteristics of literature that is ideologically apocalyptic but not generically an apocalypse.⁶⁵ This brief survey demonstrates a debatable but workable consensus on how to use the adjective "apocalyptic" to describe an ideology, theology, or a social movement, or even literature that is not an apocalypse. John Barclay has adopted this view regarding Galatians, following, in particular, Meeks' characterization:⁶⁶

1. Secrets have been revealed to the author or prophet.
2. These secrets have to do with a cosmic transformation that will happen very soon. Time moves toward that climax, which separates "this age" from "the age to come."
3. Central among the events to happen "at the end of days" is judgment: The rectification of the world order, the separation of the good from the wicked, and assigning the appropriate reward or punishment.

⁶³ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁵ Wayne A. Meeks, "Social Functions of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Hellholm; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 689, 695-98; Sturm, "Defining," 36.

⁶⁶ Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 100, adopts Meeks' typology to define "a *mode of thought* bearing apocalyptic characteristics" (*italics original*).

4. Consequently the apocalyptic universe is characterized by three corresponding dualities: (a) the cosmic duality of heaven/earth, (b) the temporal duality this age/the age to come, and (c) a social duality: the sons of light/the sons of darkness, the righteous/the unrighteous, the elect/the world.

Meeks and Barclay both comment that this paradigm holds for Galatians so long as we recognize Paul's innovation of locating God's decisive act of judgment and rectification in the past at the crucifixion.⁶⁷ We have seen above that this also is Martyn's assessment of Paul's apocalyptic perspective in Galatians. However, unlike Martyn, I find the structure of Paul's thought in Galatians to be thoroughly covenantal, as well.⁶⁸ In this regard, the theologies of Paul and his opponents are formally similar. They disagree over the terms of the covenant, and it is Paul's apocalyptic understanding of the cross that accounts for this difference. According to Beverly Gaventa, the cross has revealed a fundamental antithesis between Christ and the cosmos, and this antithesis governs Paul's apocalyptic dualism in Galatians.⁶⁹ The other antitheses in Galatians—e.g. between Christ and the law, the cross and circumcision, the Spirit and the flesh—are subsets of the Christ versus cosmos contrast.⁷⁰ This primary antithesis comes to succinct expression in 1:4, 2:20 and 6:14-15. In terms of Meeks' and Barclay's characterization of apocalyptic, noted above, 1) the revelation of Christ has been given to Paul and the church (1:12, 16; 3:23), 2) Christ's death has separated the new creation from the cosmos (6:14-15), 3) the faithful will reap eternal life (6:8) but the disobedient will not (5:21), 4a) there is a cosmic duality between Christ and all creation, 4b) a temporal duality divides history at

⁶⁷ Ibid., 101; Meeks, "Social Functions," 695.

⁶⁸ B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 17-20, 90-95; Kee, *Knowing the Truth*, 89-91; B. Longenecker, "Covenant Community," passim; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 96-105; Wright, "Gospel and Theology," 237-38; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "The Singularity of the Gospel: A Reading of Galatians," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 1: *Thessalonians, Philipians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 158-59.

⁶⁹ Gaventa, "Singularity," 152-56.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 156: "These are but subsets of the more fundamental antithesis, which is between Christ/new creation and cosmos."

the coming of “the faith” (3:23-25), 4c) a social duality exists between those who have been set free (5:1, 13) and those “enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world” (4:3).

The final category above, social duality, is of particular significance for my argument. Paul transposes the dichotomy, Jew versus Greek, from the baptismal unity formula into a decidedly apocalyptic key in 6:15, “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!” In the previous verse he has boasted of being crucified with respect to the world (κόσμος). This correlation shows that the binary social divisions expressed by the formula fall on the cosmos side of the Christ-versus-cosmos duality. Conversely, “all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28d) corresponds to the new creation. It is instructive to read the baptismal formula and its two Pauline recapitulations in Galatians side by side in view of its Pauline apocalyptic framing.

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (3:28)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. (5:6)

For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! (6:15)

On the Christ/new creation side of the duality we find the socio-ethical vision of unity and of faith working through love. On the cosmos side we find categorical social alienation. For Paul it seems that the chief manifestation of the new creation in the midst of “this present evil age” (1:4) is a united, loving community composed of members who are drawn from mutually alienated groups in society at large. Paul’s insistent categorization of circumcision and law observance on the cosmos side of the apocalyptic divide confirm that the division Jew versus Greek is part of the present evil age (4:3, 8, 9; 5:1-4; 6:15). These observations suggest that for the purpose of Paul’s argument in Galatians a chief characteristic of the “present evil age” (1:4) from which Christ gave himself to rescue believers is the division of the world into privileged versus marginalized statuses. The gospel rescues believers from such division. In Galatians “the

singularity of the gospel” produces the singularity of God’s people.⁷¹ This new identity is especially Paul’s topic in Gal 3-4, which we will examine below. But already we have seen how this new identity has radically reconfigured traditional social expectations by calling forth a new kind of social solidarity as consistent with the truth of the gospel (2:1-14). God’s spirit produces within this new community a unity nurtured by mutual love (5:13-25). The broad antithesis between Christ and cosmos is specified in Galatians primarily in social terms. The surprising social character of the church as a reconciling community embodies the Christ/new creation side of his governing antithesis.⁷²

Gal 3-4: Identity and Unity in Christ

The social unity announced in 3:28 derives from the singularity of Christ and the believers’ new corporate identity in him. I will argue below that this unified, social identity does not exclude all other social identities, as is sometimes asserted.⁷³ Rather Paul asserts its primacy over other identities such that other allegiances must not be allowed to divide the community in Christ. Viewing Paul’s construction of identity in ethnic terms enables articulations of such nuances. The sociological concepts of nested

⁷¹ Ibid., 149, who borrows the phrase “the singularity of the gospel” from John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (SNTSMS 26; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 121. She takes it as the title for her essay and means by it, “. . . Paul presupposes from beginning to end that there is only one gospel (1:6-9), the singularity of which consists of the revelation of Jesus Christ as God’s son whose crucifixion inaugurates the new age. This singular gospel results in a singular transformation for those called as believers, who are themselves moved into a new identity in Christ alone”

⁷² For a similar argument and conclusions see B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 63-67.

⁷³ E.g. Gaventa, "Singularity," 149: “The new creation results in the nullification of previous identifications, whether these come from within the law (1:11-17) or from outside it (4:8-11).” It seems unnecessarily strong to assert that the new creation nullifies other identities since Paul accepts some continuation of human social identity in the church. For instance, in Gal 1:3, Titus is clearly a Greek among Jews, all of whom are brothers in Christ. Also, Paul’s modulation of the baptismal unity formula in 1 Cor 12:12-25 to support the unity of the body that is composed of diverse members seems to accept continuity of human status within the new unity. Colossians also shows such continuity of earthly identity in 4:11b, “These are the only ones of the circumcision among my coworkers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.”

identities, non-contradictory social boundaries and the amalgamation model of ethnogenesis noted above in Chapter Two (pp. 72-73) describe the social negotiations where a new identity subsumes other ones without eradicating them. Problems arise when loyalty to a pre-existing identity threatens the cohesion of the new group and the relative importance of the competing identities must be clarified. This is the case reflected in Galatians.

In the present case, the identity threatening the cohesion of the church is that defined by Torah observance. However, the presence of the two other social dichotomies in the baptismal unity formula suggest that other identities could pose such a threat, as well. In fact, in 4:1-11, Paul generalizes the argument of 3:6-29 in such a way as to apply the conclusions of Gal 3 to other possible threats to the church's identity and unity. Nevertheless, the issue of Torah observance poses unique problems for Paul. The Scriptures of Israel are the Scriptures of the church. Paul has to conduct his argument with his Jewish opponents in Galatia on the basis of the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul claims for his churches a lineage through Israel ("you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise") via the Jewish Messiah. His ability to generalize his conclusions to other competing identities seems to follow an *a fortiori* logic. If even Jewish identity according to the Torah may not be allowed to dominate or sub-divide the church, then how much more must any other possible identity also submit to communal solidarity in Christ. This reading of Galatians 3 will highlight how Paul argues for a particular corporate identity in Christ and against an alternate construction of identity that would divide the church.

Centrality of 3:28 to Galatians 3-4

We have seen how the formula in 3:28 epitomizes Paul's argument for social unity in Gal 2 and 5-6. Furthermore, Paul has coordinated this unity with his broader apocalyptic dualism. This social and apocalyptic vision also governs Paul's central exegetical arguments in Gal 3-4 where he seeks to establish the believers' unique identity that forms

the basis of this loving, unified ethos. Galatians 3:26-29 climactically announces the new corporate identity for which Paul argues in these central chapters: “in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,” “baptized into Christ,” “all of you are one in Christ Jesus,” “you belong to Christ,” “you are Abraham’s offspring.” This concatenation of identity statements sums up the arguments of 3:6-25. At the heart of vv. 26-29, Paul places his citation of the baptismal unity formula as a final piece of evidence supporting his argumentation.⁷⁴ Paul ties the unity formula into its context in such a way that it structurally and thematically focuses the surrounding arguments by drawing together their key terms and conclusions into concise, memorable expression.⁷⁵ With the baptismal formula of 3:28 Paul asserts social unity in Christ, “for all of you are one in Christ Jesus,” and the abolition of the very exclusion dividing the Galatian church, “There is no longer Jew and Greek.”

In 3:6-25 Paul supports this claim by redefining the very foundations of the Jew versus Greek division, namely Abrahamic descent and law observance.⁷⁶ Key elements of this argument are picked up and summarized in his conclusion in vv. 26-29. Paul first mentions Abraham in 3:6 and addresses the true character of Abraham’s paternity in 3:6-9 in order to capture this pillar of Jewish identity for believers. He recapitulates his point regarding their descent from Abraham with his concluding commentary on the baptismal

⁷⁴ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 204, in commenting on the significance of 3:28 within Gal 3:6-29, cites and supplements Betz, *Galatians*, 181: “Betz calls this text ‘the goal towards which Paul has been driving all along.’ This may be so, but it is also, as we have seen, the presupposition for Paul’s argumentation all along.”

⁷⁵ Paulsen, “Einheit und Freiheit,” 74-76.

⁷⁶ There is broad consensus that these are the main topics dividing Paul and his opponents. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 159; Martyn, *Galatians*, 302-06; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcvi-xcviii, 114; Betz, *Galatians*, 142 n.29. Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 218-19, 227, is particularly cautious about what themes and Scripture citations may be attributed to Paul’s opponents, noting that mere exposure to Judaism would bring these same concerns to the fore. In any case, law observance and descent from Abraham have come into dispute among the Galatian Christians and are being exploited by Paul’s opponents.

formula in v. 29. In 3:10-13 he argues for the mutual incompatibility of faith and law observance in order to conclude that God's blessing and the promised Holy Spirit come not to "those whose identity is derived from observance of the law" (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργου νόμου) but, rather, to those in Christ and through faith (v. 14).⁷⁷ Verses 26-29 reiterate this identity "in Christ" and its basis in the faith. In 3:15-25, Paul continues to separate the law from God's promised covenantal blessing by deploying a metaphor of inheritance. By this image of inheritance and the last will and testament that conveys it, he argues that the law was incommensurate with God's promise to bless all nations in Abraham's offspring (σπέρμα). In fact, Paul presents Christ as the sole heir of God's promises to Abraham. This explains why believers share in the inheritance only by participation "in Christ." This locative, participatory vision is stressed in vv. 26-29, along with their identity, on that basis, as Abraham's offspring (σπέρμα) and heirs. This participatory identity descriptor, "in Christ," has occurred previously in Gal 1:22; 2:4, 17. In this central argument it shows up three times in key summary statements, 3:14, 26 and 28. The foundational significance of this identity is Paul's primary thesis in this argument. Galatians 3:26-29 is a meditation on this participatory identity, taking up key terms--"Abraham," "sons," "offspring," "in Christ," "one," "heirs," "promise"—all of which depend on the preceding argument for their significance and constrain our interpretation of the baptismal unity formula (v. 28) by framing it in terms of genealogy and singular corporate identity.

This reassessment of the law and of descent from Abraham is only possible because of the revealing of Abraham's one seed (3:16) and the faith (3:22-26) in the coming of

⁷⁷ The translation is that of Martyn, *Galatians*, 307-08, who rightly notes that the phrase is a group identity description parallel to 2:12, οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς; cf. Acts 10:45; 11:2; Rom 4:14; Col 4:11; Tit 1:10. The NRSV's "For all who rely on the works of the law" reads too much Pelagianism into the phrase. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3.10-14)," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 221-22; repr. from *NTS* 31 (1985): 523-42.

Christ. It is this apocalypse that negates the divisions rehearsed in 3:28 and presents the new identity as sons of God through Christ. Paul characterizes life governed by the former statuses as “imprisoned” (3:22, 23) and “slaves” (4:1, 3, 8) in contrast to the freedom of sons, which he develops in Gal 4 on the basis of the sonship established in 3:26, 29. Just as Gal 3 culminates in 3:26-29, so Gal 4 looks back on and depends on the before-and-after, identity contrast summarized there.

The Singular Identity of All in Christ

Around this dense, exegetical section of Galatians, a thicket of scholarship has grown up. The path through that overgrowth to be cut here will follow how Paul marshals his arguments to produce his central proclamation in 3:26-29 of the believers’ singular identity in Christ. The battle here is over identity; in particular, over who may rightly claim the privileged identity of being God’s covenant people. The opposing teachers in Galatians seem to have made a strong case for conversion to Jewish identity via circumcision and law observance. Paul seeks not only to discredit their case, but also to promote the Galatians’ understanding of their identity in Christ as encompassing all the benefits the opponents are offering and more.⁷⁸ In order to dissuade the Galatians from submitting to circumcision Paul argues against his opponents’ view that God’s covenant blessings abide only within the confines of Israel as defined by law observance. Instead he presents a case that God’s covenant with Abraham has been fulfilled uniquely in Jesus Christ and that only those identified with him may share in it. Moreover, this singularity of Christ has negated all other criteria for participation, including, most prominently, the law.

Because this new covenant identity is defined solely by Christ and has reconfigured all that has preceded it, no other canons of identity may divide what God has brought together. This singularity of Paul’s gospel in Gal 3—the singularity of Christ as

⁷⁸ Esler, *Galatians*, 173-74.

Abraham's true heir and mediator of God's blessings, the singularity of the church's identity in Christ—derives from his apocalyptic understanding of the cross. The social unity of the believers in Christ is for Paul the essential correlate of his apocalyptic dualism between Christ and the cosmos. Nothing from the cosmos side of that duality must be allowed to undermine what God is doing in Christ, which is precisely forming a new people identified with him. My support for this reading will proceed in two sections: 1) Heirs of faithful Abraham: the covenantal identity of Abrahamic descent is now reckoned solely through Christ according to faith; 2) The cross versus the law: the cross of Christ has removed law observance from its correlation with this identity. Following these treatments I will argue that this covenantal identity is an ethnic identity.

Heirs of Faithful Abraham

Paul engages the contested issue of Abrahamic descent beginning in 3:6, but not before establishing his preferred frame of reference. He intones, “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or from the message of faith?”⁷⁹ This “message of faith” is what Paul had previously preached to them, described in the previous sentence as “Jesus Christ crucified.” Paul imagines that his rendition of Christ crucified ought to have effectively warded off the spell under which the Galatians are now falling. Since God had manifestly poured out his promised eschatological Spirit (cf. 3:14: “the promise of the Spirit”; Isa 44:3; Joel 2:28) on them as uncircumcised Gentiles when they heard and believed the message of Christ's death for them, they ought not to think that God's

⁷⁹ I have altered the NRSV's final phrase from “by believing what you heard” to “from the message of faith.” For defense of this translation see Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 124-32. Cf. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 102-03; Martyn, *Galatians*, 286-89. Martyn prefers the translation, “the message that elicits faith,” rendering πίστεως as a genitive of direction or purpose. This option receives an approving nod from Hays who nonetheless favors rendering πίστεως as an exegetical genitive with πίστις being the gospel event, as in 3:23.

Messianic blessings are limited to those who join ethnic Israel by submitting to the law.⁸⁰ Paul frames the issue according to his apocalyptic dualism by posing the question as a disjunction between “works of the law” and “the message of faith.”

The contrast between “works of the law” and “the message of faith” harkens back to 2:16 where Paul introduced the dichotomy between works of law and faith/faithfulness. That verse encapsulates the dual use to which Paul puts the πιστ-root words, referring both to the faithfulness of Christ and to the believers’ faith in Christ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ. This usage is paradigmatic in Galatians, referring to Christ’s faithfulness, that is, the story of the cross, and secondarily calling forth human belief in that story.⁸¹ Paul’s recollection in 3:1-5 reminds the Galatians of the story of the cross and the interpretation of it they heard from Paul. It also highlights that they received God’s Spirit merely by believing that gospel. Paul has set the stage for his interpretation of Abraham and the law beginning in v. 6.

Verse 6, however, is elliptical, constituting only a sentence fragment. The verses immediately preceding and following it are complete sentences as they stand.⁸² Thus, we

⁸⁰ Paul is evoking the eschatological promises of God’s Spirit being poured out in the last days. Gordon D. Fee, *Presence*, 395; Matera, *Galatians*, 323; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 181-83. Each of these proposes Isa 44:3 as a likely LXX co-text for this verse based on the collocation of πνεῦμα, σπέρμα and εὐλογία. Martyn suggests rendering τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος as an exegetical genitive, “the promise, which is the Spirit;” I propose an objective genitive. On these grammatical alternatives see, BDAG, ἐπαγγελία, 1.a.

⁸¹ This is the main thesis of Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. Cf. Matlock, “Detheologizing,” 1-23, who has mounted a spirited challenge to this view. However, despite his helpful proposals for increasing linguistic awareness and precision in the discussion, his case against the subjective genitive reading depends on forcing a choice between discrete meanings of πίστις rather than allowing “contextual modulation of a general sense” (pp. 3-6, quotation from p. 3). My exegesis that follows will highlight how Paul indeed does modulate between faith as believing and faith as faithfulness.

⁸² For syntactical reasons that preclude 3:6 functioning as the protasis of a conditional sentence of which 3:7 is the apodosis, see Sam K. Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” *JSNT* 29 (1987): 92-94; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 217-18.

are required to complete Paul's thought. Because it introduces Paul's citation of Gen 15:6, "Abraham 'believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,'" some take καθώς to be short-hand for "Just as it is written in Scripture... ." ⁸³ But this reading suffers from two major weaknesses. First, this would be the only time in the NT that the frequent citation formula, καθώς γέγραπται or καθώς ἔστιν γεγραμμένον is shortened simply to καθώς. ⁸⁴ Second, such a reading weakens the connection between v. 5 and v. 6, thereby undermining the way Paul has written vv. 1-5 to set up his reading of Abraham. The missing clause in 3:6 must be supplied on the basis of the unstated answer to the rhetorical question in 3:5, producing the following paraphrase: *You believed the message of faith and received the Spirit just as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.* ⁸⁵ This interpretation gains further strength from the observation that Paul's summary statement in 3:14 also equates the blessing of Abraham, the theme of vv. 6-9, with the gift of the Spirit, the focus of vv. 2-5. The close link between v. 5 and v. 6, paralleling the Galatians' experience with that of Abraham, ought not to be obscured. ⁸⁶ Paul's assertive beginning to v. 7, γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι, continues the conclusion he draws from vv. 2-6, namely that it is οἱ ἐκ πίστεως who are "descendants of Abraham." The NRSV's "those who believe" reflects the traditional translation of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως. However, given the dual use to which Paul has put πίστις, referring both to the believers' faith and to the faithfulness of Christ, it remains

⁸³ Dunn, *Galatians*, 160; Betz, *Galatians*, 137, 140.

⁸⁴ Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 234-35.

⁸⁵ The clause in italics is what I have supplied as the implicit flow of thought in Paul's laconic rhetoric; cf. Williams, "Justification," 92-94; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 217-18; Fee, *Presence*, 390 n.84.

⁸⁶ Martyn, *Galatians*, 296-99.

ambiguous which reference Paul invokes by οἱ ἐκ πίστεως. Is it those whose identity derives from their faith or those whose identity derives from Christ's faithfulness?⁸⁷

Paralleling the Galatian believers' experience with that of Abraham in Gen 15:6 enables Paul to interpret Gen 12:3 (cited in v. 8) according to faith. Genesis 12:3 may have served the rival missionaries' case if they emphasized that "in you" implies physical lineage and that non-Jews must join Abraham's tribe via circumcision.⁸⁸ Paul, however, constrains this verse to cohere with his reading of Gen 15:6. In v. 8a he tells the Galatians what the citation is going to say. In v. 8b he cites Gen 12:3. Then in v. 9 he again restates his understanding of the citation. This repetition reinforces the conclusion he has already asserted in v. 7, "You know, therefore, that those whose identity is derived from faith, these are the children of Abraham."⁸⁹ Paul's paraphrase in v. 9 is telling; he has changed the "in you" of the Gen 12:3 citation to σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ. He has de-emphasized physical incorporation and has, instead, presented Abraham as a type of the Christian believer. Rather than receiving blessing in Abraham (Gen 12:3), Paul locates Abraham's blessing "in Christ" (v. 14a) and with Abraham (v. 9).

Paul's case in Gal 3:6-29 depends upon his ability to portray Abraham not only as the archetype of the believers whose family resemblance they bear as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (v. 7), but also as the type of faithfulness of whom Christ is the antitype.⁹⁰ By paying attention

⁸⁷ Ibid., 299; Richard B. Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?" in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 4: *Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. Elizabeth and David M. Hay Johnson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 52-53; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 114. Longenecker recognizes the ambiguity and argues for the traditional reading "those who rely on faith." Hays and Martyn both argue for intentional ambiguity that implicates both Christ and the believers. Cf. Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 190: "'In you' (Gen.12.3) means 'with believing Abraham' (Gal.3.9), but it also means 'in your seed' (Gen.22.18), and thus 'in Christ Jesus' (Gal.3.14a, 16)."

⁸⁸ B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 131; Martyn, *Galatians*, 301; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 115.

⁸⁹ Translation is from Martyn, *Galatians*, 294, 299.

⁹⁰ Hays, "Πίστις," 52: ". . . there is a sense in which Abraham is the prefiguration both of Christ and of those who are in Christ. Christ is Abraham's σπέρμα ("seed," 3:16), and those who are Christ's are τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ("seed of Abraham," 3:29). Abraham

to this ambiguity in Paul’s presentation of Abrahamic descent, we gain insight into his rhetorical strategy. As we have seen, in vv. 6-9, Paul presents Abraham as the model for Christian believers, who are identified as “descendants of Abraham” (v. 7). But vv. 15-18 present Christ as Abraham’s sole offspring, causing one to wonder how Paul could have called believers sons of Abraham. The singularity of Christ emphasized in vv. 15-18 calls retrospective attention to the ambiguity of Paul’s Abraham typology already in vv. 6-9. In these verses, the significance of πίστις is more multivalent than most English translations reflect.⁹¹ In each case, the emphasis could be on faith or faithfulness and the person so characterized could be Abraham, Jesus or the believer. Similarly, τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ could emphasize Abraham’s faithfulness or his belief.⁹² If the phrase evokes “faithful Abraham” (KJV), then he may be a type of Christ’s faithfulness. On the other hand, the translation, “Abraham who believed” (NRSV) makes him a type of those

is the Biblical type to whom the promise was given, Christ the eschatological antitype through whom the promise becomes effectual for those who are “children of promise” (4:28), Abraham’s sons (3:7).”

⁹¹ E.g. the NRSV: “Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” so, you see, those who believe [οἱ ἐκ πίστεως] are the descendants of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [ἐκ πίστεως], declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.” For this reason, those who believe [οἱ ἐκ πίστεως] are blessed with Abraham who believed [τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ].”

⁹² Regarding the false dichotomy between translating πιστός as “faithful” versus “believing,” see Hays, “Πίστις,” 57-58; Martyn, *Galatians*, 302-03 n.51. Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 190, recognizes Abraham’s dual function in Paul’s argument, as reflecting both the believers and Christ, yet he does not develop the necessary corollary of this observation that faith/faithful must then be coordinated both with the faith of believers and the faithfulness of Christ (pp. 185-193), developing instead his preferred emphasis on faith as the human response to divine initiative. He does not dispute the subjective genitive interpretation here but comments, “Recent emphasis on ‘the faith of Christ’ has tended to lose sight of this crucial word/faith correlation” (p. 193 n.37). Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (WUNT 140; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 128, 142, 152-53, does not consider this ambiguity of the πιστ- root words in Gal 3, assuming throughout that Paul simply contrasts believing with doing. Nevertheless, Kim affirms, “So Paul does exhort the redeemed to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law by walking according to the Spirit . . .” (p. 161). Thus, Kim apparently also understands “faith” to include “faithfulness.”

who believe in Christ. Both typologies--that between Abraham and believers as well as that between Abraham and Christ--are necessary for Paul's argument. On the one hand, presenting Christ as the true antitype to Abraham's faithfulness enables Paul to reconfigure the identity of God's covenant people around Christ, bypassing ethnic Israel as the custodians of Abraham's blessings. That is, if Christ is the only true descendant of Abraham, then participating in Abraham's family requires identification with Christ. This identity is, as we have seen above, precisely what vv. 14, 26-29 celebrate. On the other hand, making Abraham the ideal believer supports Paul's view that joining the covenant people occurs not by joining ethnic Israel but by imitating Abraham's faith in God.⁹³

The Cross versus the Law

Both of these Abraham typologies, though necessary for Paul's argument, are insufficient for making his case. His Jewish-Christian opponents in Galatia could easily have employed both typological uses of Abraham to support their own case for circumcision and law observance. They would have agreed that Abraham is their model of faith and would have continued that Abraham's faith was shown precisely in his faithfulness to the covenant of circumcision. Conversely, they could have affirmed Abraham as the prototype of Christ's faithfulness and still have argued that the benefits of such fulfillment accrue solely to God's covenant people traditionally defined and that part of identifying with the faithful Christ included becoming Jewish through circumcision. The messiah was a Jewish male, after all. By featuring faith(fulness) as the key familial trait defining Abraham's offspring, Paul has opened the door to his

⁹³ It is this dual use of the Abraham typology that creates the ambivalence regarding whose faith/faithfulness Paul registers throughout Gal 3. Thus, there are contextual pressures to take πίστις as both a characteristic of Christ and of believers, *pace* Matlock, "'Even the Demons Believe'," 315-17.

reconfiguration of the covenant people around Christ but he has not precluded law observance from being reintroduced.⁹⁴

So to complete his argument, Paul must also demonstrate that law observance plays no role in identifying with Christ.⁹⁵ If believers are “in Christ,” then they may claim the benefits of being Abraham’s offspring and heirs solely on that basis. This is precisely Paul’s point in his summary statements at 3:14 and 29. To exclude law observance from the identity of those in Christ, Paul does not exploit the typology between Abraham and believers, polarizing believing and doing, as has traditionally been argued; rather he develops the implications of Christ’s faithful death being the antitype to Abraham’s faithfulness in order to show that the faithfulness of Christ Jesus subsumes Abraham’s faithfulness and reveals a new understanding of the law. Rather than being the definition and conduit of Abrahamic identity the law can now be seen to have been a temporary caretaker, incapable of producing the life and blessings to which it pointed. Paul’s case for new identity in Christ and against the requirement of law observance in the church does not require him to prohibit any and all observance of the law. He merely needs to entirely separate such law observance from the identity of Abraham’s heirs in Christ. That is, he does not need to ban law observance *per se*, but only law observance as essential to identification with Christ.

⁹⁴ Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, 139-40, 161, signals his awareness that to be effective, Paul’s argument must dismiss law observance as definitive of this community in Christ. However, in his fixation on defending the traditional interpretation that the missing assumption in 3:10 must be that no one can keep the law perfectly, he never shows how his reading of 3:10-14 avoids this defect. Kim argues that the law’s weakness consists in the absence of God’s Spirit to enable obedience (pp. 154-63). Paul may have agreed, yet he must provide a stronger critique of the law than that in Gal 3 because those he opposes could simply reply that with the redemption in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, believers are now liberated and empowered to do what Israel previously could not do. At the point where Kim seems to be aware of this lacuna in his argument he merely asserts, “However, he [Paul] is opposed to Christians keeping the law of Moses in the way the Jews do” (p. 161)! What way might that be?

⁹⁵ Gaventa, "Singularity," 150-53.

It is precisely because the death of Christ Jesus on the cross becomes definitive of faithfulness that Christ as the antitype can displace Abraham as the prototype of faithfulness. Seeing that Abraham prefigured Christ, Paul recognizes that traditional indices of Abrahamic descent, such as circumcision and law observance, likewise have been refigured. For instance, in 3:7, Paul concluded that Gentile believers are Abraham's descendants (υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ). But by 3:26, that privileged identity has been subsumed under an even greater identity: "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) through [the] faith," the very identity of Christ Jesus, himself (1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6, 7). In vv. 23-25, just before this triumphant conclusion, Paul has referenced the new revelation of the faith that arrived with Christ, concluding, "But now that [the] faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian," that is, the law. The faith revealed in Jesus Christ has also revealed the law's true nature.

It is only by the revelation of the faith (3:23) that Paul can retrospectively make these temporal distinctions. Paul's unmodified use of "the faith" in 3:23 (cf. 1:23) highlights its synonymy with "the gospel," for it refers either to the content of what is confessed and believed or it refers to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. In either case, its referent is essentially the same--the story of Christ crucified. In other words, the cross of Christ becomes the hermeneutical key by which Paul can discern the true identity of Abraham's heir and the interim and confining character of the law's reign. According to Paul, Christ's death has not only atoned for sins, it has fundamentally changed the world and has revealed that transformation to those who believe. Richard Hays' analysis of the presence and power of the story of Christ's death throughout Gal 3:1-4:11 is a helpful reminder that the summaries of that story in 3:1, 13-14 and 4:4-6 evoke the foundational convictions upon which Paul depends in writing to his churches in Galatia. Thus, the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ (3:22, 26) alludes to the story of Christ's faithful death on behalf of the Galatians. And that story is the content of "the faith" that "has been revealed" (v. 23) and that "has arrived" (vv. 23, 25).

In the vexing and much debated vv. 10-13, Paul boldly presses his disjunction between faith and the law. He argues, much as he did in 2:15-21, on the basis of the shared assumption of Christ's effective and necessary atoning death for all. Paul's seemingly self-contradictory interpretation of Deut 27:26 in v. 10 is intelligible only in terms of the two verses of explanation that follow, and the logic of those verses depends on the cross. Verses 11-12 explain the apparent contradiction in v. 10 by reasoning backwards from the agreed upon point that Christ's death was necessary for humans to be justified. Following Bruce Longenecker, I repunctuate v. 11 of the Nestle 27 and UBS 4 editions of the Greek text by placing the comma before δῆλον instead of after it.⁹⁶ This reverses the logical relationship between the clauses. The traditional rendering, following the punctuation of the critical Greek text, produces the following assertion, "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'" That is, the point of the first clause is clear on the basis of the second clause. But moving the comma produces more normal Greek syntax by connecting δῆλον with the ὅτι following it and produces the following translation: "Because no one can be justified before God by the law, it is clear that 'the righteous will live by faith.'" This reading reverses the logical relationship between the clauses by making the clarity of the second clause depend on the assumption in the first clause. Paul's previous use of this very same assumption in 2:16 is further evidence for this rendering of the logical relationship between the clauses here. In 2:16 he explicitly asserted that this assumption is common ground between himself and other Jewish-Christians saying, "yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ."

⁹⁶B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 164; Wright, *Climax*, 149 n.42. Longenecker claims to have seen this view assumed in Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 207, but I see only agreement with the standard punctuation there. See now Andrew H Wakefield, *Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul's Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1-14* (Academia Biblica 14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 162-67.

And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.” Here at 3:11 he presses that common ground into service deconstructing the rival teachers’ own case. Their acceptance of the necessity of Christ’s death for them implies that works of the law were insufficient. Because Christ’s death demonstrates that the law has not been able to provide righteousness, it is evident that Hab 2:4 is correct—righteousness is from faith.

In v. 12, Paul pits Scripture against Scripture. If Christ’s death together with Hab 2:4 demonstrate that the law was unable to confer righteousness, then what of statements like Lev 18:5 that assert that those who do the works of the law will live? Paul’s conclusion seems to be that such statements are wrong.⁹⁷ As he says later, in Gal 3:21b, “For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law.”⁹⁸ If the law failed to produce life, it must have produced death. The common wisdom of the Two Ways—the way of life and the way of death, the way of blessing and the way of cursing—is frequently portrayed in Scripture and was assumed in much of Second Temple Judaism.⁹⁹ Since the law pronounces a curse on Christ because he was crucified, as Paul notes in v. 13, then he is forced into a binary choice between Christ and

⁹⁷ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 179; B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 165. Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 315-16, 324-44, 369-70; Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 167-69, 273-77, 329-41, for fuller, more sophisticated and distinctive cases for Paul’s theological discernment of two voices within the law.

⁹⁸ This parallel confirms the case of Simon Gathercole, “Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 126-45, that Paul understands “live by them” in his Lev 18:5 citation as offering eternal life. Such an emphasis on eschatological vindication may be entirely consistent with a communal and covenantal understanding of Paul’s argument in Gal; cf. B. Longenecker, “Covenant Community,” 75-78, 81.

⁹⁹ E.g. Deut 30:19; Ps 1; Jer 21:8. Regarding the doctrine of the Two Ways, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 304, 324-28, 588; Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (ed. Joel Marcus et al.; JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 178-80.

the law. If the crucifixion was necessary for the provision of life, then the law must have failed in that task. If the law failed in its offer of blessing and life, the only other option was to concede that it produced cursing and death. Paul knows that the law resulted in a curse solely because Christ had to be crucified for them.¹⁰⁰ In this exegetical argument, Paul does indeed reason from “solution to plight.” On the basis of the cross of Christ he has argued that law observance no longer has a role in defining God’s covenant people, leaving only identification with the faithful Christ through faith as the basis for inheriting God’s promised blessings.

Ethnic Identity

We have seen that Paul’s argument for unrestricted table fellowship in Gal 2 reflects ancient kinship norms of commensality and that his promotion of deference, love and forbearance in Gal 5-6 likewise fits the social ethos one would only find among family members in antiquity. These typical indices of ethnicity find explicit confirmation in the overtly genealogical argumentation of Gal 3-4. In those chapters, Paul has pressed the believers’ identity as his own children (4:19), as Sarah’s offspring and true children of Jerusalem (4:25-31), as Abraham’s descendants and heirs (3:6-29) and as sons and heirs of God (3:26; 4:6-7). Furthermore, the chief familial characteristic that epitomized Abraham is *πίστις*. Christ as the ideal son (of Abraham, 3:16; of God, 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6) fully expresses this aspect of their identity that determines the character of those who join the family by incorporation into him. In this typical ethnic logic, the group is to embody the characteristic virtues of the mythic forebearers whose essence they somehow share in

¹⁰⁰ Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 275-77, 354, 426-34, on the other hand, argues that Paul knew the law produced only cursing and death on the basis of his reading of the Pentateuch and its recounting of Israel’s experience under the Sinai covenant. While this may be the case, it is not the argument Paul develops in Gal 2:15-3:29. Watson’s inter-textual reading leads him to entirely neglect Paul’s argument in Gal 2:15-21, which, on my reading establishes the assumptions upon which Paul proceeds to argue in Gal 3.

common. The believers are both in Christ and Christ is formed in them (2:20; 3:27-28; 4:19).

This identity, summarized in 3:29, “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise,” is the collective identity Paul has reiterated in the immediately preceding phrase, “all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28d). By calling them “heirs” and “offspring,” Paul construes that social unity as an ethnic group. Three parallel statements underscore Paul’s reconstitution of those in Christ as a new ethnic group. Those statements are vv. 26, 28d, and 29. The first two are almost verbatim repetitions of each other with slight but interesting variation. The third restates the first two in terms of Abraham’s seed and thus concludes Paul’s argument about Abrahamic descent.

3:26 Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

3:28d πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ¹⁰¹

That their unity is ethnic is clear from the replacement of “sons of God” in v. 26 with “one” in 3:28b. The ὑμεῖς in v. 28 is added as an emphatic subject to underscore the plurality that has become a unity. The clause “through the faith” in 3:26 connects it with the preceding discussion about the arrival of “the faith,” which governs their new genealogical reckoning and inheritance rules. Both statements assert that this new identity as sons of God and as a united community exist in Christ.

The critical transaction is not with the law, nor with Abraham, nor with his plural descendants, but it is with Christ into whom they were baptized (v. 27a). In 3:26, Paul does not call them sons of Abraham but sons of God. The Galatians’ most important identity is not the privilege of association with Abraham but membership in the family of God. In v. 29, Paul recapitulates key terms from his argument in vv. 15-25—Abraham’s

¹⁰¹ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 155, compares these verses by means of the same presentation but to make a different point. He uses these parallel verses to support his case for the subject genitive of πίστις Χριστοῦ in Gal. 3.

seed, inheritance, and promise. Following and summarizing the statements of identity in vv. 26 and 28d as it does, “Abraham’s seed” now takes its meaning from Paul’s framework and not from that of his opponents. This class one conditional statement makes their actual identification with Christ the ground for their identification with Abraham’s seed. As we saw above in vv. 26 and 28d this is the first and final basis on which Paul wants to discuss identity. They are heirs to Abraham’s inheritance because they are incorporated into the heir, Christ, not vice versa. As sons, they share in Christ’s inheritance, which is the blessing promised to Abraham. In this sense only are they Abraham’s seed. He uses the term in polemical differentiation from its use by his opponents but he does not dispute it as an apt description of those in Christ, given that it is correctly defined. This familial terminology affirms their new corporate identity as an extended family or new ethnic group (“seed” as descendants of a common ancestor) drawn from various human ethnic groups (Greek, Jew). This new family takes its identity from being “in Christ”--the sole and all-important distinguishing characteristic of this community.

These clearer ethnic parallels to “all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28d) have helped to clarify that the one thing they become is one new people. Paul’s usage of $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ in this way is unique in the NT, but further examination of its usage will confirm my ethnic interpretation of its use here. In every other place in the NT where “one” designates the united whole in contrast to the parts of which it is constituted, either the appropriate gender of the cardinal ($\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, $\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$, $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$) is used to complement a singular noun, or the neuter $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ is used by itself substantively to indicate “one thing” or “a unity.”¹⁰² Evidently, Paul expected his Galatian readers/auditors to supply the correct masculine noun that they are

¹⁰² The NT data is as follows: Adjectival uses of “one” with a noun to characterize a whole in contrast to the parts of which it is made are Matt 19:5-6; Mark 10:8; John 10:16; Acts 4:32; Rom 12:4-5; 15:6; 1 Cor 6:16-17; 10:17; 12:12-19; Eph 2:15; 5:31; Phil 1:27; 2:2; Col 3:15; 1 Tim 2:5; Rev 9:13; 17:13, 17. Substantival uses of $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ in this sense are John 10:30; 11:52; 17:11, 21-23; 1 Cor 3:8; Eph 2:14.

now one of in Christ. What is particularly unhelpful in this instance is that nowhere in the NT, let alone in Paul, does the use of εἷς in this sense modify a masculine noun, whereas examples with neuter and feminine nouns abound (e.g. in 1 Cor 6:16-17 we find ἐν σῶμα, σάρκα μίαν, and ἐν πνεύμα). In the few instances where the multiple parts do not become one certain thing but merely become one, generically, ἓν is used. If Paul meant “one” to be understood here in the sense of “you are all united in Christ” he would have used the neuter.¹⁰³ Instead his statement implies that they all have become one particular thing. But what is the one thing they have become?

The possible candidates seem to be ἄνθρωπος, σῶμα, σπέρμα, λαός or οἶκος. Σπέρμα is the only option that is specified in the immediate context but it is a neuter noun.¹⁰⁴ Σῶμα suffers from the same problem, but that does not prevent Dunn from suggesting it on the basis of 1 Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-20.¹⁰⁵ Given the parallel baptismal formula in 1 Cor 12:13, Dunn may be correct that the body of Christ lies behind Paul’s usage here. Yet this still does not explain the masculine adjective. The Galatians may have made this association anyway if Paul had imparted this body metaphor to them during his time in Galatia. However, it would be surprising for Paul not to use this apt metaphor to urge unity in Galatians, if he had previously introduced it to them. The absence of the body of Christ metaphor from 1 Thessalonians, as well, the only epistle widely accepted as pre-dating Galatians, raises the possibility that Paul had not yet employed the body of Christ as a metaphor for social unity. Ἄνθρωπος does not appear in the immediate context, but it seems reasonable to supply it in view of Paul’s emphasis

¹⁰³ The examples in BDAG, s.v. εἷς, 1.b. suggest this to be the case. My own analysis, summarized in the previous note, confirms this.

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *Climax*, 163-64, suggests that Paul’s meaning is that the Galatians become one single family. In his comment on Gal 3:28-29, Wright does not state what Greek term would convey this meaning nor does he comment on the gender implied by εἷς. Thus, I infer that he means to supply σπέρμα in 3:28 as well.

¹⁰⁵ Dunn, *Galatians*, 207-08.

here on their participation in Christ, as “an incorporative personality.”¹⁰⁶ The later Pauline tradition made such an inference explicit when commenting in Eph 2:15 on the uniting of Jew and Gentile in Christ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον. Finally, I suggest λαός or οἶκος because they are the correct gender and because of the prominence in context of the idea of an ethnic group or extended family. For instance, at Gal 6:10, Paul refers to the believers as the household of the faith, though here he uses the feminine οἰκία.

However, the use of other masculine singular adjectives in v. 28--
Ἰουδαῖος, Ἕλληνας, δούλος, and ἐλεύθερος--as substantives for collective identities may provide an analogy for understanding εἰς as one kind of people. Whereas those paired groupings functioned as fundamental social divisions in the Galatians’ world, Paul asserts a social unity in Christ. Incorporation into Christ demotes what have been primary categories of social organization, including ethnic Jewish identity. Paul’s opponents in Galatia also would have affirmed a social unity in Christ, but theirs was joined to an existing ethnic group. They insisted that everyone become Jews, “sons of Abraham” according to their definition of that phrase. Paul, by contrast, demands a social unity in Christ that is not aligned with any conventional social status. This use of εἰς to designate a collective identity in contrast to the mutually alienated identities in the baptismal formula does not contradict supplying ἄνθρωπος as the implied noun. In fact, incorporation into the one new human, Christ, implies a collective new humanity; “in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith” (3:26). Life in Christ is a new social status derived from being an entirely new humanity participating in a new creation. The genealogical reckoning implicated by such an identity is familiar from Jewish

¹⁰⁶ Martyn, *Galatians*, 377; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 280; Matera, *Galatians*, 143, 146. “Incorporative personality” is Witherington’s phrase. In Col 3:9-11, yet a third instance of the formula used in 1 Cor 12:13 and Gal 3:28, though this time without mention of the many being “one,” the Colosians are described as a new person (ἄνθρωπος in v. 9 carries through the entire sentence) who turns out to be “Christ, who is all and in all.”

speculation on humanity's share in Adam's sin and from Israel as being in Abraham.¹⁰⁷ The citation of Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8, noted above, locates Abraham's blessing "in you," presumably denoting his descendants.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Paul's declaration that "all of you are one in Christ Jesus," asserts that, in contrast to the divided humanity of the formula's dichotomies, the believers share the new collective identity of those who belong to Christ and claim God as their father.

Similarly, Paul's use of σπέρμα suggests dual aspects of the one and the many. The singular can function both as a true singular and as a collective. Paul famously plays on this ambiguity for his exegetical case in 3:16 that Christ is the unique heir of Abraham.¹⁰⁹ Then once he establishes the believers' identity as reckoned solely through identity with Christ, he can exploit the collective aspect to designate those who belong to Christ as τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα (v. 29). The idea of a family or ethnic group suggested by "children of God" (v. 26) and by "Abraham's offspring, heirs" (v. 29) emphasizes the single collective identity of multiple people. Σπέρμα can be seen as an intermediate term

¹⁰⁷ Adam-Christology speculation is not present in Galatians but was extant in 2nd Temple Judaism as well as elsewhere in Paul's epistles. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 100-02, comparing Paul's use of the Abraham story in Rom and Gal, argues, "Abraham and Adam complement each other in Romans (chapters 4 and 5:12-21). Abraham typifies salvation-history, and Adam typifies the dualistic apocalyptic theology of the two ages." However, he notes of Galatians, "It strikes us that the Abraham story of Galatians incorporates features of both the Abraham story and the Adam story of Romans. But because Paul does not employ the Adam story in Galatians, he cryptically inserts the dualistic Adamic motif of the two ages into the Abraham story . . . This apocalyptic motif of discontinuity dominates Paul's interpretation of the Abraham story in Galatians, because the promise to Abraham—actualized by Christ as his exclusive seed—is sharply contrasted with the law and its curse."

¹⁰⁸ N. T. Wright, "Adam in Pauline Christology," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1983* (ed. Kent Harold Richards; SBLSP 22; Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1983), 361: "He [Adam] is the whole eschatological people of God."

¹⁰⁹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 85: "This exegesis is less perverse than it might appear, depending as it surely does on the linkage of the catchword *seed* to God's promise to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-14" Hays notes the similar, Messianic, interpretive play on the word "seed" in 4QFlor.

implying both the single heir (3:16) and the collective identity of those who belong to him (3:29).¹¹⁰ And the reckoning of identity as someone's seed is patently ethnic rhetoric. Thus we conclude that, in wresting the rhetoric of Abrahamic descent from his opponents in Galatia, Paul produces an alternate ethnic rhetoric that trumped their claims. Paul's reflections on the apocalyptic implications of the cross of Christ and his modulation of the theme of faith support his construction of a new ethnic identity in Christ.

This apocalyptic disruption into historical Israel's ethnic reckoning encapsulates the continuity-discontinuity tension throughout Galatians.¹¹¹ Paul has produced a genealogical construction of the church derived from that of Israel but radically reconfigured by the cross of Christ. This apocalyptic ethnicity is also apparent in Paul's allegorization of Hagar and Sarah in Gal 4:21-31. Not only does he continue his apocalyptic genealogical reckoning, we also catch a glimpse of eschatological autochthony. Paul's presentation of Sarah as both their mother and as the heavenly Jerusalem reflects both a maternal genealogy as well as the classic ethnic concern for origin in and return to a homeland. His citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 furthers this combination of maternity and Jerusalem. The Isaianic context of this citation is God's pledge to restore the glory of Jerusalem and to repopulate her.¹¹² Paul's apocalyptic reinterpretation in Gal 3 of the law's role, Abraham's heirs and God's promise to them

¹¹⁰ This understanding of "seed" as implying a new family group and being the one thing the Galatians become in Christ at v. 28 is similar to Wright's assertions in *Climax*, 157-74, but I have arrived at this view through entirely different exegetical means. Wright's lexical argument about the meaning of σπέρμα is flawed. And his thematization of σπέρμα as the complement of "one" at each occurrence of the cardinal (vv. 16, 20, 28) is unconvincing at v. 20.

¹¹¹ Gaventa, "Singularity," 159: "An adequate statement of the theology of this letter requires attention to the elements both of continuity *and* of discontinuity" (italics original). Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 96-105, argues, rightly that this same duality governs Paul's ethics in Galatians.

¹¹² Hays, *Echoes*, 118-20; William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context* (ed. John M. G. Barclay et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 220-21.

has opened the way for the shocking ethnic calculus of 4:21-31.¹¹³ This apocalyptic ethnic reckoning establishes the dichotomies--slave versus free and Spirit versus flesh--that Paul uses in the following parenthesis to characterize their normative ethos (slave/free in 5:1, 13; Spirit/flesh 5:16-25), further rooting these cultural indicia in his ethnic argument for their identity.¹¹⁴

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the pervasive concern for social unity in Galatians. This reading attends to the social dynamics presented in the epistle rather than merely to theological concepts. Paul's fixation on family-like social unity between Jews and Gentiles (and presumably between slaves and free and male and female, as well) in the churches is evident at every turn in his letter. Furthermore, the social identity underwriting his argument accords with our definition of ethnicity outlined in Chapter Two. At its core, the identity of the Galatian believers as Paul's children, Sarah's offspring, residents and children of the eschatological Jerusalem, sons of Abraham, heirs of his blessing and, above all, as sons of God through Christ Jesus is ethnic. Their lineage is a disrupted and reconfigured version of Israelite ethnic identity. The key to this alteration is Paul's apocalyptic gospel. Christ's cross has forged this new ethnic identity, the indices of which constitute a corporate ethos patterned on the faithfulness of Christ, the model Son of God.

It is this singular basis of their new corporate identity that calls into question other pre-Christian social identities. Paul's apocalyptic gospel relegates all cultural norms to being among τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3, 9). They are indeed adiaphora for identity in Christ, as Boyarin has complained.¹¹⁵ Yet Paul's apocalyptic perspective applies equally to all norms extrinsic to identification with Christ and, thus, enables critique of any

¹¹³ Hays, *Echoes*, 114-15.

¹¹⁴ Esler, *Galatians*, 227.

¹¹⁵ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 42, 112.

cultural dominance within the church and opens the way for the kind of diasporized identity that Boyarin has urged. Paul's stance disallows any extra-Christian cultural norm from becoming identified with corporate identity in Christ. In terms of the amalgamation model of ethnogenesis ($A+B \rightarrow C$), Paul refuses the indices of A or B to become identified with C while not disallowing them entirely, as is implied by Gal 2:3, 12-15¹¹⁶. That is, Paul rejects the assimilation model for the church ($A+B \rightarrow B$). I have argued that for Paul in Galatians the ethos associated with the church (C) consists of the familial solidarity that arises from identification with Christ and the sacrificial love for others patterned on Christ's faithfulness that makes such unity possible. This mythic foundation of Christ's intervention by his death and resurrection into the story of Abraham's people provides resources for minority cultures within the Christian community or in ambient society to resist the imposition of majority norms on the church, much as Paul wants the Gentile Galatian believers to resist circumcision. Thus, Paul's marginalization of alternate cultural identities does not necessarily result in their erasure as Boyarin fears but it does reject their normativity for the community in Christ. If Paul does not envision a platonic ideal that devalues human particularity and embodiment but, rather, envisions a new, embodied community comprised of members drawn from extant social groups, then his concerns may be framed in terms of ethnic identity formation rather than in terms of Hellenistic anthropology. Members from various extra-ecclesial identity groups must constantly reassess and renegotiate their status vis-à-vis others with whom they seek to preserve solidarity in the Christian community.¹¹⁷ Such a solution seems very close to Boyarin's diaspora identity.

Paul's extreme diatribe against those who would impose Jewish norms on the church community is commensurate to his perception of the strength of the Judaizing party in

¹¹⁶ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 126.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.: “. . . I suggest that corporate solidarity in Christ implies, for Paul, neither the *erasure* of previous distinctions nor merely their *encompassing* within a new sphere of belonging, but rather their *relativization* or revaluation, with real social implications.”

Galatia. What becomes of pre-Christian identities in Christ is not Paul's concern in Galatians. He is, rather, vigorously working to free the Christian community from identification with one particular form of cultural domination. To make his case, he ferociously argues for the unique bases of social identity in Christ and against imposing upon that identity the norms of any other social construct not derived from participation in Christ by baptism and the Spirit. The ferocity of his case seems at points to support Boyarin's critique that Paul's ecclesial vision undermines the continuation of any other particular social identity, especially that of Jews. However, Paul's aim in Galatians is not guidance in how to negotiate difference within the community; rather, he focuses on undercutting those in Galatia who would impose Jewish norms upon the church. This rhetorical situation must be taken into account. Paul is attempting via letter to counter advocates present in the churches who were enshrining Jewish boundary markers as coterminous with identity in Christ. Paul's apocalyptic gospel insists on unity arising solely from identity with Christ. Therefore, this attempted imposition of another basis for unity provokes from Paul the strongest repudiation. He is not rejecting Jewish particularity; rather, he rejects giving priority to certain Jewish cultural norms in the construction ecclesial identity.

Nevertheless, by interpreting Jesus Christ in terms of the Jewish Scriptures, Paul inscribes some Jewish norms as indices of Christian identity even as he rejects others. Engagement with Paul's hermeneutical strategies is beyond the scope of this thesis, though I have indicated above in Chapter One the shortcomings of Boyarin's attempt to read him as a platonistic allegorizer. For the present purposes it will suffice to note that Paul re-reads the Scriptures in view of the advent of Christ which provides a reassessment of the indices of God's covenant people. Paul's phrases "the faith of Christ Jesus" or "the law of Christ," discussed above, are examples of how the revelation of Christ has reshaped the legacies of Abraham and Moses for Paul. As I noted above, Paul's vice and virtue lists, Gal 5:19-23, emphasize the typical Jewish concerns for

avoiding idolatry and sexual immorality but focus even more on the cultivation of social unity and harmony. Thus, along with the metanorms of social solidarity in Christ and sacrificial love for one another modeled on Christ, Paul inscribes the typical Jewish denunciation of idols and sexual impurity as consistent with participation in Christ.

Paul's assertion, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6), in its immediate context rejects circumcision as of any value in providing status or solidarity in the church community. Paul has demoted all cultural indices apart from those based on participation in Christ and refuses not their preservation but their use as bases of exclusion and judgment.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Paul hints at modes of coexistence in Christ that honor various cultural identities; for example, Titus' presence as a Greek in the Jerusalem apostolic meeting (2:3). Similarly, in 6:4-5 Paul suggests that some different norms and standards within the community may be just cause for pride so long as they don't lead to the kinds of social divisions he has catalogued in 5:20-21, 26; and 6:3. These hints are more fully developed in 1 Cor where Paul explicitly leads his readers through negotiation of such acceptable differences.

The two concrete issues addressed in Galatians--circumcision and table fellowship--conform to this characterization of Paul's social vision. In both cases we have seen that Paul resists the imposition of these norms as definitive indices of the church. Yet nothing in Galatians precludes Jews and non-Jews from each maintaining their distinctive practices regarding circumcision. Not so, however, regarding table fellowship. If the believers are to eat together in familial solidarity as Paul insists, they must negotiate some agreement on dietary norms. In the Antioch incident, Paul seems to require disproportionately greater sacrifice of the Jewish members who are required to be

¹¹⁸ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 195: ". . . Paul's tolerance operates only within the frame-work of an intolerance that insists on Christ alone as the basis for community solidarity, a basis which also implies the proscription of actions deemed to threaten this union. . ."

labelled “sinners” by their Jewish compatriots in order to eat at Gentile tables. Inasmuch as the Antioch incident is an example supporting Paul’s case against circumcision in Galatia, it can be seen as a similar rejection of the imposition of Jewish norms on the church community. Yet why does this rejection produce apparent conformity to Gentile norms rather than some sort of compromise? This instance appears to validate Boyarin’s critique that Paul erases Jewish identity in Christ. However, before jumping to this conclusion several caveats deserve to be noted. First, Paul’s rhetoric here is colored by his consistent strategy to undermine an attempt at localized Jewish cultural dominance in Galatia; thus he is not presenting a balanced case for all places and times. Second, the actual practice that Paul characterizes as ἐθνικῶς (2:14) in the Antioch incident is unclear to us. It may have involved substantial accommodation of Jewish sensibilities on the part of the Gentile believers yet still have come in for criticism due to social and political factors. Or perhaps accommodations such as those mentioned in Acts 15:29 were in force, yet some Jews were still offended simply by Jewish Christians eating and drinking with Gentiles or in Gentile homes. Finally, due to the one-sided nature of Paul’s argument, he does not elaborate what social costs the non-Jewish believers in Antioch may already have paid for the sake of ecclesial unity. In the next chapter, we will see that Paul’s more nuanced reflections regarding similar disputes over table fellowship in Corinth support these caveats.

Chapter Four: 1 Cor 12:13 and the Body of Christ

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13)

Introduction

There is some serendipity in the fact that the study marking a decisive turn from partition theories of 1 Corinthians to broad affirmation of its integrity bases that conclusion on a rhetorical analysis of how Paul urges social unity on his factionalized Corinthian congregations.¹ First Corinthians is a unified epistle urging ecclesial unity in the face of social strife. Furthermore, the unity formula cited in 12:13 both epitomizes this vision for unity among former factions and reverberates broadly throughout the letter. Echoes of the formula's terminology and its logic of inclusion of divided humanity are present in 1:10-13, 22-24; 7:17-24; 9:19-23; 10:32; 11:2-16.² In this chapter, I will trace how Paul implicates the baptismal unity formula in his argument for social reconciliation throughout the letter. At each turn, I will highlight how the model of ethnic identity construction elaborated above in Chapter Two brings Paul's rhetorical strategies into clearer relief. Before treating key sections of the epistle to assess the baptismal formula's function in Paul's strategies for building ecclesial unity, I will highlight Paul's initial foray into ethnic identity construction in the letter opening. In so doing, I will introduce approaches to reading 1 Corinthians as Paul's negotiation of challenges arising out of the social context of ancient Corinth. Following that I will argue that the major

¹ Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

² Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 544-47, 702, 998; Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 140; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 88 n.131, 201 n.92, 212; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (IBC; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1997), 122-23; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 85-86, 168-69, 74; Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Gender and Creation in 1 Cor 11:2-16: A Study in Paul's Theological Method," in *Evangelium Schriftauslegung Kirche* (ed. Jostein Ådna et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 166-71; Gundry-Volf, "New Creation," 95-121.

images for social unity that Paul develops across multiple sections of his letter--the body, a building or temple, typology with Israel, ἡ ἐκκλησία, family and the household— participate in his ethnic rhetoric. Finally, I will focus, in turn, on each of the major sections of 1 Corinthians where Paul engages issues dividing the churches--1 Cor 5-7, 8-10, 11-14--to highlight both how Paul treats each issue in terms of ethnic solidarity and how the terms and logic of the baptismal formula govern these attempts to resolve factionalism.

1 Corinthians in Socio-Historical Context

First Corinthians fits Paul's pattern of introducing the key themes of his letter in the opening address and thanksgiving or prayer.³ Already in this introductory section, 1:1-9, Paul's strategy for identity construction is clear, as I will show below. Then, in 1:10, Paul turns from the thanksgiving period to the body of his letter.⁴ Scholars have long viewed 1 Cor 1:10 as the thesis statement for 1 Cor 1:1-4:21. But most commentators now endorse Margaret Mitchell's case that 1 Cor 1:10 is the thesis statement for the entire epistle.⁵ It reads:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

Mitchell's rhetorical analysis, in turn, stands on the shoulders of Gerd Theissen's groundbreaking research into the social matrix against which 1 Corinthians ought be

³ Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), esp. 107-37.

⁴ Jack T. Sanders, "The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus," *JBL* 81 (1962): 348.

⁵ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*. Cf. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 111; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Raymond F. Collins and Daniel J. Harrington, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 13, 69; Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 94-97; Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 611 n. 56; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 21.

read.⁶ By correlating social history of ancient Corinth with careful attention to the text of Paul's epistle for clues to social dynamics, Theissen established that status distinctions between members of the Corinthian congregations fueled the conflicts Paul addresses. While Theissen's reconstruction has been subjected to critique in some of its details, his basic approach of reading Paul's pastoral concerns in the epistle as reflecting their broader social context has become ubiquitous in Corinthian scholarship.⁷ Dependence on and difference with insights from Theissen and his descendents will be evident below in the treatment of particular passages in the epistle. But I will take it as established by Mitchell, Theissen and scholars following them that 1 Corinthians is Paul's unified and sustained plea for an end to factionalism that derived from extra-ecclesial status and the social dynamics of ancient Corinth.⁸

⁶ Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

⁷ Beyond the standard commentaries, which show dependence on the approaches pioneered by Theissen, numerous studies have carried his work forward; cf. Horrell, *Social Ethos*; Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup 75; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (AGJU 18; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993); Martin, *Body*; Meeks, *First Urban*.

⁸ Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), has brought a helpful caution against the anachronistic imposition of modern capitalistic economic assumptions, such as the concept of a middle-class, often implicit in the so-called "new consensus" inaugurated by Theissen. In particular, he reminds NT scholars of the harsh economic realities for the vast majority of society under the Roman Empire and the near impossibility of improving one's economic situation (cf. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 88-120). Meggitt advocates judicious correction for the elite bias of most Greco-Roman sources and a more careful reading of the NT data regarding the economic level of Paul and his congregations. However, Meggitt's homogenizing characterization of 99% of the Empire's population as locked in undifferentiated poverty also fails to do justice to the ancient evidence, including the Pauline epistles, for socially significant gradations of wealth among the poor masses. Furthermore, inasmuch as Meggitt's critique focuses solely on economic status, it leaves untouched the more complex assessment of multi-variant social status as practiced by Theissen, Meeks, Mitchell, Martin, etc. This thesis depends not on particular economic locations of Corinthian church members so much as

This is not to say, however, that we may confidently correlate the various issues raised in the letter with the parties named in 1 Cor 1:12. Nor is it the case that we may consistently line up the positions of Corinthian social groups known from other sources than Paul on each of the issues addressed in the letter. Varying degrees of clarity on the social dynamics are possible for each of the issues addressed in epistle, so particular assignments must be carefully gauged in each instance. Mitchell soberly summarizes the situation:

It is the complexity of the different lines of influence that makes an assignment of the various positions on issues to specific factions so difficult. Just as not all facets of the Corinthian situation can be completely resolved on the basis of the Jew/Gentile differences, so too the rich/poor dichotomy cannot explain all the positions. The varieties of factors, social, economic, ethnic, geographical, religious, even gender and marital status, cut across the members of the community. No one factor can account for the spectrum of groupings thus produced, as even Theissen concedes: “thus the bases for the conflict at the Lord’s supper are neither purely material nor purely theological. Above all, they are social, the problems of a socially stratified community” . . . While I agree that economic factors fomented the factionalism at Corinth, as so often in history, it is important to note that Paul does not himself explicitly describe the conflict in those terms (as is done, for example, in *1 Clem.* 38:2).⁹

What is widely affirmed is that Roman Corinth was a highly stratified and agonistic society and that the pervasive pursuit of status according to a matrix of social valuations was dividing the church. Further, examination of several of the points of tension in the

on the view that various aspects of extra-ecclesial social status were causing the division within the church that Paul redresses. Cf. John M. G. Barclay “Poverty in Pauline Studies: A Response to Steven Friesen,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 365-66; Steven J. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 339-58; Bengt Holmberg, “The Methods of Historical Reconstruction in the Scholarly ‘Recovery’ of Corinthian Christianity” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 261-64; Dale B. Martin, “Review of Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*,” *JSNT* 24, (2001): 53-56; Gerd Theissen, “The Social Structure of Pauline Communities: Some Critical Remarks on J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*,” *JSNT* 24 (2001): 72-75; idem, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further Remarks on J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*” (*JSNT* 25 (2003): 371-91.

⁹ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 94-95 n.174; citing Theissen, *Social Setting*, 160.

church will show, with David Horrell, that “[t]he behaviour of the socially prominent members of the community seems to have caused problems, at least in Paul’s view.”¹⁰ Such a finding sheds further light on the relevance of the formulaic social pairings in 12:13 to the body metaphor Paul develops in 1 Cor 12. His expectation that all give greater honor to those without honor (12:23-24) amounts to an inversion of social competition in their environment and a counter to the status differential implicit in the dichotomies of the formula. In fact, Paul’s strategy in 1 Cor 12 accords with his approach to each of the problems he engages in the letter. Repeatedly, he injects the logic of the cross as undermining the valuations of society (e.g. 1 Cor 1:18-31; 2:1-8). Thus, his mention of social status categories in the midst of his treatise on “spiritual gifts,” far from being an *ad hominem* argument or tangential allusion, reveals explicitly the social status concerns permeating the Corinthian congregations and Paul’s epistolary response.

Unity as Ethnic Identity in the Letter Opening

Paul begins his letter, “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:2), highlighting the church’s two spheres of belonging—“in Corinth” and “in Christ Jesus.” Victor Paul Furnish develops this rubric to analyze the theological themes of 1 Corinthians, noting that the difficulties besetting the church arise from incompatibilities between the two spheres.¹¹ Paul’s solution to these struggles is to elucidate what it means for the Corinthians to be “in Christ Jesus.” Paul’s consistent rhetorical strategy in the epistle can be seen as an explication of their corporate identity in Christ and exhortation to live according to that identity. As noted above, the social dynamics of their context in Corinth deleteriously affected congregational life. Against that we may observe how Paul focuses them on corporate life in Christ as the antidote.

¹⁰ Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 124.

¹¹ Victor Paul Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 16, 28-32, 49-50, 86, 106, and *passim*.

Already in 1 Cor 1:2 Paul customizes the adscription of the conventional epistolary opening to establish his focus on their united, collective identity. This identification of his addressees is noteworthy in this case for its extraordinary length. What he normally covers in 4-18 words, here he elaborates for 31 words.¹² Linda Belleville, in her study of the epistolary form of 1 Corinthians, notes that this unusually long address summarizes four themes to be taken up in the course of the letter: “(1) the Corinthian believers as the church of God, (2) the unity of all believers under the name of one Lord, (3) calling, and (4) sanctification.”¹³ She fully recognizes the emphasis on corporate identity and unity in the first two items. However, Paul’s characterization of them as “sanctified” and “called to be saints,” the third and fourth items, also are statements of who they are as a people. Each of their individual “callings,” if they even would have conceived of such an idea, is into the same corporate calling—to be the holy, chosen people of God, along with “all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.”¹⁴ If all people everywhere are united into this special people, how much more must those who co-dwell in Corinth and environs also be one people?

Paul’s other usages of “saints” (ἁγίοι) in 1 Cor 6:1, 2; 14:33; and 16:1, 15 bear this out as Paul clearly moves the plural adjective to a more substantival sense, referring to

¹² The limits of the adscription in Paul’s letters are easily discernable, beginning with a dative of the recipient and terminating just before his customary greeting, “Grace and peace to you.” The number of Greek words in the adscriptions of Paul’s other letters to churches are as follows: Roman--9; 2 Corinthian--18; Galatians--4; Ephesians--11 (including ἐν Ἐφέσῳ); Philippians--14; Colossians--9; 1 Thessalonians--10; 2 Thessalonians—11; cf. Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 193 n. 40; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 31 n.6, for similar observations about the unique character of this verse.

¹³ Linda L. Belleville, "Continuity or Discontinuity: A Fresh Look at 1 Corinthians in the Light of First-Century Epistolary Forms and Conventions," *EvQ* 59 (1987): 17. Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 193; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 34, also note this introductory and programmatic function of the adscription in v. 2.

¹⁴ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans. James W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 22-23; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 32; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 16; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 32-33.

the collectivity of God's people.¹⁵ Furthermore, when Paul employs the verb "called" (καλέω) in v. 9 at the close of the thanksgiving period (vv. 4-9) he recapitulates that designation from v. 2 (κλητοί), but here their calling is into common participation in Jesus Christ as well as into common identity with their fellow saints.¹⁶ Their designation in v. 2, "sanctified in Christ Jesus," along with Paul's statements in 1:30 and 6:11 that it is by means of Christ that they are made holy, shows that their calling into communal participation in Christ is but another way to say "called to be holy people." Thus, in the epistolary opening Paul has established their communal identity in Christ as the basis for his appeal summarized in the *prothesis* of 1:10.

Furthermore, these first ten verses of the epistle assimilate their common identity to an ethnic framework. God, their father (v. 3), has called them into communal participation with his son, Jesus Christ (v. 9). This spiritual genealogy establishes the ethnic character of their identity, according to the ethnic theory outlined above in Chapter Two. The believers in every place (v. 2) are brethren to one another (vv. 1, 10), showing the trans-local nature of this kinship solidarity. Paul appeals for unity in v. 10 on the basis of this familial identity, mentioning both their siblingship (ἀδελφοί) and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who he has just identified as the Son (v. 9) in whom they gain their familial identity. Paul's figuration of the community as a trans-local, fictive, kinship group and his exhortation to unity on the basis of their familial bond suggests a diaspora, ethnic identity such as I have presented in the previous chapters of this thesis.

Paul deploys the ethnic language of genealogy and family frequently in 1 Corinthians, continuing the ethnic identity construction begun in 1 Cor 1:1-10. He refers to the

¹⁵ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 23, overstates the case when he says, "Paul never uses the word in the singular of the individual Christian," as 1 Cor 7:34 proves. However, he is correct regarding the preponderance of Pauline usage.

¹⁶ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 104-05, surveys the challenges in translating κοινωνία and defends his translation "communal participation." Cf. Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 35-36.

Corinthians' common ancestors repeatedly in the epistle (God the Father--1:3, 8:6, 15:24; Paul as their father--4:14, 15, 17; ancient Israel as "our fathers"--10:1). This vision of multiple fathers is not confusing so long as we keep in mind that "father" often refers not merely to one's immediate, male, progenitor, but to any notable male ancestor (e.g. Rom 4:12, 16); thus, kindred may unproblematically claim multiple common "fathers." Such thinking is patently ethnic. His most frequent term for believers is ἀδελφός/ἀδελφή (41 times). The believers explicitly constitute a fictive kinship group. Furthermore, as we shall see below, Paul coordinates the group's boundaries with this core ethnic identity and urges behavior typical of ancient kinship norms, including generalized reciprocity, shared concern for the group's public reputation, as well as the classic ethnic concerns for connubiality, commensality, and common cult.

Ethnicity among Images for Unity

It is a commonplace to note the prominence of the building and body images in Paul's writings, but the familial language is so pervasive that it becomes taken for granted, despite the fact of his extensive adoption of it.¹⁷ Besides the family language and building and the body images, Paul figures the Corinthians by other motifs, as well: the temple, a field, a loaf, and Israel. Of these, only the temple and the typology with Israel join the family, the building and the body in occurring in more than one passage. Paul also refers to the believers as ἡ ἐκκλησία. Wayne Meeks suggests that this term functions as a proper noun.¹⁸ Because of its prominence in denoting the congregations, I will include ἡ ἐκκλησία in this overview of Paul's major images for the church in 1 Corinthians. I will argue that ethnic rhetoric is implicated in Paul's usage of each of them. I will conclude this section on Paul's images for unity with a survey of his family and household language and its connection to ethnic identity construction. Paul's familial language

¹⁷ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 111; Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 22-23; Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 53-59; Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 536 n. 13.

¹⁸ Meeks, *First Urban*, 108.

constitutes his most extensive metaphor for social unity in 1 Corinthians. This prominence, together with the ethnic associations Paul brings to each of his other major images for unity, justify reading Paul's social vision through the lens of ethnic identity construction.

ἡ ἐκκλησία

The two most probable semantic backgrounds for Paul's use of this term for the community of believers, whether or not he coined it, are (1) its use in the LXX to translate *qhl YHWH*, the sacred assembly of God's people, or (2) its primary Greek sense as the official assembly of the citizens of a *polis* to conduct official business, such as a vote or a verdict. It seems likely that its currency in the earliest churches derives from its usefulness in evoking both the Jewish and Greco-Roman spheres of meaning. Similarly, the LXX translators recognized how fittingly it rendered a Hebrew concept in the Greek idiom.¹⁹

As Margaret Mitchell has demonstrated, Paul does amply use the language of Greek political life in this epistle.²⁰ He also clearly expects his readers to understand his frequent citations of and allusions to the Jewish Scriptures and to identify with the people of Israel (e.g. 1 Cor 10:1-11). So both backgrounds are present. However, Paul's rhetoric presses the Corinthians more towards identification with the covenant people of the Jewish Scriptures than it does towards the Greek *polis*.²¹ This point will be sustained through this entire chapter, and especially below in the section on Paul's configuring the church's identity typologically to Israel. Against that background, the notion of ἐκκλησία θεοῦ evokes the *qhl YHWH*, and thus the ethnic and covenant community of Israel. Several

¹⁹ On the dual backgrounds to Paul's usage of this term and the debate over which is primary, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 21-22; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 75; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 31-32, and the debates referenced therein.

²⁰ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 65-183.

²¹ Cf. Meeks, *First Urban*, 79, 108, and below in this chapter.

examples of Paul's use of the term ἐκκλησία in 1 Corinthians will highlight this connotation.

Paul twice invokes ethnic rhetoric while arguing in 1 Cor 14 for the community benefits of speaking intelligible words to build up the ἐκκλησία (vv. 4, 5, 12, 23, 28, 33) and against speaking in uninterpreted, unknown tongues. First, in v. 11 he characterizes the one speaking in another tongue as being a βάρβαρος with respect to his non-comprehending hearer, and vice versa. A βάρβαρος was simply “the other” against which the identity Ἕλληνας was constructed making this usage latently ethnic, though Jews, also, referred to ethnic outsiders as βάρβαροι.²² A boundary marker for a true Ἕλληνας was the speaking of proper Greek.²³ A βάρβαρος was a babbler and an outsider. Thus, in castigating the speaker in tongues for placing himself and his brother as barbarians one to another, Paul promotes the ἐκκλησία as a cultural linguistic group that should value speaking constructively one to another. Second, in vv. 21-23, Paul analogizes the ἐκκλησία to the people of Israel to make the same point. Here, paraphrasing Isa 28:11-12, a word of judgment against Israel, Paul notes that God had revealed his wrath against “this people” by sending foreigners to punish them. This enemy is characterized linguistically as “people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners.” That is, unintelligibility is characteristic of outsiders and is a sign of God's judgment. This example is the Jewish parallel to the barbarian analogy in v. 11. But here the insider is the covenant people Israel with whom God had his complaint. Thus, the ἐκκλησία is analogized to ethnic Israel, God's covenant people, an identity we will examine further below.

A further instance of Paul's bending the term ἐκκλησία toward an ethnic field of meaning is his ability to use it for a trans-local, diaspora identity. An ἐκκλησία in the

²² H. Balz, “Βάρβαρος,” *EDNT* 1:197-98; Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians*, 65, 157 n.46.; cf. 2 Macc 2:21; Rom 1:14.

²³ Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians*, 63-66, 77-82.

Greco-Roman sense was a particular, local gathering, an assembly of citizens. Similarly, in its LXX occurrences it denotes the gathered assembly of Israel for covenant ratification or worship (e.g. Deut 4:10; 9:10; 31:30).²⁴ And this meaning comports well with the vast majority of Paul's usages in 1 Corinthians where he is discussing the corporate life of the assembled believers, e.g. 1 Cor 11:18. However, on occasion Paul can use ἐκκλησία to refer to the united, trans-local community of believers in Christ, as in 1 Cor 10:32 and 15:9.²⁵ In the former instance, Paul explicitly parallels the term with Jews and Greeks, suggesting that the church of God can be viewed as an ethnic group that is spread across a broad territory and a variety of cities. Similarly, when in 1 Cor 15:9 Paul characterizes his former life saying, "I persecuted the church of God," he is referring to his opposition to multiple congregations (cf. Gal 1:13, 22-23; Phil 3:6). Here again, Paul's use of ἐκκλησία θεοῦ conforms to a diaspora, ethnic identity.

First Corinthians 4:14-17 correlates a particularly dense occurrence of familial language and affection with ἐκκλησία in such a way as to highlight the trans-local family resemblance of all the churches. Paul urges behavior modeled on his own as their father in Christ who himself follows Christ, suggesting that ultimately the family resemblance derives from Christ. They are Paul's beloved children, as is his son Timothy, who is coming to remind them of the family ways that he urges on all the churches everywhere. Paul here explicitly portrays the churches as a diasporized, fictive, kinship group.

Israel

We have seen in the previous section how Paul's use of ἐκκλησία sometimes overlaps with his evocation of Israelite identity. Paul develops the ethnic aspects of that typology

²⁴ McCready, "Ekklēsia," 60-64; Meeks, *First Urban*, 107-10.

²⁵ Meeks, *First Urban*, 74-84, 108-10, notes just this characteristic of the Pauline congregations and this feature of Paul's use of the term ἐκκλησία that seems to be innovative. He opines that Paul extends the term from its LXX range to include "the concept of belonging to a single, universal people of God, which ... came directly from Judaism" (108).

in his construal of the Corinthian believers' identity and ethos. We cannot here begin to plumb the issues swirling around the status of Israel and the covenants in Paul's theology, issues that are most prominent in Romans. For the purposes of this study it merely needs to be shown that Paul analogizes the church in 1 Corinthians to ethnic aspects of Israel's identity.

Paul never directly calls the church "Israel." In 1 Corinthians, he uses the name "Israel" only once, Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα (10:18), referring to the descendants of Israel who worship at Jerusalem according to the law of Moses.²⁶ Paul nevertheless claims for the Corinthian believers Israel's history and ancestors in 10:1-4. Having read the church's rituals of the Lord's Supper and baptism back into Israel's exodus experience (vv. 1-4), he can use the subsequent unfaithfulness of Israel in the wilderness as warning to the church (vv. 5-13).²⁷ Paul's "therefore" in v. 14 shows that his exhortations in vv. 14-22 continue from the template developed in vv. 1-13. Furthermore, as Richard Hays has noted, Paul alludes in vv. 20, 22 to Deut 32: 17, 21, where Moses' Song urges a later generation not to repeat the errors of the wilderness generation.²⁸ This allusion, together with Paul's continuation in v. 16 of Lord's Supper and baptism rituals from vv. 1-4, show the coherence of vv. 1-22 as Paul's parenetic midrash. Thus v. 18, "Consider the people of Israel," continues the midrash on the exodus generation begun in vv. 1-4, and the consumption of sacrificial food in vv. 18-20 alludes to the golden calf incident. Paul's coordination of common cult and commensality with this genealogically rendered identity fits the pattern we have presented for ethnic rhetoric. His assertion of their consubstantiality, "we who are many are one body" (v. 17b) and the ethical entailments

²⁶ The NRSV's translation of this phrase as "the people of Israel" obscures Paul's rhetorical move in calling them "Israel according to the flesh," a move that implicitly interjects the question of whether there might be another way of viewing Israel.

²⁷ In this section I am dependent on Hays, *Echoes*, 91-97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 93-94. Cf. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 772-75; Meeks, *First Urban*, 98-100.

thereof is further evidence of ethnic logic. On the basis of their fictive genealogy, Paul has pressed for appropriate boundaries and communal solidarity.

Such reasoning surfaces again in 1 Cor 12:2, “You know that when you were pagans [ἔθνη], you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.” Here Paul can unproblematically call them ἔθνη, as if they are now covenant insiders.²⁹ Israel was the people of the one true God, the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) followed idols. Similarly, Paul has contrasted the church with the ἔθνη in 1 Cor 5:1, but there the sin is sexual misconduct. Among Jews, the stereotypical sins of τὰ ἔθνη were idolatry and sexual immorality. In these two instances, 5:1 and 12:2, Paul has figured the Corinthian church as Israel in contrast to stereotypical Gentile behavior.³⁰ To a Jew, these Corinthians were still ἔθνη, but to Paul they are no longer covenant outsiders.

Finally, we noted above that Paul’s argument about the merits of speaking in tongues in 1 Cor 14 turns in vv. 21-22 on the church’s identifying with the recipient of God’s address in Isa 28:11-12, “this people,” namely Israel. The identity of Israel was both ethnic and covenantal, that is, both genealogically reckoned and religiously defined. Paul applies both the genealogical and the covenantal dimensions of Israel’s identity to the church. These figurations of the church as ethnic Israel are reinforced by the numerous ways Paul alludes to and depends upon such self-consciousness on the part of the believers. He freely cites Scripture and the traditions of Israel. In 16:2 he reckons weeks in terms of Sabbaths. In a passing remark about travel plans in 16:8 he matter-of-factly references his schedule in terms of the Jewish holiday of Pentecost. All these features of Paul’s rhetoric signal their identity as patterned on Israel.

Building

In supporting her assertion, “The building metaphor for the undivided, stable church community is (along with the body of Christ imagery) the predominant image of the

²⁹ Hays, *Echoes*, 96.

³⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 133-37.

epistle,” Mitchell goes beyond merely citing the occurrences of (ἐπ)οἰκοδομέω, οἰκοδομή and οἰκοδόμος (3:9-14; 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26), but demonstrates that a cluster of words associated with construction and edifices constituted a Greek metaphorical *topos* in discourse urging concord.³¹ This metaphorical language construed society as a building and involved related terms such as θεμέλιον (3:10, 11, 12), βεβαιόω (1:6, 8), and ἑδραῖος (15:58). The metaphor plays on both building as structure and on construction, the activity of building—οἰκοδομή having both senses in Greek, as does our word “building.” Thus, in 1 Corinthians the language of work (ἔργον, ἐργάζομαι) and labor (κόπος) is largely drawn into the building metaphor. Of the fourteen occurrences of (συν)ἔργον or (συν)ἐργάζομαι (3:9, 13-15 [4times]; 4:12; 5:2; 9:1, 6, 13; 15:58; 16:10 [2 times], 16), ten of them refer to the work of building the church (3:13-15; 9:1; 15:58; 16:10). And both occurrences of κόπος (3:8; 15:58) coincide with these uses of ἔργον in referring to church edification, as do two of the three occurrences of κοπιᾶω (15:10 and 16:16, but not 4:12).

Having introduced this building metaphor in 3:9-15, Paul is able to allude to it with language from this semantic field outlined by Mitchell. As he does this he intermingles the architectural *topos* with his ethnic rhetoric. In concluding his introduction of the building metaphor (3:9c-15), Paul specifies the building as being the holy temple for

³¹ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 99-111, quotation from p. 104. By ignoring familial terms in 1 Corinthians, she provides indirect confirmation of Hellerman’s, Banks’ and Dunn’s observations above (n.16 in this chapter). In her case, this omission is likely due to her focus on the Greco-Roman rhetoric of political concord in which the building and the body were important *topoi*, whereas familial terminology was not. This makes Paul’s insertion of family language and ethos all the more noteworthy, as Martin, *Body*, 67-68; Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 99, have commented. However, see now Sandnes, *A New Family*, 113-30; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 61-92, who both demonstrate that the rhetoric typical of political concord in antiquity was also prominent in urging harmony between brothers. They argue on this basis that when Paul urges concord in his churches, his rhetoric is most like ancient φιλαδελφία literature. We will revisit this observation below regarding Paul’s use of the common *topos* of the body.

God's Spirit (3:16-17).³² Paul has adapted a conventional Greco-Roman metaphor for social stability, the building, to his ends by specifying what kind of building they are, the temple of a particular God. This evokes ethnic identity because a common cult is an important ethnic index--all the more so in this case because the image is likely that of the Jerusalem temple. Moreover, the territorial orientation of Jewish identity focused above all on the Jerusalem temple.³³ In portraying the community of believers as God's temple, Paul has transformed the autochthonous dimension of Jewish ethnic identity into a reinforcement of the community's consubstantiality.

Two other passages (8:1-13 and 14:1-26) will serve to exemplify Paul's intermingling of architectural and ethnic language. The first of these passages introduces the fractious topic of meat offered to idols, the main concern of 1 Cor 8-10. The second summarizes Paul's counsel regarding edifying behavior in worship gatherings, the overarching topic of 1 Cor 12-14.

In 1 Cor 8:1 Paul asserts that the criterion of choosing well is what builds up in love, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up [οἰκοδομεῖ]," and he proceeds to specify the object of this edifying love as ἀδελφός (4 times in vv. 11-13; variously rendered in the NRSV as "believers," "family," "their" and "them"). With a touch of irony, Paul underscores the destructiveness of license taken by some when he notes that those who disregard the sensibilities of weaker members build them up into idolatry ("be encouraged [οἰκοδομηθήσεται] to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols," v. 10).

³² Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 87, insists, without supporting argument, "Paul's image of the church as God's temple is not an extension of the building imagery...." Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 77, also discounts the connection saying, "The notion is no longer that of God's building, but of his dwelling." But one cannot but combine the images in Paul's development here. Adding the aspect of God's dwelling to that of God's building does not disconnect the images, but specifies what sort of building it is. The connection is supported by Fee, *First Corinthians*, 146; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 315; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 101-04; John R. Lanci, *A New Temple for Corinth: Rhetorical and Archaeological Approaches to Pauline Imagery* (Studies in Biblical Literature 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

³³ Barclay, *Diaspora*, 417-21; Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," 207-12.

These two uses of οἰκοδομέω invoke the *topos* of the stable building to support Paul's plea for concord between brothers. This familial solidarity underlying the mandate to do what edifies a weaker member is grounded theologically in two confessional statements in vv. 6, 11.³⁴ The monotheistic confession of v. 6a names the one God as "Father," thus defining fellow worshippers as siblings. Further, the next line of that confession recalls that inclusion in the father's family comes via the "one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." This foundation of having been made siblings only through Jesus Christ is continued in the second confessional citation, v. 11. The identification of "believers [ὁ ἀδελφός] for whom Christ died" with Christ, himself, is so complete that sinning against a brother or a sister is also sinning against Christ (v. 12). The family identity seems to presume shared identification with Christ through whom the Corinthians all exist for their one God and Father (v. 6).

The section above on Paul's use of ἐκκλησία in 1 Cor 14 has noted the involvement of ethnic rhetoric in vv. 11, 21-23. It remains here merely to note that Paul repeatedly urges in this chapter that the object of οἰκοδομέω and οἰκοδομή must be ἡ ἐκκλησία (vv. 4, 5, 12, 26). Furthermore, Paul's standard appeal to them as ἀδελφοί (vv. 6, 20, 26, 39) makes the ethnic *pathos* explicit. The object of edification is the family, especially the weaker member. Identification with and love for a brother epitomize family loyalty, which here is equated with building up the community. In Paul's construction of the church, "love builds up" (8:1), and the object of that love is siblings.

The Body of Christ

The prominence of the body as an image for the church in 1 Corinthians is much discussed. In this section I will tread lightly in regard to the important conversation regarding the significance of σῶμα for Pauline anthropology, but rather will examine Paul's development of this metaphor in the service of his argument for unity and its

³⁴ On the identification of traditional material here, see Eriksson, *Traditions*, 97-98, 120-122.

interrelation with his ethnic rhetoric. Paul's juxtaposition of the body with ethnic contrasts in 12:13 concisely asserts his conclusion that the unity of the body alters understanding of ethnicity in the church. I will attend to how Paul's previous uses of *σῶμα* prepare for his conclusion in 12:13. I will also briefly comment on how Paul's comments on the body in 1 Cor 15 may deepen our appreciation of his earlier uses of body as a metaphor.

Margaret Mitchell has demonstrated that Paul's elaboration of the body metaphor in 1 Cor 12 conforms to its conventional use in the rhetoric of concord. Her comparative analysis assessed this body *topos* in its ancient context of urging concord in the Greek *polis*. In that setting, the body metaphor legitimated the ruling class and urged cooperation upon those with the most reason for dissatisfaction with the *status quo*.³⁵ As an example, she cites the oration of Menenius Agrippa recounted by Livy, by which he persuaded the revolting plebs of the city to accept their social location and roles:

In the days when man's members did not all agree amongst themselves, as is now the case, but had each its own ideas and a voice of its own, the other parts thought it unfair that they should have the worry and the trouble and the labour of providing everything for the belly, while the belly remained quietly in their midst with nothing to do but to enjoy the good things which they bestowed upon it; they therefore conspired together that the hands should carry no food to the mouth, nor the mouth accept anything that was given it, nor the teeth grind up what they received. While they sought in this angry spirit to starve the belly into submission, the members themselves and the whole body were reduced to the utmost weakness. Hence it had become clear that even the belly had no idle task to perform, and was no more nourished than it nourished the rest, by giving out to all parts of the body that by which we live and thrive, when it has been divided equally amongst the veins and is enriched with digested food—that is, the blood. Drawing a parallel from this to show how like was the internal dissension of the bodily members to the anger of the plebs against the Fathers, he prevailed upon the minds of his hearers.³⁶

However, Aasgaard and Sandnes have both demonstrated that use of this *topos* for urging concord was also common in moral philosophy of the family, in particular in

³⁵ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 157-64.

³⁶ Livy, *Ab Urde Condita* 2.32.9-12 (B. O. Foster et al., LCL).

urging the supreme virtue of φιλαδελφία, brotherly love.³⁷ Here also the metaphor supported hierarchical arrangements as it urged cooperation and acceptance of one's place in family conventions where the elder brothers were conferred greater status and power. This differential was a frequently bemoaned source of familial strife in this literature. Nevertheless, brothers in antiquity were far closer to being equals than was the populace of a city in comparison to its aristocracy.³⁸ Paul's use of the body metaphor is much closer to that of the φιλαδελφία literature than the political.³⁹ Whereas in the political sphere the body metaphor primarily justified great difference in status and means, in the familial setting it helped support an ethic of solidarity, concern for common honor, refusal to allow outsiders to the family to come between brothers and generalized reciprocity. For our purposes, one example will suffice:

. . . we should consider that in a certain way a person's brothers are parts of him just as my eyes are of me, and similarly my hands, and the rest. Family relationships are similar. If the eyes and hands, therefore, should each receive its own soul and mind, they would treat the rest with respect in every way possible on account of the partnership we have mentioned before, because they would not be able to perform their own functions without the presence of the other members. In the same way also, we who are men and admit to having a soul should in no way relax the esteem with which we should deal with our brothers. Furthermore, brothers far more than parts of the body are adapted by nature to help each other. For the eyes, indeed, being present with each other, see together, and one hand works together with the other that is present. But the cooperation of brothers with each other is much more varied, for they do things which by common consent are excellent even if they should be completely separated from each other, and they greatly benefit each other even if the distance that separates them is immense . . . No one, therefore, is alone, nor is he

³⁷ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 61-92; Sandnes, *A New Family*, 113-30.

³⁸ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 91: "Although siblings structurally were on roughly the same level in the family, it seems ahistorical to speak of siblingship as an egalitarian relationship. It is more appropriate to view it from the perspective of unity and harmony, and within the framework of a strongly hierarchical system."

³⁹ This distinction between *polis* and household is not absolute in that the household was considered a microcosm of the state and the state's smallest constituent unit (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.1253b). However, it is the distinction between household, including slaves, clients and property, and the family genealogically reckoned that made brotherly love a special moral topic in distinction from household management.

born “from an oak or a stone” [Homer, *Odyssey* 19.163], but from parents and in conjunction with brothers, kindred, and other members of the household.⁴⁰

Paul’s use of this common metaphor for brotherly relations participates in his other ethnic rhetoric inasmuch as it evokes that familial identity and bond. We will see in subsequent sections below that Paul features distinctly familial values in his ethical guidance to the Corinthians. For now I will examine three other ways that Paul implicates this body language with his ethnic rhetoric in 1 Corinthians: 1) he coordinates its corporate dimension with sexual union and endogamy, 2) he uses it to defend a common and exclusive cult and, finally, 3) he defines this corporate body as the church’s participation in Jesus Christ, which is simultaneously the basis for other aspects of his ethnic vision for the church.

The Body and Sexual Union

The Corinthian slogans Paul recites in 1 Cor 6 (“All things are permissible” [v. 12] and “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy both the one and the other” [v. 13]) suggest a Corinthian ambivalence towards an ethics of the body. In correcting their view, Paul establishes foundational commitments that prepare for his later development of the body as a metaphor. Most important is his reinterpretation of their bodily life as participation in Christ by means of the Spirit. Paul’s counter-slogan “The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (v. 13cd) juxtaposes “for fornication” with “for the Lord,” setting up Paul’s citation of Gen 2:24 to establish the concept of a collective body. Whereas the LXX uses σάρκα μίαν, Paul’s gloss in v. 16ab uses ἐν σῶμα, enabling him to apply the concept of the shared body both to sexual union and to unity in the Lord. Lurking just behind “members of Christ” in v. 15 is the full metaphor of the body of Christ, a phrase they already know

⁴⁰ Hierocles *On Duties* 4.27.20; cited from Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC 4; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 95.

from tradition, which Paul will later cite in 10:16.⁴¹ Paul insists that their bodies have been joined to the Lord by the Spirit on analogy with the bodies of man and woman being joined in sexual union (v. 16-17).⁴² Paul's development of body language here enables his case that being members of the Lord by the Spirit limits with whom one may be united sexually. Paul's case implies exclusive endogamy limited to others in Christ, a topic he will address more fully in 1 Cor 7. Such thinking conforms to classic ethnic boundary maintenance. Furthermore, if their individual bodies are members of Christ, as he asserts in v. 15, it is a short step to construe them as united also with each other through that participation in Christ. There is only one Christ in whom their bodies are members by the Spirit; therefore, this argument for individual sexual purity depends on the assumption of their corporate identity in Christ.⁴³ And his rationale for individual sexual boundaries appears to be prophylactic for the entire community.

A subtle shift in Paul's syntax belies this corporate sub-stratum. In 6:15 their individual bodies are to the fore when Paul uses the plural, "your bodies are members of Christ." But in vv. 19, 20, he uses the singular of σῶμα, with the plural possessive ὑμῶν. This does not necessarily highlight a single shared body because a distributive singular with a plural possessive is common.⁴⁴ However, in this context the change from plural in v. 15 to singular in vv. 19, 20 would resonate for them with corporate assumptions drawn both from the traditional use of σῶμα Χριστοῦ in the Lord's Supper and from the corporate use of ναός (here in v. 19) previously in 1 Cor 3:16 where that is clearly a

⁴¹ On the traditional nature of 1 Cor 10:16, see Eriksson, *Traditions*, 106-10; E. Earle Ellis, "Traditions in I Corinthians," *NTS* 32 (1986): 487.

⁴² Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 112, correctly summarizes the thought: "We naturally expect ὁ κολλώμενος, 'he who clings' ... is *one body with the Lord* (following v 15). This thought is, as a matter of fact, the inherent proposition. ἓν πνεῦμα, "one spirit," now explains what is the nature of this one body" (italics original).

⁴³ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 145, 162.

⁴⁴ BDF §140.

singular, corporate identity.⁴⁵ Paul here argues that what they do with their bodies matters greatly because their bodies have been joined to the Lord as members of (the body of) Christ. Here we find the same vision that will be expressed explicitly as the body of Christ metaphor in 1 Cor 12.

Their participation in the Lord by the Spirit creates a new thing that Paul here alternately symbolizes, albeit nascently, as the body of Christ, a marriage (ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ), or a temple. Paul's conceptualization of the body here at least tangentially connects it with ethnic considerations. In as much as marriage restrictions and common cult are two of the chief indices of ethnic groups and we have the body identified with both, the body participates in Paul's ethnic reasoning. Furthermore, the evocation of the temple most likely reflects the temple in Jerusalem and thus draws the Corinthians into identification with Israel as God's covenant people. This identity with Israel is heightened in the Paul's next metaphorical development of σῶμα.

The Body and Common Cult

When Paul applies the body metaphor to the Corinthians in 10:16-17 he ties their corporate identity, "we who are many are one body," to their participation together in the Lord's Supper. Paul then analogizes this form of ritualized solidarity to Israel's sacrificial worship (v. 18) and to pagan cultic worship (vv. 20-21).⁴⁶ Here their identity as one body derives from their common cult, which, as we saw above in Chapter Two, is a typical

⁴⁵ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 120 n.338: "Because the body of Christ imagery is a prevailing image of the letter, which is based upon prior instructions which Paul can count on the Corinthians to know (6:15), any time σῶμα is used by Paul in 1 Cor we cannot discount also a communal referent. σῶμα in 6:20 can thus also refer to both the individual body and the communal body of Christ." Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 112, comments regarding the temple image, "Thus the application in 3:16 is primary as compared with 6:19." Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 474 n.269, concurs.

⁴⁶ As is clear from my discussion of these verses above on p. 145, I understand v. 18 as alluding to Israel's apostasy in the golden calf incident. But that view is immaterial to the present argument, as the logic of corporate identity being rooted in a common cult is present whatever Israelite worship setting this alludes to.

feature of a religious communal ethnic myth. The fact that corporate worship and joint participation in Christ are here fused suggests that Paul's development of the body metaphor grew from the emphasis on "body" in the dominical Lord's Supper tradition. The logical flow from Paul's citation of tradition in v. 16 to his conclusion in v. 17 is that the celebration issues forth in social unity. In v. 16 the body is Christ's physical body that was broken. In v. 17 the body is the church.⁴⁷

Furthermore, his explicit comparison of their corporate identity and practice with that of Israel underscores the ethnic aspect of this religious identity. The analogy with the people of Israel, including sacramental food and drink, began in 10:1-4. In 10:4, Christ was the source of Israel's spiritual drink, as he is for the Corinthians in 10:16. Paul repeats *κοινωνία* (vv. 16 [2 times], 18) to parallel the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper with Israelite participation in altar worship, suggesting the dimension of *κοινωνία* that implicates the thing participated in. But v. 17, falling between these two cultic examples, emphasizes the social unity of those who together partake (*μετέχω*) in the celebratory meal. In this, Paul develops both the social and cultic dimensions of *κοινωνία*. Commentators sometimes describe these dimensions as horizontal and vertical, respectively. As in his introduction of the term *κοινωνία* at 1:9, Paul intends both horizontal and vertical aspects.⁴⁸ It is participation in Christ and social solidarity in Christ. Here in 10:16-22, we see Paul explicitly commenting on both dimensions.⁴⁹ This

⁴⁷ Sandnes, *A New Family*, 160-61: "Paul's use of the term *sôma* [in 11:23-29] moves from the idea of the community's meal to the gathered community as Christ's body. A similar movement can be observed in 1 Cor 10:16-17 and 12:12-13. . . . I have argued above that this is a metaphor intimately associated with a household. This seems to be confirmed in 1 Cor 11:30 [*sic*, read 11:33], in which Paul calls the community as brothers and sisters."

⁴⁸ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 104-05, 750-51, 761-67; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 85-86.

⁴⁹ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 134-36, 254-55 n.383, notes both dimensions calling them "cultic vs. political/ecclesiological" and "sacramental vs. social." Eriksson, *Traditions*, 110, comments, "...the traditional statements [10:16] strengthen Meeks' suggestion that the Corinthians would have understood the Lord's Supper as a ritual of solidarity. As they ate the bread and drank the cup, they celebrated their unity in Christ." Eriksson does

continues Paul's development of σῶμα to reference both joint participation in Christ and corporate identity analogous to that of Israel, infusing ethnic identity into his vision of the corporate body.

Evocation of the exodus traditions in the context of the Lord's Supper figures again in 11:23-24 by Paul's citation of the familiar words, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (v. 25). Their typological appropriation of Israel's history, as in 10:1-4, noted above, is authorized precisely by this *new* covenant that creates a new, covenantal, corporate identity (cf. Exod 24:8, "the blood of the covenant"). Paul's further identification of this new, covenantal identity with the body is underscored by his final mention of σῶμα (v. 29b) without mentioning the cup. Paul has relentlessly paired "eating" with "drinking" and bread/body with cup/blood in vv. 24-29a but suddenly ends on μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα with jarring emphasis.⁵⁰ In vv. 29b-32 he amplifies this discerning of the body "by means of a fivefold *paronomasia* with words sharing the stem κρίνω" sandwiched between two occurrences of κρίμα (vv. 29, 34) that further identifies the body with the gathered community by making "ourselves" the object as well as the subject of the same verb διακρίνω (v. 31).⁵¹ For Paul this covenantal, cultic, and communal identity as the body, warrants his appeal for them to behave as family, "So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another" (11:33).⁵² How they treat each other at the celebration reflects whether they are "discerning the body" and whether they participate in the Supper "for the better" or "for

not here specify his reference to Meeks but is alluding to his previous discussion of Meeks, *First Urban*, 157-60, on pp. 103-04.

⁵⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 109: "If Paul had meant to refer primarily to the elements of the supper, the bread and the wine, and their representation of Christ's self-giving death, then it seems odd that he wrote only τὸ σῶμα, given that in the previous lines he has constantly repeated references to both elements . . ." The NRSV's "For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves" loses this emphasis by transposing the final clauses.

⁵¹ Eriksson, *Traditions*, 192-93.

⁵² see n.47, above.

the worse” (11:17). When I revisit this section again below, we will see that Paul’s expectation of table fellowship with generalized reciprocity and without honor-shame distinctions (v. 22) coincides with typical, Mediterranean, family ethos.

When Paul in 1 Cor 12 finally develops the body metaphor without explicit connection with the Lord’s Supper but in a conventional way for social concord, expressing the symbiotic relations among the parts of the human physiology, he has already established his preferred frame of reference for conceptualizing the body— participation in Christ, the Lord’s Supper as social, cultic and covenantal unity on analogy with Israel. So in 12:13 when he recalls their baptism that initiated them into this body (cf. 1:13-16), these associations still cling to the term. Paul concludes the body metaphor in 12:27 by naming them for the first time explicitly σῶμα Χριστοῦ. In 12:27-28 Paul makes clear that “the body of Christ” and “the church” equally refer to the same community. When Paul juxtaposes their corporate identity as σῶμα Χριστοῦ to the opposing pairs “Jews or Greeks, slaves or free” it implies an alternate, united group. Since the first of these pairs is an ethnic contrast and because Paul has been developing ethnic associations of this one body, I suggest that it is fitting to construe their unity in the body of Christ as ethnic solidarity.

Paul’s final development of σῶμα in 1 Cor 15:35-46 confirms this ethnic association. Here it does not appear to refer to the church collectively but to the bodies of individuals and their mode of existence on either side of resurrection. However, we must not be too hasty in eliminating any collective reference in Paul’s argument here. He is answering the rhetorical question of someone who is cynical about resurrected bodies by making a case for different kinds of bodies appropriate for different realms of existence. There are bodies fit for existence in this earthly world, which kind Paul calls ψυχικόν; and there are bodies fit for resurrected life, which kind he calls πνευματικόν. Despite developing an extensive list of binary contrasts between the two types of bodies (earthly-heavenly, mortal-immortal, perishable-imperishable, first-second, natural-spiritual, weak-strong,

dishonor-glory), Paul says very little about the mode of resurrected life. Thus, the communal dimension of life in Christ may well be an essential aspect of future transformed bodies. When we consider Paul's previous characterization of the communal body of Christ as animated by the Holy Spirit (6:17-20; 12:13), together with Paul's description here of the resurrected body as "spiritual" by means of the second Adam's "life-giving spirit," we may consider that Paul expects resurrected spiritual bodies to participate in community in Christ just as he has argued for their flesh-and-blood bodies. In any case, Paul is vague enough about what the future life will entail that we can rule little in or out. But more to the point of this argument, in 1 Cor 15, the body also participates in ethnic reasoning. The σῶμα ψυχικόν is perishable because it descended from the first Adam (v. 45). The σῶμα πνευματικόν can inherit the kingdom of God (v. 50), which belongs to God the Father (v. 24) because it derives from the second Adam and participates in the son's (v. 26) resurrection. Both lineage and legitimate inheritance are ethnic logic. Here in this final turn regarding σῶμα in 1 Corinthians, Paul characterizes it genealogically, confirming its connection to his ethnic reasoning that we have noted all along.

Family and Household

Paul seldom uses the nouns designating a household to refer to the community of believers, preferring instead the familial language of siblingship and parenthood.⁵³ He

⁵³ In antiquity, the family, reckoned by lineage, and the household, as a broader collectivity, were not identical, but had distinct yet overlapping meanings and social functions. The relevant terms and corresponding social functions, *familia* and *domus*, γένος and οἶκος, and שבט and משפחה and בית-אב are helpfully examined in Sandnes, *A New Family*, 47-64; Halvor Moxnes, "What Is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. Halvor Moxnes; London: Routledge, 1997), 13-41; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 34-60. Paul's pattern of usage does not follow a clear adherence to these distinctions. He seems rather to depend on a cluster of coherent, though not necessarily consistent metaphors drawn from ancient family life (Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 29-31, 118-36). I find helpful the synthesis of Sandnes, *A New Family*, 54: "Family-like' means: a) people living in the same household b) or that are closely related

does use the terms οἰκεῖοι, οἰκία and οἶκος to refer to homes and households of believers who host or are members of a local congregation, but only once in the undisputed Pauline letters does one of these terms clearly refer to the church (Gal 6:10; in the disputed letters see Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15). By contrast, Paul's construal of the believers as genealogical family is pervasive, especially in 1 Corinthians: ἀδελφοί (1:1, 10, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 5:11; 6:5, 8; 7:12, 14, 24, 29; 8:11; 9:5; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6, 26, 39; 15:1, 6, 50, 58; 16:11, 15, 20); God as father (1:3; 8:6; 15:24). Nevertheless, Paul does combine language drawn from the realm of the household with his familial vision, most notably in 1 Cor 7 where Paul's discussion of marital and slave status touches on these concerns of household management.⁵⁴ Household members who were kin by blood and marriage would be part of a household system including slaves, clients, property and business. Thus, his descriptions of salvation in terms of inheritance participate in the household metaphor (6:9, 10; 15:50). His characterization of himself and his coworkers as ὑπηρέται (4:1), a servant or assistant to a master, or as οἰκονόμοι (4:1, 2; 9:17), managers of household affairs, make sense against a background of the church as part of God's household. Such representatives of the *paterfamilias* were often trusted slaves who held major responsibilities in the household. The logic of 7:22cd-23 suggests that believers are slaves purchased by Christ and, thus, are part of his household. This household language comes into even clearer relief when we recall that siblings existed within households and household networks and that the early churches met in actual

to a household as friends spending their time there, dining there etc.; to put it in Aristotle's terms, people living like friends of equal standing, or friends of virtue c) who experience support and aid usually provided by the extended family." Households are linked to other households both by means of patron-client relations and by genealogical relations. The latter are most germane to this study, as they constitute trans-local networks of related households of similar status one to another (Sandnes, *A New Family*, 47-54; Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 40-49).

⁵⁴ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 55, notes the intersection between Paul's familial language and his household imagery.

households of members (1 Cor 16:15-19). Thus, this household environment was everywhere presupposed by those participating in church life.⁵⁵

However, Paul primarily configures the church as siblings and as children of common ancestors—God the Father, the Israelite patriarchs and Paul, himself. These genealogical aspects of the family connect the household metaphor cluster to Paul’s ethnic rhetoric.⁵⁶ Paul’s strong emphasis on the sibling aspect of the community versus the structural aspects of the ancient household confirms Dunn’s observation that Paul’s emphasis seems to be more on the relational dynamics and values than on church management.⁵⁷ Joseph Hellerman develops this insight further in a recent study applying a model for the Mediterranean kinship group to early Christian communities. He applies insights from comparative anthropology to demonstrate that Paul appeals to values and reasoning typical of ancient Mediterranean patrilineal kinship groups (both Jewish and Greco-Roman) to reinforce a familial identity and ethos throughout his arguments. Hellerman argues for “. . . the indisputable centrality of the family model for Paul’s conception of Christian community.”⁵⁸ Regarding 1 Corinthians, he calls attention to the values and social practices of generalized reciprocity, family loyalty, and corporate honor to show how Paul’s expectations correlate with his naming them ἀδελφός.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Sandnes, *A New Family*, 103-11.

⁵⁶ Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 212 (cf. his entire ch. 3), notes Paul’s collocation of slavery and kinship language in referring to believers and attempts to map the intersection of these two symbol systems in Paul’s symbolic universe. Attending to such a synthesis is beyond the scope of this study; however, it is worth noting that Petersen’s solution is to locate slavery as a symbol system within the broader kinship system that is eventually dissolved into kinship via adoption, “Thus *the master-slave system is related to the kinship system as one symbolic representation of a stage within the process by which God adopts his children*” (italics original).

⁵⁷ Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 536 n.13. Cf. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 54-59.

⁵⁸ Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 126.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 99-108. Cf. Sandnes, *A New Family*, 170, 177-79.

Summary: Ethnicity and Paul's Images for Unity

This section has surveyed Paul's major images and most prominent language for unity in 1 Corinthians noting that in each case his vision of social unity participates in the construal of the believers as an ethnic group. This finding, together with the observation that Paul refers to them as "brothers and sisters" more than any other term or image, suggests that an undercurrent of ethnic rhetoric binds together all his images for social unity. This tour of Paul's rhetorical strategy for building a united church validates my goal of reading his citation of the baptismal unity formula in 12:13 as epitomizing his vision for reconciled ethnic community comprised of members who were formerly socially alienated. In particular, his extended metaphor of the body, in which the formula is embedded in 1 Cor 12, has been seen to have been a common *topos* in antiquity for urging harmony and brotherly love between siblings.

Having established this ethnic frame for Paul's vision of church unity, I will now examine Paul's negotiation in 1 Cor 5-14 of particular ethical crises in the Corinthian churches in order to demonstrate that his arguments depend on his configuration of the believers as an extended kinship group and that his exhortations appeal to ancient kinship norms. Furthermore, in each major section of this Pauline parenesis, 1 Cor 5-7, 8-10 and 11-14, Paul alludes to and depends on the logic of the baptismal formula that he eventually cites in 12:13. This observation will further establish that the Pauline mythic context for understanding this formula is the story of this group's origins, ethos and future genealogically based identity.

Ethnic Identity and the Unity Formula in Paul's Parenesis: 1 Cor 5-14

In 1 Cor 5-14, Paul engages a series of issues that have become focal points for division in the community. In each instance, he appeals to their corporate identity in Christ and deploys ethnic reasoning in a variety of ways to urge unity upon the church. The Corinthian problems addressed in 1 Cor 5-7 are sexual ethics, lawsuits and marriage.

In 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 the main issue dividing the church is the propriety of eating meat that has been offered to idols. Finally, the concerns in 1 Cor 11:2-14:40 pertain to divisions in the community when they are gathered to worship.

Victor Paul Furnish has helpfully summarized the issues in the first two sections (1 Cor 5-7; 8:1-11:1) as all arising from the difficulties of being the church in the midst of an unbelieving society.⁶⁰ In terms of ethnic theory, these are the dynamics of maintaining and negotiating boundaries between the ethnic group and outsiders among whom they live. An examination of these sections will show that Paul reinforces the identity, boundaries and future of the church in ethnic terms. The problems reflected in 1 Cor 11-14 regarding worship gatherings, are intramural affairs, having to do with inner-group solidarity rather than with boundary concerns. Nevertheless, the internal church conflicts derive from issues of status in the world outside the church. In other words, the church is in Corinth and Corinth is in the church.

All the Corinthian conflicts, whether over boundaries or inner-group solidarity, derive from the church members participating in two realms, the church and the present world, in Christ and in Corinth. In his use of ethnic rhetoric, Paul stresses their identity in Christ, their solidarity and cohesion as a kinship group, and the appropriate boundaries between the church and the outside world. Furthermore, we will observe that the believers' dual identities correspond to Paul's apocalyptic dualism (e.g. 1 Cor 10:11). The cross and resurrection of Christ demarcate these two spheres. Thus, the Corinthians' unity in their new identity as God's people is a sign of the new thing that God is doing through the cross and resurrection of Christ. We will also see that to embrace that unity they must follow the ethos of the cross as the life pattern appropriate to living as Christ's people in this present world.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 49.

⁶¹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 245, arrives at this same conclusion regarding Pauline social norms: ". . . the appeal for other-regard presumes the existence and value of communal solidarity. Other-regard is primarily a community-focused virtue, practised

1 Corinthians 5-7: Sexuality, Lawsuits and Marriage

Three main topics may be discerned in this section of the epistle, sexual immorality, lawsuits, and marriage.⁶² In 5:1-13 and 6:12-20 Paul addresses sexual immorality in the church. Between those treatments, 6:1-8 deals with lawsuits among believers, with 6:9-12 summarizing and interconnecting these two topics. The lawsuits are patently divisions of brother against brother (6:6). Furthermore, court battles would not merely have involved the litigants but also social networks and loyalties both internal and external to the church.⁶³ Thus, 1 Cor 6:1-8 reflects schism along the lines of unbelieving Corinthian society, be they wealth, status, patronage, or family. Paul's rejection of sexual immorality in 5:1-13 expressly concerns proper understanding of the boundary between church and world. In 1 Cor 7, Paul turns his attention to various aspects of marriage that they seem have inquired about (7:1). A comparison of 1 Cor 5:1-2 with 7:1 suggests division over

in relation to 'one another', that is, towards one's (weaker) siblings, the other members of the Christian movement; it is a means by which unity and equality can be created and sustained within the community."

⁶² My choice to view 1 Cor 5-7 as a unit necessarily raises questions about the structure and outline of the letter as a whole which are beyond the scope of this study. For the purposes of this thesis, I find it more helpful to follow those who argue on thematic grounds that 1 Cor 7 completes the argument of 1 Cor 5-6 (e.g. Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 184-92; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 49-75) than by those who see 7:1 as beginning a new unit taking up concerns raised by the letter the Corinthians had written to Paul (e.g. Fee, *First Corinthians*; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*; Hays, *First Corinthians*; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*). Both views clearly have merit, and woodenly insisting on any particular outline risks obscuring the complexity, integrity and style of the epistle. But Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, and Eriksson, *Traditions*, have demonstrated that Paul is more responsible for the invention of his rhetorical program than is an externally imposed agenda. The commentators listed above who make a major section break at 7:1 justify it primarily on the grounds that here Paul begins responding to the Corinthian's letter to him. However, the fact that in 11:18 he returns to the oral reports mentioned previously in 1:11 and 5:1 highlights that concerns other than Paul's sources of information govern his arrangement of themes in his composition. Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 49-75; Meeks, *First Urban*, 97-103; James D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 46-68, characterize the topics addressed in 5:1-11:1 as concerning boundaries between the church and surrounding society, whereas the topics addressed in 11:2-14:40 pertain to issues internal to the believing community.

⁶³ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 97; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 419-22; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 116-17.

sexual ethics. In the former case, we encounter sexual libertinism; in the latter, asceticism.⁶⁴ However, it is unclear which of the subtopics in 1 Cor 7 they raised and which Paul introduces as part of his educational campaign. We will see below that Theissen and others have discerned social class dimensions to all these concerns. Paul counters these sources of division by appeal to their common social identity and ethnic solidarity.

1 Cor 5:1-13

Paul argues stridently here for the Corinthian community's purity and boundary maintenance. He warrants this group boundary enforcement by appeal to common convictions regarding their corporate identity. In particular, Paul appeals to an apparently traditional interpretation of the cross of Christ as their Passover and of them as Israel. He urges their purity as God's new, covenant people (vv. 7-8) and concludes in v. 13 citing Deut 24:7, "Drive out the wicked person from among you." Their identity with Israel is registered already in 5:1 where Paul contrasts them with τὰ ἔθνη. The summary allusions in 5:6-8 to the Passover narratives and imagery presume that they are already familiar with their identity as God's holy people. Paul challenges the insider status of this one "who bears the name of brother or sister" (v. 11), highlighting that this issue of sexual ethics is a boundary for this fictive kinship group. Driving him out would be a violation of ethnic solidarity but for the fact that his behavior has disqualified him from being considered a brother. The injunction against even eating with such a person is a culturally loaded social statement. We have seen previously that commensality is a typical index feature of ethnic groups and that it was especially so in the Greco-Roman culture in which table fellowship symbolized social alliance and reciprocity. In 1 Cor 5 Paul has characterized the church ethnically and has justified the expulsion ethnically.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 121-25, 235-36; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 483-84; Martin, *Body*, 70-76; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 269-70.

His concern here is to reinforce the boundaries so as to maintain the group's integrity. He does not bother to explain his sexual ethic, assuming that this act of immorality is patently wrong by any standards of the Hellenistic world, and especially according to the Scriptures of Israel. Paul's emphasis is on preserving the church's integrity according to the template of Israelite identity. The basis of his argument is to remind them of their identity as God's holy people, constituted by Christ's death as their Passover and called to be holy. His outrage here is at the members' seeming indifference to these critical boundary concerns that he wants them to be unified in defending.

1 Cor 6:1-11

Boundary concerns and the church's configuration as Israel continue into 6:1-11 (vv. 1-8 on lawsuits and vv. 9-11 summarizing 5:1-6:8).⁶⁵ The naming of insiders as "saints" (ἅγιοι, vv. 1, 2) is typical of the covenant identity of Israel, as is the cognate verb describing the Corinthians' conversion in v. 11: ἀλλὰ ἡγιάσθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε.⁶⁶ Paul's characterization of the believers by ἀδελφός (vv. 5, 6, 8) and as heirs of God's kingdom (vv. 9, 10) makes that corporate identity explicitly ethnic. When he says, "I say this to your shame" (v. 5), he proceeds to shame them according to kinship values.⁶⁷ It brought shame on a family for siblings to expose their disputes to outsiders, let alone ask outsiders to adjudicate in family matters.⁶⁸ Since the social and judicial structures dictated that to win in court one had to draw upon other alliances of patronage, class, or kinship,

⁶⁵ Meeks, *First Urban*, 129: "Then he turns to the question of lawsuits not just because the topic of judgment has come up but because again it illustrates their confusion about the lines dividing 'inside' from 'outside.'" Meeks is followed by Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 230-31, who presents other connections between 5:1-13 and 6:1-8.

⁶⁶ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 32-33, 231-32; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 76-77, 425. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 138, notes that this dichotomy between οἱ ἅγιοι and οἱ ἀδίκτοι is the theological foundation for Paul's argument in 1 Cor 6:1-8, though he does not develop that in terms of group identity.

⁶⁷ Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 232, documents the dense collocation of traditional family shaming language and techniques in this passage.

⁶⁸ Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 104-05.

these Christian litigants would be guilty of publicly displaying that their group solidarities outside the church supersede their kinship identity in Christ.⁶⁹ Such a display brought shame on the demoted kinship group. Paul continues playing to such kinship sensibilities when he concludes v. 8 with the emphasis that they are not merely wronging and defrauding but are doing the most shameful kind of wrongdoing—against brethren: But you yourselves wrong [ἀδικεῖτε] and defraud—and believers [ἀδελφούς] at that.⁷⁰

Paul hints that such treasonous behavior might actually place such a person outside the group when, in v. 9, he reminds them: “Do you not know that wrongdoers [ἄδικοι] will not inherit the kingdom of God?” His accusation in v. 8, prepares them to be the ἄδικοι who will not inherit; that is, they will be cut off from the inheritance benefits of the kinship group. This characterization identifies them with the “unrighteous” (ἄδικοι) outsiders in v. 1, who they have in fact chosen to identify with in seeking outside help over against their brother in Christ.

The vice list in vv. 9-10 reiterates these group boundaries and serves to unite the themes of 5:1-13 and 6:1-8. The first half of the list emphasizes sins of sexual immorality alluding to 5:1-13; the second half highlights sins of defrauding, as has 6:1-8. The list is framed by repetitions of not inheriting the kingdom of God, highlighting that the list describes boundary behavior separating the heirs from unworthy outsiders. The concluding v. 11 affirms their new identity and stresses their distinctness from the surrounding society, piling up language of separation, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified . . .”

⁶⁹ Bruce W. Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Corinthians 6:1-8," *NTS* 37 (1991): 559-72.

⁷⁰ Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 137-42, in his analysis of Paul's argument in this section, attends to Paul's strategy of status reversal and call to sacrifice based in the logic of the cross and does not consider Paul's rhetoric of boundary maintenance and group identity. I argue that Paul employs the strategy Horrell correctly analyzes in order to maintain the common group identity, which also is based in the cross.

1 Cor 6:12-20

Here Paul addresses further the topic of sexual immorality that occupied 5:1-13 and was summarized in 6:9-11. Whereas 5:1-13 assumed agreement on the sinfulness of the immorality and emphasized community discipline and boundary maintenance, 6:12-20 engages the attitudes and beliefs that may have permitted lax sexual mores.⁷¹ Theissen and Martin have argued that the Corinthian slogans cited by Paul in vv. 12-13 reflect a position consistent with the higher status strong (1:27).⁷² Thus, as we saw regarding the problem of court cases (6:1-8), these concerns for sexual ethics likely reflect inner-church conflicts deriving from extra-church status. Thus, throughout 1 Cor 5:1-6:20, Paul argues for their particular identity and ethos in Christ to be guarded from outside entanglements that would either divide the community or defile them through boundary violations.⁷³

1 Cor 7

The continuities between 1 Cor 7 and chs. 5-6 show that ch. 7 may be read as explication of the issues raised implicitly in 6:12-20 and especially in 6:16-17.⁷⁴ The Corinthian slogans cited in 6:12-13 and 7:1 all raise questions regarding the status of the physical body for those in Christ.⁷⁵ Paul's use of the "one flesh" tradition from Gen 2:24 in 6:16-17 presents a tension by juxtaposing two different unions that intersect in the

⁷¹ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 232-33; Meeks, *First Urban*, 129.

⁷² Theissen, *Social Setting*, 132-37; Martin, *Body*, 70-76, 174-75.

⁷³ Meeks, *First Urban*, 153-54, notes that each section of 1 Cor 5-6 trades in boundary maintenance.

⁷⁴ G. J. Laughery, "Paul: Anti-Marriage? Anti-Sex? Ascetic? A Dialogue with 1 Corinthians 7:1-40," *EvQ* 69 (1997): 114-18, who, in n.39, also cites E.-B. Allo in support of this view. Cf. Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 26, 148, 51.

⁷⁵ This connection is noted by Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Controlling the Boundaries: A Theological Profile of the Corinthian Ascetics (1 Cor 7)," in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1996), 536-37. Adjudicating the complex reconstructions seeking to explain the seeming presence of both libertine (6:12-13) and ascetic (7:1) in Corinth is beyond the scope of this study. For these issues and the case for identifying these as Corinthian slogans consult Martin, *Body*, 70-76, 175-79, 205-08; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 487-501; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 266-77.

body of the believer. The believer may be simultaneously one body with the Lord by the Spirit and one body with another human in the flesh. Even if believers eschew prostitutes, it is still not at all clear whether spiritual unity with the Lord permits fleshly unity with a spouse (7:2-6), especially an unbelieving spouse (7:12-16). Paul carries over his concern about avoiding πορνεία (7:2) from 6:13, 18.⁷⁶ His clarification regarding for whom is one's body (6:13, 19, 20) continues in 7:4, 34. In 1 Cor 7:23 Paul repeats the same traditional phrase, "you were bought with a price," that he used in 6:20 to ground his case there. And it is widely agreed that Paul's mention of a command of the Lord in 7:10-11 reflects the tradition known to us in Mark 10:1-12 par., which cites Gen 2:24 as Paul has in 6:16.⁷⁷ Both 6:12-20 and 7:1-40 concern the intersection of life in Christ with life according to sexual activity. These topical, verbal and formal parallels between 6:12-20 and 7:1-40 show that one may read 1 Cor 7 as Paul's continuation of the ethical complex raised by the previous section.⁷⁸ Put more generally, the correspondence between 6:12-20 and 7:1-40 is that both sections are fundamentally shaped by the tension between one's this-worldly status and one's status in Christ. This contrast gives rise both to the confusion Paul must address and to his solution.

In 7:1, Paul is responding to an issue posed in their letter to him regarding the slogan, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." Although this could be a purely neutral, open-ended inquiry, it is more likely the statement of a faction of the Corinthian churches

⁷⁶ Many scholars propose that certain "eschatological women" view sex with their husbands as being in conflict with their new spiritual status, driving their frustrated husbands to seek release in visits to prostitutes. Thus, Paul's injunction to stop defrauding each other (v. 5) and his exhortation of mutual rights to one another's bodies in marriage (vv. 3-4) are his correction to this situation--e.g. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 270, 280; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 114-16; Laughery, "1 Cor 7," 120-21; Gundry-Volf, "Corinthian Ascetics," 523-27.

⁷⁷ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 519-21, surveys much of the relevant scholarship.

⁷⁸ Fee, *First Corinthians*, despite having marked a major division in the body of the epistle at 7:1 (266-67), comments several times on connections between 6:12-20 and 7:1-40 (e.g. 267, 271-77).

seeking validation of their views.⁷⁹ The factional dynamics behind this issue adds to the continuity of this section with 1 Cor 5-6 that precede it and 1 Cor 8-10 that follow it.⁸⁰ Here, too, Paul is urging social concord to counteract factionalism. Disputes are easily imaginable, if not clearly delineated; for instance, between spouses where one wants to forego sex for the sake of being truly spiritual, between families of engaged couples where one wants to call off the marriage, over different views of how members ought to relate to their unbelieving spouse, between a father who wants to arrange a marriage for his daughter and the daughter who wants to remain celibate. Each of these particular issues could easily have factions on both sides. Given the placement of 1 Cor 7 between treatments of factional issues in 1 Cor 5-6 and 1 Cor 8-14 and given the overall purpose of the epistle to end factionalism and build unity, it seems best to presume divisions over views on marriage and sex. Paul's detailed treatment here could then be seen as his example of how to reason together through complex ethical issues so as to avoid divisions over them. Two aspects of his strategy that will bear also on the issues prominent in 1 Cor 8-15 are his refusal to resolve the tension between creation and new creation in either direction and his insistence on concessions to statuses inherent in this world as part of faithfulness to the new calling they have in Christ.

Paul's social and ethical vision in 1 Cor 7 is also important for our exploration of ethnic identity and the formula cited at 12:13 for several reasons. There are obvious formal similarities between these marriage concerns and ethnic identity. Both concern the status of pre-Christian social identities within the Christian community, raising issues of loyalty and faithfulness. This analogy is confirmed by the examples Paul cites to support his case in vv. 17-24. There is broad scholarly consensus that these examples derive from the full version of the baptismal formula cited in Gal 3:28 and partially repeated in 1 Cor

⁷⁹ See n. 75 above.

⁸⁰ Martin, *Body*, 70-76; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 110, 113, 118; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 121-25.

12:13.⁸¹ Paul presents the statuses of circumcised and uncircumcised, slave and free as somehow parallel to the issue of marriage and singleness he is assessing. If Paul's ruminations about marriage are commentary on the final pair, "there is no longer male and female," then we see reflected here all three status pairings from the Gal 3:28 version. That Paul interprets that pair in terms of marital status confirms the view I promoted in Chapter One, pp. 11-13, above, that the allusion to Gen 1:27 in Gal 3:28 need not promote androgyny, but, rather, may simply marginalize the importance marriage and procreation for defining one's status. Paul does not negate sexual dimorphism or marriage; rather, he revalues social status, including sex and marriage, in view of now belonging to the Lord (vv. 22-24) and in view of new creation (vv. 29-31). Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor 7 may be our most explicit framework for understanding how Paul understood the baptismal formula, including its ethnic dimensions.⁸² Moreover, I will note below how vv. 17-24 occupy a key place in Paul's argument, providing the general theological justification for his advice in vv. 1-24.

In view of this direct relevance of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 7 to his understanding of the unity formula in 12:13, we may note how Paul's reasoning about marriage intersects with his ethnic logic. Rules governing marital status and options figure as typical ethnic concerns because such unions bear directly on the genealogical construction of the social group. Here in typical ethnic fashion, Paul restricts marriage to fellow believers; that is, communal identity in Christ is a primary identity that circumscribes options for marital union. However, atypically for ethnic groups, marriage and procreation are not for Paul primary means of ensuring the group's continuity. Thus, being born into the community

⁸¹ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 544-47; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 62 n.25; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 122-23; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 126; Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 162-65; Gundry-Volf, "New Creation," 95, 100, and passim; Scroggs, "Eschatological Woman," 293.

⁸² Hays, *First Corinthians*, 123, writes, "First Corinthians 7 can be read, therefore, as Paul's own explication of Galatians 3:28."

in Christ grants no special status vis-à-vis adult converts. All in Christ are full participants in the community with all the benefits thereof, irrespective of marital status or parentage, because their primary identity is reckoned genealogically from God the father through the son, Jesus Christ. Paul is ambivalent as to the value of marriage and procreation for advancing the “affairs of the Lord.” Like marriage, ethnic identity is a this-worldly status that Paul re-envisioned according to life in Christ yet does not exclude from consideration in that new life.

A creation/new creation dialectic governs Paul’s reasoning throughout this chapter. The ethics of 5:1-7:40 treat the challenges of life “between two worlds.”⁸³ Paul indicates this frame in 6:14 with the future tense “will raise us” and in his eschatological reasoning of 7:29-31 that includes the phrases, “the appointed time has grown short” and “the present form of this world is passing away.” The challenge of living between two worlds is that the loyalties pertaining to two identities may come into conflict. Paul consistently gives priority to the loyalties of one’s life in Christ without disparaging this-worldly existence. In fact, in 1 Cor 7 Paul shows that one’s loyalty to the resurrected Christ and his people is worked out precisely in the give and take of entanglements with this world. It appears, as many scholars have argued, that these issues have arisen in Corinth because some church members have taken their new spiritual identity to imply status or rights at odds with Paul’s understanding of life in Christ.⁸⁴ Paul considers this a grave misunderstanding of his gospel and seeks to correct their vision. For Paul a proper

⁸³ This is Dunn’s characterization of the ethics of 1 Cor 5-10 in his *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 689-708.

⁸⁴ Martin, *Body*, 69-73, 174-76; Anthony C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 510-26; Gundry-Volf, “New Creation,” 113; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121-74; Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne,” 199-204; Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 131-32; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 269. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the varieties of reconstructions of the Corinthian positions reflected in these works and those they refer to. However, there is broad consensus at a generic level that Paul disagreed with some implications being drawn from the gospel in Corinth and that those misunderstandings correlated with divisions in the church along social status lines.

understanding of their location at the intersection of creation and new creation is to govern their attitude toward this-worldly identities.⁸⁵

Commentators divide 1 Cor 7 into two major parts, vv. 1-24 and vv. 25-40.⁸⁶ Each introduces the topic with *περὶ δε*.⁸⁷ The first section addresses various issues arising from being married; the second section concerns the unmarried and their choices.⁸⁸ The one exception to this schema is v. 8, where Paul mentions the widowed in passing, only to address them more fully in the latter half of the chapter at vv. 32-34, 39-40. Widows and widowers come under both headings because they have been married yet are not currently married. Paul touches on their situation in the first section, but more fully assesses the choices before them in parallel with the other unmarried people in the second half.

This segmenting of the chapter into two also reflects the “already/not yet” eschatological frame of Paul’s reasoning. The first half, which addresses the relatively static life station of marriage (as well as the parallel examples of ethnicity and slave status in vv. 17-24), shows Paul’s commitment to bodily life in this world. When, in the second half of the chapter, Paul addresses the unmarried, normally a relatively temporary status en route to the norm of marriage, who will be faced with more imminent decisions

⁸⁵ Here I differ with Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 278: “I have not, however, unlike many studies of Pauline ethics, given space to outlining specifically how eschatology, the Spirit, and so on, function as motivating bases for ethical exhortation. This is in part because these represent aspects of the mythology rather than the ethics themselves: thus they convey motivations for acting ethically rather than indications as to what *constitutes* ethical action.” As I will show in this section, Paul’s refusal to resolve the dialectic between creation and new creation to either pole correlates with his preservation of this-worldly difference within the eschatological community, as Horrell actually confirms (pp. 129, 147).

⁸⁶ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 267-69; Jeremy Moiser, “A Reassessment of Paul’s View of Marriage with Reference to 1 Cor. 7,” *JSNT* 18 (1983):103-22; Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 130-36; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 565-71; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 126-30.

⁸⁷ Margaret M. Mitchell, “Concerning ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ in 1 Corinthians,” *NovT* 31 (1989): 229-56.

⁸⁸ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 269.

than the married, his counsel is future oriented and underscores the transience of this world. This bipartite schema must not be over-pressed. The same, “already/not yet” perspective on somatic existence pervades the whole chapter. However, noting this structure and Paul’s shifts in tone helps us elucidate his reasoning. Paul provides a unit of general theological justification for his counsels in each section. For the first half, vv. 17-24 justify faithfulness within given social roles. In the second half, vv. 29-31 prioritize the world that is coming.⁸⁹

Paul’s placement of the new family in Christ at the intersection of these two worlds is clear when we compare his concluding summaries from each of these sections of theological justification:

In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God. (v. 24)

For the present form of this world is passing away. (v. 31b)

Because the form of this world has not yet passed away but is, in fact, the venue of their calling into life in Christ, Paul urges the Corinthians to pursue faithfulness to Christ in the context of their worldly condition as spouse, or Jew, or slave (vv. 17-24). On the other hand, because “the appointed time has grown short” (v. 29), their worldly status is not of ultimate concern. Paul will permit neither their denial of the entailments of their worldly identity nor an embracing of worldly status that prevents faithfulness to Christ. What is constant is their identity as “brothers and sisters.” Paul invokes that familial identity in both these summary statements, in v. 24, cited above, and in v. 29, “I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short.” The aspect of their calling that is constant in

⁸⁹ Ibid., 306-07, 334-42; Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 11; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 51. Bartchy’s comment is apt, “And the two, more theoretical sections, 0717-24 and 0729-31, are placed in the argument by Paul in order to stress his view of the basic problem: the relation between status in the world and eschatological Christian existence.” Similarly, Dunn, *I Corinthians*, 57: “Just as earlier the call to ‘remain’ (7.20,24) was intended not to support the *status quo* but to *relativize* the importance of all worldly conditions and relationships, so the *hos me* calls for an inner detachment from the world, a spiritual though not physical distancing from the world.”

view of both creation and new creation is their corporate identity as family no matter what other social roles they occupy. This observation accords well with my conclusions regarding social identity in Galatians that the new creation is manifested in this present world primarily through the character of this new community in Christ.

Paul's reasoning in this way is especially apparent in his treatment of mixed marriages in vv. 12-16. These are instances where only one spouse has converted. In such a case, by Paul's own reasoning in 6:15-17, one might conceive of the sexual unity between the spouses as an unholy violation of the boundary between the holy body of Christ and the sinful world.⁹⁰ Instead, Paul first urges the preservation of the marriage and in that demonstrates his commitment to life in this world and to God's creational ordinance of marriage (vv. 12-13). Furthermore, Paul emphasizes the possibility of the unbeliever's salvation through the marriage (v. 16) showing how that worldly state can serve "the affairs of the Lord" (v. 32). However, if the unbelieving spouse leaves, Paul urges the believer to allow the dissolution of the marriage (v. 15). That option stands in notable contrast to Paul's strictures on a spouse separated from another believer (vv. 10-11) and has more in common with his advice to someone whose spouse has died (v. 39). The rules are different because the spouse is an outsider to God's holy people.⁹¹ Paul ultimately gives precedence to existence in Christ, but does not urge retreat from the world.

His remarkable statements in v. 14 further underscore the strength of his commitment to earthly life and relations, even in a mixed marriage. He writes, "For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy."

⁹⁰ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 300; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 528.

⁹¹ David Daube, "Pauline Contributions to a Pluralistic Culture: Re-Creation and Beyond," in *Jesus and Man's Hope: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary 175th Anniversary Festival on the Gospels* (ed. Donald G. Miller and Dikran Y. Hadidian; Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1971), 233-36.

Much ink has been spilled over possible covenantal understandings of the verse and its implications for soteriology.⁹² But if the focus here is on the proper recognition and negotiation of boundaries, as we are arguing, then this verse may be read as Paul's response to the unique ethical challenges for a believer seeking to be holy while in a mixed marriage. For the purposes of the believing spouse's intimate involvement with the unbelieving spouse and their children, they are holy to that believer.⁹³ In other words, the believer's faithfulness to Christ, far from being compromised by this most intimate of worldly entanglements, may be pursued in holiness within the bonds of such a marriage.

Paul's negotiation of the ambiguities created by mixed marriages also helps to surface again the kinship dynamics of his rhetoric. Joseph Hellerman has demonstrated that, according to ancient Mediterranean kinship values, loyalty to one's family of origin took precedence to one's family by marriage if ever conflict arose between the two clans.⁹⁴ He later notes this value system reflected in the issue of mixed marriages in 1 Cor 7:12-16.⁹⁵ Presuming that the unbelieving partner abandons the marriage over the spouse's conversion, this scenario reflects a believer choosing solidarity with fellow Christians against the wishes of the unbelieving spouse, who remains loyal to his or her original familial and religious allegiances. Paul presumes the faithfulness of the believer to Christ; the only question is the willingness of the non-believer to tolerate that Christian

⁹² See, e.g. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 301 n.27; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 531-33; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 121-23, for a sampling of the debates.

⁹³ Daube, "Pauline Contributions," 236-38. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 528-30, depending on Owen Roger Jones, *The Concept of Holiness* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1961), comes close to this interpretation and certainly affirms that Paul's assurances here are to allay the fears a believer might have about being defiled by intimacy with an unbelieving spouse. Thiselton rightly underscores the pragmatic rationale of influence on the unbelieving spouse and children as what legitimizes faithfulness in the relationship. However, given the context of proper discernment of boundaries and their maintenance, I would equally stress that Paul is here affirming that due to the divine origin of marriage in creation, faithfulness to an unbelieving spouse falls within the realm of holy behavior for a believer apart from evangelistic potential.

⁹⁴ Hellerman, *Church as Family*, ch. 2, esp. 35-39.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-08. Cf. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 122.

reorientation. In this marital conflict over religious loyalty, the believer maintains loyalty to the Christian community just as the non-believer keeps primary loyalty to his or her ancestral religion. The Christian spouse has placed the Christian community in the place of primary loyalty, where one's family of descent normally would stand. Hellerman observes that Paul suddenly reintroduces the familial term ἀδελφός/ἀδελφή for the believer in just this section, four times in vv. 12-15, having not used it since 6:8.⁹⁶ In doing so, Paul evokes the familial identity of those in Christ as primary in comparison to the marriage to the unbelieving spouse. Later, when Paul stresses that remarriage for the widowed must only be in the Lord (v. 39), he plays on another aspect of ethnic reckoning—ethnic endogamy.⁹⁷ Thus, the Christian community has become for believers both their primary familial loyalty and the ethnic group that limits acceptable marriage options. In a status and group oriented culture such as Roman Corinth, such loyalties would be far more costly and pronounced than in modern individualist society.⁹⁸ Paul is promoting substantial kinship and ethnic reorientation while refusing retreat from one's given worldly status.

In 7:25-40, when Paul assesses the decisions facing the unmarried, he is clear that marriage is not a sin (vv. 28, 36-39), but that singleness is preferable because marriage is an aspect of the current world that is passing away and because the union will be a distraction from the things of the Lord which are not passing away (vv. 29-35).⁹⁹ But he

⁹⁶ Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 107.

⁹⁷ Meeks, *First Urban*, 101, commenting on this verse, notes the assumed norm of “group endogamy” and adds, “The phrase ‘a sister as a wife’ in 1 Cor. 9:5 presupposes the norm.”

⁹⁸ For these cultural background issues and comparison with modern Western culture, see DeSilva, *New Testament Culture*, chs. 1-2.

⁹⁹ The presence of this explicit reasoning regarding marital status gives the nod towards interpretations that understand 7:21 as endorsing the opportunity to serve the Lord with one's freedom. Paul sees all the worldly states he mentions as compatible with faithfulness to Christ. But where options present themselves, he prefers freedom from worldly bonds. For an overview of the contested issues in the interpretation of 7:21, consult Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, passim; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 553-59.

reiterates in v. 35 that this advice is not a restriction but is guidance as to the benefits of singleness and he continues such calculus further in vv. 36-39. In this whole section, vv. 25-40, we see Paul's clear distinction between those things that are passing away (v. 31b) and those things that are essential to devotion to the Lord (vv. 34-35). Paul will further exploit this same dichotomy in 1 Cor 13, where that which is essential and ultimately enduring is Christomorphic love.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Paul corrects an apparent spirit-body dichotomy of some Corinthians by reiterating his creation-new creation dichotomy and emphasizing the importance of discerning faithfulness during the time "between the cross and parousia."¹⁰¹

This reckoning, here developed in detail regarding marital status, may now be seen to frame all of Paul's appeals for unity in 1 Corinthians. Paul keeps asserting their identity in Christ—in terms of family and household and slaves of Christ, in terms of temple and building, in terms of covenant Israel, in terms of the body of Christ—to stress the primacy of that new communal identity over worldly identities and statuses that may have divided them, but without denying the reality of their worldly identities. In fact, it is within their worldly social roles that they were called to learn faithfulness to the Lord and unity with each other. Paul does not want to deny or avoid the realities of earthly society, but he wants the Christian community to embody a united manner of life that reflects

¹⁰⁰ Daube, "Pauline Contributions," 226-31, notes that the criterion of what is advantageous for the community governs each of the ethical complexes in 1 Cor 5-14, including 1 Cor 7, noting 7:35, and that it finds its fullest expression in 1 Cor 13.

¹⁰¹ Gundry-Volf, "New Creation," 120, uses this phrase to speak of the overlap between creation and new creation in the Christian community. Through an argument based more on a specific reconstruction of the situation in Corinth than on the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians, Gundry-Volf arrives at a similar conclusion to mine. I find her case largely persuasive. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 524, notes, "Whereas the 'pneumatic Christian existence' (cf. 7:1a) saw everything in black-and-white, Paul avoids any sweeping cultural or countercultural attitude which does other than place 'the things of the Lord' first in a complex variety of real situations. Indeed, remaining is part of the 'not yet' which conflicts with ... the 'eschatological perfectionism' found in Corinth." Cf. Martin, *Body*, 176.

their corporate identity in the midst of the passing forms of this world. Paul's eschatological social vision maps well onto our model of ethnic identity construction where a new group arises from incorporating members of existing groups. As in such ethnic amalgamation, the previous identities persist but are subordinated to the new, primary identity. Paul's echo of the baptismal formula in 7:17-24 invites readers to use his reasoning regarding marriage to negotiate the presence of extant ethnic identities within the new family in Christ, as well.

1 Cor 8:1-11:1: Divisions over Idol Meat

Paul's treatment of divisions over eating meat brings to the fore the social status dimensions of the Corinthian disputes.¹⁰² The more liberal group on this issue has a higher social status and the benefits that accrue to such. The conservative group is socially inferior, with fewer prerogatives in life.¹⁰³ Paul's entire response here is predicated upon the unity of all members as a new, eschatological, covenant people in Christ. Paul presses ethnic reasoning in reiterating their new identity in order to urge proper behavior towards one another in the church. Moreover, twice in this section he anticipates the unity formula of 12:13, much as he did previously in 7:17-24, highlighting that his vision for corporate life in this section also reflects the social arrangements and mythic context that the formula epitomizes. The cross of Christ becomes here not only the source of their identity but also the pattern for their corporate ethos. They are to be the people of the cross both by definition and by comportment. Paul calls on those who have more rights and options to voluntarily abandon them for the sake of the weaker

¹⁰² I follow Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121-44; Meeks, *First Urban*, 69-70, 97-100; Martin, *Body*, 70-76, and others who have built on their insights (e.g. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 609, 644.) that the Corinthian disputes generally, and this one in particular, are not abstract theological controversies but correlate with status and cultural differences that have caused conflict in the mixed church community.

¹⁰³ See Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 105-09, for a careful assessment of arguments for and against this social characterization of the Corinthian perspectives in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 and his cautious endorsement of this view.

members of the family. Paul cements this cruciform ethic as he concludes this section saying, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (11:1).

Paul presents the so-called strong group as justifying their position on the basis of strident monotheism.¹⁰⁴ At 8:4, he recites their slogans, “we know that ‘no idol in the world really exists,’ and that ‘there is no God but one.’” They appear to assert on the basis of this common, Christian knowledge (another Corinthian slogan in 8:1, “all of us possess knowledge”) that dedication of sacrificed meat to an idol is meaningless and powerless because the idol is likewise void of power and presence. Paul begins to alter their framing of the issue by asserting the primacy of love over knowledge (vv. 1-3) and by complicating their strict monotheism with Christology and with a reminder that they share with their weaker siblings one God as their father (v. 6). In that credal verse,

yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist,

the second line parallels and modifies the first by placing Christ as the means by whom everything is from God, the Father. Thus, by correcting their slogan with a more complete Christian confession, Paul brings communal identity into the picture—children of God and common solidarity in Christ.¹⁰⁵

In the argument that follows, he urges concern for the weaker siblings on just these terms. In 8:11-13 Paul focuses the appeal of 1 Cor 8 on family loyalty and deference, as I argued above in examining Paul’s ethnic terms in the epistle (p. 148-49, 160). In 1 Cor 10, Paul’s typological description of the church as Israel (10:1-22) reinforces the Corinthian Christians’ ethno-religious identity as reason for avoiding idolatry and

¹⁰⁴ For support of characterizing the camps as “socially weak/strong” and for the view that Paul differentially presses the “strong” to sacrifice see Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121-43; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 105-09, 142-50; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 156; Martin, *Body*, 75-76; Meeks, *First Urban*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Eriksson, *Traditions*, 156-57, offers this analysis of the function of v. 6 in the argument.

preserving corporate solidarity.¹⁰⁶ In 10:16-17, Paul further explicates corporate participation in Christ in terms of the Lord's Supper to conclude, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body."¹⁰⁷ Their corporate identity, common cult and table fellowship all intersect in the Lord's Supper. As I argued above (pp. 154-58), Paul here fuses the image of the corporate body of Christ with his ethnic identity construction. The presumption of common genealogy, throughout this section, correlates Paul's call for deference and unity with their ethnic identity. They are siblings (ἀδελφός in 8:11, 12, 13; 9:5; 10:1; and ἀδελφή in 9:5) who have God as their father through their participation in Christ (8:6) and who claim the exodus generation as their ancestors (10:1).

Margaret Mitchell has noted the inclusio of πρόσκομμα in 8:9 and ἀπρόσκοποι in 10:32.¹⁰⁸ Both are related to προσκόπτω, which refers literally to striking against or stumbling and figuratively to giving or taking offense.¹⁰⁹ To make the motif apparent in English Mitchell renders it by "offense" in 8:9 and "inoffensive" in 10:32. The motif is further developed in 8:13 by the verb σκανδαλίζω and in 9:12 with ἔγκοπή.¹¹⁰ This is consistent with Paul's previous strong prohibition on eating meat. In 8:13 Paul concluded that section of the argument saying, "Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall." This argument is built on the weaker brother's understanding of the meat eating. Paul characterizes the weaker brother, "Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food

¹⁰⁶ As noted above (pp. 145), I concur with Hays, *Echoes*, 91-102, that the typological midrash continues from 10:1 through 10:22. Cf. Meeks, *First Urban*, 99, supporting the view that the exodus midrash continues through v. 22 and provides the context for interpreting the Lord's Supper of vv. 16-17 in light of the Passover.

¹⁰⁷ This verse anticipates Paul's development of the one body with many members in 1 Cor 12, esp. vv. 12, 14, 20, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 128-30.

¹⁰⁹ BDAG, s.v. προσκόπτω 3a, b; ἀπρόσκοπος.

¹¹⁰ Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 121; L&N 1:308-09.

they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled” (8:7).¹¹¹ Three times he specifies the person with the “weak conscience” as a brother (vv. 7, 10, 12). Two times he refers to the person as “weak” (vv. 9, 11). Thus, even though there may be some who are able to dissociate the meat from the idol, there will always be others who cannot. Since these others are family, loyalty towards whom trumps individual freedom, Paul concludes that it is best never to eat meat. The basis for his conclusion is his presumption of the kinship of believers and the cultural kinship norms, as well as his bias that the strong, especially, ought to accommodate the weak.

Not only does Paul appeal to their common, ethnic identity as reason for unity, but also he demonstrates how they are to maintain that unity in the face of divisions along the lines of worldly social status and identity.¹¹² Their calling into participation in Christ Jesus (1:9) includes participation in his manner of life and death, which entails voluntary sacrifice of privilege in order to enhance unity in the church and the advance of the gospel among groups different than oneself. His own example in 1 Cor 9 emphasizes such an ethos.¹¹³ They are to maintain their new familial unity through deference towards

¹¹¹ For an overview of the complex, intercultural challenges to translating *συνείδησις*, see Malina and Neyrey, *Portraits*, 94; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 640-44; Martin, *Body*, 179-82.

¹¹² Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 607; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 70-75; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 248-49.

¹¹³ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 707-08; Martin, *Slavery*, 132, 135; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 154-55, on the christomorphic cruciformity implicit in 1 Cor 9:19-23. As to whether Paul’s accommodation is for the sake of church unity or for missional aims Hays, *First Corinthians*, 155, aptly notes, “We should remember that in 1:18 Paul referred to himself and other members of the believing community as those “who *are being saved*.” For Paul, conversion is a process of having one’s life reshaped in the likeness of Christ, and salvation is the eschatological end for which we hope” (italics original). Thus, Paul’s concern to live so as to “save” (9:22d; 10:33) or “gain” (9:20-22b) as many as possible applies both to believers and unbelievers. This coincidence of preserving corporate unity and of winning new converts appears again in the other echo of the baptism formula in 10:31-33. If we note with Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 793-94, that *δόξα* (“glory”) entails a public dimension of reputation or status that Paul now measures against the message of the cross as the proper Christian standard of honor and glory (e.g. 1 Cor 1:18-31; 2:7, 8), then doing all things for God’s glory (v. 31) is

their weaker siblings. Throughout his engagement with this issue of idol meat, Paul promotes this ethos of self-sacrificial love for the sake of unity. The exemplary excursus in 1 Cor 9 shows that cruciform love is Paul's primary answer to the dispute over meat.¹¹⁴ He carefully develops and defends his right to material support from the Corinthians through various proofs (vv. 1-14), only to disclaim that right for the sake of the gospel (vv. 15-18). Paul describes in varied but parallel terms the primary identity he maintains while molding himself so as not to "put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" (9:12e). His self-descriptions are "a slave to all" (v. 19), "under Christ's law" (v. 21), "weak" (v. 22, cf. 4:10). Then, in vv. 19-23, he generalizes the principle beyond the issue of receiving material support from the churches to a broader principle of self-sacrifice for the sake of the gospel's progress among all kinds of people, concluding in v. 23, πάντα δὲ ποιῶ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἵνα συγκοινωνῶς αὐτοῦ γένωμαι.¹¹⁵ These self-characterizations find their coherence as imitation of the cross of Christ, which seems to be Paul's vision of what ought to characterize this new people called into joint participation in God's son, the Lord Jesus Christ (1:9). This participation in the gospel anticipates Paul's call in 11:1 to imitate him as he imitates Christ in that his life has become a model of the gospel of the cross.

Paul appears to press the ethical implications of the cross especially upon those in Corinth with higher status and greater social capital.¹¹⁶ Scholars have observed that in

equivalent to the following statements in vv. 32-33 to cause no offense and to seek the salvation of all.

¹¹⁴ Here I follow Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 56, 130-38, 243-50; Martin, *Body*, 52; Martin, *Slavery*, 68-80; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 146-49; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 607-12, 661-63, 698-99; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 146-47, 152, 157, in viewing 1 Cor 9 as a rhetorically integrated example supporting the argument of 1 Cor 8-10.

¹¹⁵ The NRSV's "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings" obscures that the sharing is a joint participation in the gospel, or perhaps even in Christ. In either case, it is an echo of 1 Cor 1:9, where Paul has so characterized the goal of their calling into Christ; cf. pp. 155-56, above; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 707.

¹¹⁶ Paul spends 1 Cor 8 citing and correcting the position of the "strong." His *exemplum* in 1 Cor 9 is built around giving up his rights and freedom. In the summary unit of 1 Cor

8:1-11:1 Paul primarily engages the position of the strong.¹¹⁷ It is they who are called to modify their social and eating habits, not the weak. It is for the sake of the socially weak that the socially strong are to limit themselves. The social costs of this self-limitation may have been significant. Social historians concur that society in Roman Corinth was built on a hierarchical network of patron-client relationships and groupings.¹¹⁸ This social matrix was maintained in part by meals, celebrations, and reciprocal hospitality.¹¹⁹ Curbing one's license for meat consumption was a public statement of loyalty to and solidarity with one's brothers and sisters in Christ over one's civic social network. And such a commitment to the church may have entailed substantial social and financial costs.¹²⁰ Here we see Paul expecting the believers to prioritize the unity and well being of the church over other important social networks. In this, they are to demonstrate commitment to their fellow believers in ways reserved solely for ancient family members.¹²¹

9:19-23, he pairs freedom with enslavement (v. 19), Jews and those under the law with those without the law (vv. 20-21), and then concludes asserting that he becomes weak (v. 22) but does not pair it with becoming strong. This intimates that his main point is to call the strong to become weak for the sake of the weak. This view is supported by Hays, *First Corinthians*, 154, who, along with Theissen, *Social Setting*, 125, notes that Paul did not merely become "as the weak" (the ὡς that is applied to the other labels is missing in v. 22 regarding the "weak") but he became weak (cf. 1 Cor 4:10). Cf. Martin, *Slavery*, 118-24. The restrictions and warnings of 1 Cor 10 apply primarily to the strong who had more social obligations involving meals with meat.

¹¹⁷ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 137-38; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 142-50; Martin, *Slavery*, 121-24, 144; Meeks, *First Urban*, 98-99. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 107-113, attempts in vain to dismiss Theissen's analysis of the Corinthian dispute according to status differential within the church. Meggitt is forced to discount the connection between "the weak" in 8:7, 11, 12 and Paul's thematization of "the weak" in 9:22, where he is clearly evoking social status. Cf. Theissen, "Social Conflicts," 381-89, for his rebuttal to Meggitt's dismissal of economic factors in 1 Cor 8-10.

¹¹⁸ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*; Chow, *Patronage*; Winter, *After Paul*, 184-94.

¹¹⁹ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 129-30.

¹²⁰ Meeks, *First Urban*, 69; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 105, 108-09; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 129-32.

¹²¹ Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 35-51.

Twice in this section, Paul anticipates the baptismal formula of 12:13 showing that this ethos of familial unity, deference and self-sacrificial love is the social praxis that the formula supports. The reintroduction of ethnic and slave/free status in 9:19-20 to parallel the topic at hand, namely the weak (v. 22), recalls 7:17-24 where Paul used the same examples to support his case regarding marriage.¹²² In both places the example demonstrates that the perspective Paul is arguing applies equally well to other sources of social division.¹²³ Then in 10:32-33 Paul reprises 9:19-23 in brief, mentioning only the ethnic categories to summarize his case for loving service in the cause of concord and the advance of the gospel.¹²⁴ These echoes of the baptismal formula cited in 12:13 fill out for us Paul's vision of what the formula implied. Here in 1 Cor 9:19-23 and 10:32-33 the ethnic example of Jew/Gentile (ἄνομος in 9:21; Ἕλλην in 10:32) buttresses Paul's call to maintain unity in diversity through forsaking one's rights.¹²⁵ In short, Paul presumes social diversity in the church, be it ethnic, cultural, or class (9:19-23) and he insists that the gospel requires unity maintained by the sacrificial love of those with greater social privilege. According to Paul, the cross brings them all together and the cross will keep them together.

1 Cor 11:2-14:40: Divisions in Worship

This section of 1 Corinthians coheres around issues arising from the dynamics of the gathered worshipping community and forms a unified section that is well integrated into

¹²² Eriksson, *Traditions*, 127-34.

¹²³ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 133, comments, "In 9:19-23 Paul shows how this kind of behavior extends into social relations, which is the application he wishes the Corinthians to make."

¹²⁴ Eriksson, *Traditions*, 153.

¹²⁵ Attempts to correlate the conflicts in Corinth to a Jew/Greek division in the community have largely been abandoned. One reason to leave off such simplistic mirror-readings of 1 Corinthians is that these categories seem to have been introduced through the influence of the baptismal formula and primarily as a traditional instance parallel to their own internal differences.

the epistle's overall argument against factionalism.¹²⁶ Boundary issues are less prominent as Paul focuses primarily on how members relate one to another within the church. However, even apart from the challenges directly arising from interaction with the world, such as idol meat and prostitution, internal worship practices appear to have been adversely affected by members' social status outside the church. Paul's strategy throughout is to call them to the unity entailed in their identity as the body of Christ and to the corporate ethos commensurate with that identity. First Corinthians 12 contains Paul's most extended treatment of their identity as Christ's body as well as his explicit citation of the baptismal formula that is the subject of this thesis (12:13). Therefore, this examination will focus primarily on 1 Cor 12 with reference to the rest of the unit in which it occurs (11:2-14:40) as needed to set the appropriate context.

Divisions Arising from Social Status Conflicts

The societal forces adversely affecting ecclesial harmony are explicit in the first two issues Paul addresses, gender (11:2-16) and wealth (11:17-34). This observation and the rhetorical unity of 1 Cor 11-14 prompted Meeks to inquire as to whether some of the same status issues analyzed by Theissen in 1 Cor 1-11 might also be at play in 1 Cor 12-15.¹²⁷ Dale Martin has successfully confirmed Meeks' intuition by demonstrating that ecstatic tongues in religious settings and incredulity towards resurrected corpses both correlate with elite sensibilities in Greco-Roman society.¹²⁸ In particular, it appears that

¹²⁶ Eriksson, *Traditions*, 197-231; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 491; Furnish, *First Corinthians*, 76; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 181-82; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 157-75, 258-83; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 799, 1026-30, 1132, 1146-168.

¹²⁷ Meeks, *First Urban*, 121-22; but Meeks concludes, however, "We are left then with more suspicions than positive evidence for [such] interactions... ."

¹²⁸ Martin, *Body*, 87-136; Dale B. Martin, "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators," *JAAR* 59 (1991): 547-89, correlates tongues and views of resurrection with status concerns in ancient Corinth. Martin, *Body*, 88, comments, "In most previous research on 1 Corinthians ... scholars have not placed glossolalia among the theological issues that divide the Corinthian church along status lines." Cf. Allen Rhea Hunt, *The Inspired Body: Paul, the Corinthians, and Divine Inspiration* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996).

esteem for public manifestation of certain spiritual capacities, especially speaking in tongues (N.B. these three chapters contain 21 of the 50 NT occurrences of γλῶσσα), has led to the honoring of some members as πνευματικοί and the implicit shaming of others (e.g. 12:22-26). Thus, Paul's treatment of worship comportment in 1 Cor 12-14 presses unity upon a collection of people who are fractured according to valuations derived from their worldly statuses and culture, just as the worldly identities of male and female and rich and poor intersected ecclesial life in 1 Cor 11:2-34.¹²⁹

Paul's citation of the baptismal unity formula in 12:13 highlights the fact that Paul's treatment of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12-14 is a proxy battle over divisions based on social status. For his citation of the formula to support his case, the differences in gifts must somehow be analogous to the differences between Jew and Greek, slave and free. Whereas the body metaphor could be interpreted simply as emphasizing unity in diversity or diversity in unity, the formula evokes social roles and status differential. Juxtaposing the formula and the body metaphor highlights that unequal extra-ecclesial statuses have been incorporated into a new communal identity and solidarity. Furthermore, it suggests that these differences in spiritual capacities among the Corinthians may, in fact, reflect social status differences, as Martin has now shown to be case. Paul develops the body

¹²⁹ Many consider that 11:2-16 ought to be regarded as Paul's correction of improper implications some Corinthians had drawn from the male/female pair in the baptismal formula. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 182-84; Thiselton, "Eschatology," 521; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 490; Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 122-28; Stendahl, *Bible and the Role of Women*, 35; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 218-36, esp. 235-36; Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne," 200-03; Gundry-Volf, "Gender and Creation," 160-61, 169-71. Gundry-Volf, "Gender and Creation," represents a growing consensus regarding how Paul corrects them and reinterprets that tradition. Her approach is similar to how she interprets 1 Cor 7 in her article, Gundry-Volf, "Corinthian Ascetics," that I largely followed above. Namely, Paul corrects their overly enthusiastic spiritualization by insisting on the persistence of bodily and cultural particularity and difference among those "on whom the ends of the ages have come" (10:11). Cf. Thiselton, "Eschatology," 521.

metaphor to conclude, “But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another” (12:24b-25). This focus on status differential between the members echoes the insider/outsider dynamic encoded in the baptismal formula.

Thus, just as Paul’s previous echoes of the social pairs in the formula (7:17-24; 9:19-23; 10:31-33) served his construction of unity and identity across differences in social status, so here, when he finally cites the formula explicitly, it anchors his ethnic rhetoric of unity. Alongside this progression of allusions to the baptismal formula, Paul also has been developing the body as a metaphor for their unity (6:13-20; 10:16-17; 11:23-34; see my discussion of the body metaphor above, pp. 149-58). These two trajectories converge in 1 Cor 12, where Paul encases his explicit citation of the baptismal formula within his classic, extended treatment of the body metaphor, making this chapter a consummation of the social vision Paul has been urging all along. The climactic function of this passage in Paul’s argument against factionalism is further confirmed by its recapitulation of key terms from Paul’s inauguration of this main topic in 1:10-13 – *σχίσμα* (1:10; 12:25) and baptism as the basis for unity (1:13; 12:13).¹³⁰

Ethnic Concord and the Body of Christ

In urging unity upon the worshiping congregations in Corinth, Paul transposes their concern for “spirituality” and the status it conferred into a vision of their corporate identity as the body of Christ.¹³¹ By immediately tying spiritual status to the Spirit of God

¹³⁰ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 993, 998; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 216; Martin, *Body*, 39; Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 86 n.109, 254.

¹³¹ Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν (12:1) could refer either to “spiritual people” or “spiritual things,” presumably pneumatic enablement. In either case, the term appears to have come from the Corinthians and to be the basis of some strife in the church. Paul seems to prefer the term *χάρισμα* to which he deftly switches in this passage from v. 4 onwards. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 552-60, esp. 555 n.127; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 201-02;

and the confession, “Jesus is Lord” (12:3), Paul introduces Christology to his treatment and paves the way for v. 13 where he shifts from discussing the Spirit to elaborating the body metaphor as the body of Christ. The baptismal formula in 12:13 serves as Paul’s vehicle for this shift from πνεῦμα to σῶμα.¹³² Verse 13 appears to be a bit of an intrusion in that vv. 12, 14 could be read together more smoothly without it interrupting, and the whole of vv. 12-26 would read perfectly well as an extended metaphor of the social body. But by citing this tradition, he authorizes his conflation of life in the Spirit with life in the body of Christ and characterizes that life as the social unification of members from divergent social backgrounds.

We have seen above (pp. 150-52) that the body metaphor was a commonplace for urging both political and familial concord. Paul’s address to the Corinthians as ἀδελφοί in 12:1 conforms this instance to the familial variety and continues the confluence between the body motif and Paul’s ethnic rhetoric. Thus, Paul has placed his citation of the baptismal formula in his argument in such a way that it supports his construal of the church as a new family that unites members from various social backgrounds. This conclusion is entirely in keeping with Paul’s previous use of the body motif and ethnic rhetoric in 1 Corinthians.

Furthermore, vv. 12d-13 specify the body as Christ’s and not a generic body. This construal of the stock metaphor of the social body as the body of Christ builds on Paul’s previous development of the body motif in 1 Corinthians (10:16-17; 11:17-34) and helps account for the surprising social inversions Paul derives from the body metaphor. When Paul concludes, “God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member” (v. 24), he has surpassed a vision of common honor and communal solidarity. He has, rather, called for status inversion in keeping with the social vision he expressed at

Martin, *Body*, 263 n.68; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 910; cf. 1 Cor 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31.

¹³² Eriksson, *Traditions*, 212: “The baptismal reunification formula functions as the vehicle to bring the body metaphor into the discussion.”

the beginning of the letter, “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are” (1:27-28).¹³³ This deference to members of lower status expresses well what Paul recommended in caring for weaker members in the matter of food that had been offered to idols (8:7-13) and how Paul concluded his *exemplum* (9:1-23), “To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (v. 22). As I noted above regarding Paul’s negotiation of divisions over meat consumption in 1 Cor 8-10, their familial bond is maintained by an ethos patterned on Christ’s sacrificial death for them.

That same cruciform ethic also governs Paul’s reply to divisions based on wealth in their meal celebrations that immediately precedes his treatment of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12. That passage also gives shape to the body metaphor he is about to expound in 1 Cor 12. The problem Paul addresses in 11:17-34 clearly is a division between relatively richer and poorer members in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (vv. 18, 21-22c).¹³⁴ Paul finds such a situation utterly unacceptable and liable to the Lord’s judgment (vv. 17, 20, 22def, 27-33). He redresses them on the basis of their common identity expressed in the very ritual they are profaning, the Lord’s Supper mentioned previously in 10:16-17 and

¹³³ Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 181-82, 195-96; Martin, "Tongues," 567-69.

¹³⁴ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 96, 106, 145-74; Winter, *After Paul*, 142-58; Meeks, *First Urban*, 67-69; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 95, 102-05. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 118-122, 189-193, is correct to challenge absolute characterizations of this division as being between rich and poor on the grounds that the term “rich” is misleading with respect to the economic realities of these believers. However, his attempt to deny any economic dimension to this conflict, however relative, fails. His argument depends on his view that already in Paul’s time the eucharistic worship gathering did not include a meal but only a symbolic ritual with one loaf and one cup. Oddly, he demotes support for this idiosyncratic view to an appendix. Cf. Theissen, “Social Conflicts,” 377-81, for further rebuttal to Meggitt’s case.

developed further here.¹³⁵ Paul explains that the Lord's Supper is an enacted proclamation that the Lord's death has created a new covenant community. The cup interprets Jesus' death as a new covenant that creates a new people, who, in turn, are defined by the bread as Christ's body.¹³⁶

The equal hospitality extended to all members expresses the purpose of Christ's death, namely to bring together disparate people into a new community characterized by unity and intimacy. Such counter-cultural table fellowship in ancient Corinth would have communicated a particular social bond corresponding to Paul's presentation of them as siblings in v. 33.¹³⁷ Paul's indictment here falls on the wealthier members of the congregation who are not treating their poorer siblings in Christ as family. It is they, once again, who must especially alter their behavior in order to embrace their poorer brethren and strengthen unity in the church. Paul locates his recapitulation of the Lord's Supper tradition (vv. 23-26) in the midst of his criticism of the Corinthian behavior (vv. 17-22 and 27-34) so as to contrast their activity with that demanded by the celebration, properly understood. Paul here urges that the church members treat one another as siblings, not making distinctions between themselves, as they celebrate their new, corporate identity in Christ. The church is to behave as an alternative community to the surrounding society, upending the status hierarchies of greater society as it welcomes people from walks of life.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Mitchell, *Reconciliation*, 265 n.442, comments that Paul's argument in 11:27-34 "works rhetorically because in 10:16-17 Paul laid down the premises which also function in this later argument." I add only that Paul began that process in 6:15-17.

¹³⁶ Eriksson, *Traditions*, 186: "These references to the sacrificial death of the Lord interprets [sic] that death as of benefit 'for us,' and the benefits are transferred to the believers through the mediating concept of the new covenant."

¹³⁷ Dennis E. Smith, "Meal Customs (Greco-Roman)," *ABD* 4:650-53; idem, "Table Fellowship," *ABD* 6:302-04; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 180-82; Hellerman, *Church as Family*, 8; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 102-05; MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 106-20; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 129, 153-63.

¹³⁸ See Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 103, 126-31, 150-57, for a convincing correction to Theissen's conclusion that Paul's view here is essentially socially conservative. For

Paul concludes his rebuke of their meal comportment by appealing to them as siblings, “So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another” (11:33), and then two verses later repeats that invocation as he changes his focus to spiritual gifts, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters” The practice under review has changed but for Paul the main topic is still the same, namely, how they are to express their familial identity in their corporate ethos. Paul’s elaboration of the body metaphor in 1 Cor 12 continues the emphasis on preserving their communal solidarity through a cruciform praxis that favors the least among them. In terms of the baptismal unity formula, the privileged insider (Jew, free) has primary responsibility to receive the socially marginalized member (Greek, slave) into the family in a way that especially honors them as full siblings.

Summary

This chapter has argued that in order to counter factionalism in his Corinthian congregations, Paul promoted their new corporate identity as kin in Christ and an ethos of sacrificial love for one another as fitting for that identity. Since the divisions were fueled by differences in the social backgrounds of church members and their extra-ecclesial attachments, Paul found the baptismal unity formula to be an apt authority for urging unity upon divided social identities. The traditional pairings, Jew versus Greek and slave versus free, were extended by Paul to include the various social identities present in the Corinthian conflicts, such as weak versus strong and rich versus poor. His allusions to the unity formula in 1 Cor 7:17-24; 9:19-23; 10:32, as well as his citation of it in 12:13, demonstrate its applicability to the social conflicts addressed in each of those sections.

My survey of Paul’s chief images for church unity in 1 Corinthians has highlighted how he integrates each of them with his ethnic identity construction. Paul’s construal of

instance, the welcome of slaves as equals and intimates in the meal would have been remarkable.

them genealogically and as siblings is his most pervasive vision for social unity, and this ethnic vision has been shown to be capable of enfolding each of his other images. I highlighted how Paul combines the common *topos* of the body for familial concord between brothers with the eucharistic tradition of the body of Christ to produce a unique familial vision of unity based on *imitatio Christi*. Moreover, Paul's ethnic vision, his image of them as a temple and his adoption of the term ἐκκλησία seem to derive from his construal of the church as a redefined Israel on the basis of their participation in Christ. Thus, for Paul the symbolic context for understanding the baptismal unity formula is God's forging of a new ethnic group in Christ who claim as their own the history and Scriptures of Israel as interpreted through the story of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. One way in which Israel is redefined through Christ is seen in Paul's neglect of concern for an ethnic homeland even as he claims Israel's genealogical identity for his churches. Rather than identify the believers with Judea and Jerusalem, Paul configures them as the new, eschatological temple and locates their home beyond death as inheriting the kingdom of God in resurrection (15:50-57) when God the Father will be all in all (15:24-28). In this sense, their new ethnic identity constitutes a diaspora identity, as I have been urging throughout this thesis. Their ethnic mandate in this present world focuses not on territory but on communal solidarity in Corinth and "with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2).

By embedding the baptismal unity formula within his development of the body metaphor in 1 Cor 12, Paul shows that this formula does not envision uniformity. Rather, the body metaphor endorses the nurturing of both family-like unity and distinct identities within the community. What it rejects is the social exclusion implicit in the binary pairs, Jew versus Greek and slave versus free, as Paul asserts, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable . . ." (vv. 21-22). Moreover, Paul coforms the body metaphor to his Christologically grounded vision

of sacrificial love as the way of life appropriate for nurturing this communal life when he says,

the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another (vv. 22b-25).

Since Paul has implicated both the image of the body and the terms of the baptismal formula in each of the major ethical segments of the letter I have analyzed above, his engagement with concrete social dynamics in each of those sections provides us with further elaboration of how he envisioned the social implications of 1 Cor 12:13. He has addressed sexuality and gender (1 Cor 5-7; 11:2-16), slave and free statuses (1 Cor 7:21-23; 9:19), Jewish and non-Jewish identities (1 Cor 7:18-19; 9:20-21), food sensibilities (1 Cor 8-10), economic difference (1 Cor 11:17-34).¹³⁹ In terms of the ethnic theory introduced above in Chapter Two and the socio-ethical questions introduced there (p. 79), we have seen Paul adjudicate both violations of the indices of the Corinthians' new identity in Christ and conflicts between previous identities now incorporated into the Christian community. Paul's ethnic logic defends four indices as definitive of their Christian identity: bans on sexual immorality and idolatry and embrace of communal solidarity and Christ-like sacrificial service. Each of these has been grounded in their identity as the body of Christ and their entry into the story and identity of Israel via Christ. Paul asserts his most strident judgments against those who would violate these norms of life in Christ (1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:6-10, 15-19; 10:7-10, 14, 21; 11:27-33). It appears, then, that the other identities and behaviors addressed are neither excluded nor

¹³⁹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 126 n. 85 "But the ways in which Paul proceeds elsewhere to deal with relations between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, gives some indication of what he (for better or worse) took to be the social implications of the declaration."

identified with life in Christ. Thus, Paul's treatment of them negotiates the middle ground of how differences are preserved and unity maintained in the Christian community.

It is with regard to these ambiguous cases that Paul has invoked the terms of the baptismal formula. In 1 Cor 7:17-24, Paul echoes the formula to ground his nuanced treatment of marriage. Similarly, 1 Cor 9:19-23 and 10:32 depend on the formula to navigate conflicts over food scruples. In the latter case, Paul disallows either perspective on meat to become enshrined as an index of Christian identity. He theologically endorses the position of those who freely eat meat from any origin (1 Cor 8:4-8; 10:25-30) while refusing to allow their more liberal position to become normative (8:9-13; 10:28, 31-33). Paul proceeds, then, to navigate this situation according to three of the four primary indices of Christian life outlined above. He affirms avoidance of idolatry, preservation of social unity, especially in terms of table fellowship, and cruciform sacrifice for one another as the standards for discerning proper behavior. Avoidance of sexual immorality does not seem to have a role in Paul's calculus here. He confirms the clear boundary line that believers must not participate in cultic worship of idols (1 Cor 10:6-13, 18-22), yet allows for greater latitude as to consuming meat that has been sacrificed to idols apart from the believers' participation. However, since social unity is a foundational norm, then sacrifice of one's rights for the sake of 'weaker' members whose sensibilities can not embrace such liberty becomes the Christian index that defines the solution—believers must eat together in accordance with the needs of their weakest members. As we have seen above, this conclusion is the point of Paul's excursus in 1 Cor 9.

We cannot ascertain if the weak in this instance are Jews who were unable to get accustomed to eating previously proscribed meat (as seems more clearly to be the case in Rom 14-15).¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the contrast between this solution and Paul's position in Gal 2:11-14 is striking. Yet noting two key differences sheds light on some easily missed

¹⁴⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 183-84.

correspondences. First, in the Antioch incident recounted in Gal 2:11-21, Paul presents the more restrictive Jewish group as imposing their dietary norms and, thus, inscribing Jewish norms as Christian norms. Second, in Antioch this Jewish Christian group enforced their view by dividing the community's table fellowship, thus violating Paul's fundamental commitment to social unity in Christ. In Corinth, on the other hand, the community does not appear to have yet become segregated over this issue even as they debate it because neither camp has yet enacted their view as a defining Christian boundary. In both Corinth and Galatia Paul calls for self-sacrificial love patterned on Christ's sacrifice as the solution with the preservation of familial unity as the goal. In Galatians, Gal 2:20 is Paul's christological basis for choosing to identify with "Gentile sinners" (v. 15), just as in 1 Cor 9:19-23, 1 Cor 11:1 christologically underwrites Paul's call for the strong to become weak in order to preserve church unity in Corinth. First Corinthians helpfully counter-balances Paul's rhetoric in Gal because it shows how he strives to accommodate the needs of various extra-ecclesial identities once their concerns have been separated from identity in Christ and it is clear that social solidarity is non-negotiable.

Paul's strategy of creating space for members of divergent social practices while preserving social solidarity in Christ can also be seen in 1 Cor 7 where Paul treats marital status. Though Paul has stronger sympathies with those who pursue singleness and celibacy, he resists establishing that lifestyle as a Christian norm. Quite to the contrary, he corrects those who seem to have desisted from conjugal relations in marriage in order to be more spiritual. According to Paul, their continuing life in Christ embraces and endorses their married status, even in the case of having a non-Christian spouse. Paul navigates this ethical complex of marriage and sex in such a way as to affirm marriage, sexuality, celibacy and singleness as all being faithful options in the Christian community. The Christian boundary he does preserve is that against illicit sexual unions, emphasized in 1 Cor 5-6. His binary model implicit throughout 1 Cor 7 is celibacy in

singleness and sexual union in marriage. Here again, Paul has made the case for embracing in Christ people of diverse social statuses (married and single) and ethical commitments (vow of celibacy or pursuit of marriage), none of which are erased in Christ.

Paul mentions the social identities of the baptismal formula (7:17-24) as paradigmatic for his detailed case regarding marriage. He does not here develop what sorts of concrete arrangements he might suggest for preserving unity in the diversity of circumcised and uncircumcised or slave and free. And as we have seen from comparing his treatment of table fellowship in Gal 2 and 1 Cor 8-10, local social dynamics affect specific solutions within the broad parameters of his fundamental indices of Christian identity. Given those parameters it would appear that Paul envisions the inclusion of members who are slave and free and circumcised and uncircumcised, together with the preservation of those distinct identities. Verses 17 and 24 bookend this unit of text and assert just this vision: “. . . let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches” (v. 17) and “In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God” (v. 24).

Yet this general conclusion receives variations appropriate to particulars raised by each status. In other words, Paul does not baptize certain social arrangements as normative for the churches so much as he models here a mode of socio-ethical reasoning rooted in his mythic vision for the church. Slavery does receive a certain negative value judgment inasmuch Paul urges slaves to take advantage of freedom if given the chance. Similarly, he articulates his preference for celibacy and singleness. Yet he fully expects both married and enslaved members to have full sibling status in Christ. In contrast to this, Paul gives no hint of preference between the circumcised and uncircumcised statuses. All these options are equally suitable to life in Christ and none must become normative in the church or lead to the diminution of others. Yet Paul’s reasoning varies

slightly for each one depending on how its particular entailments interact with the norms of life in Christ.

In 7:29-31, however, Paul's eschatological vision fundamentally relativizes all extra-ecclesial social identities within the church.

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (vv. 29-31)

Yet the previous twenty-eight verses of 1 Cor 7 caution against pressing these implications too far. Verses 29-31 could be taken as support for those Paul has just corrected for their abstention from marital sexual relations, or they could be taken as support for divorcing an unbelieving spouse, an option Paul has likewise closed off. Given that in 1 Corinthians "the affairs of the Lord" (vv. 32, 34) consistently have to do with building up the church in unity and mutual love, it would seem safe to read these verses as Paul's exhortation not to allow on-going social entanglements to disrupt pursuit of Christian community as one's primary, familial solidarity. This reading is confirmed by Paul's assertions in 1 Cor 9:19-23, 10:32-33 where he invokes the dichotomies from the baptismal unity formula in order to stress the priority of his apostolic calling over holding tightly to any pre-Christian identity. Yet he makes such personal sacrifices precisely to serve Jews and Greeks, slaves and free in their particularity and social embeddedness. Inasmuch as one's previous identities can be dynamically incorporated into that diverse family in Christ, Paul encourages the cultivation of each member's distinctive identity and contribution.

Paul does relativize previous identities for those who become Christians. However, that relativization is not in the pursuit of an ideal uniformity as Boyarin fears, it is, rather, merely the function of Paul's prioritization of the new community in Christ when the

indices and loyalties of previous identities would conflict with Christian solidarity. Certainly, when such loyalties conflict, fellow members of the previous identity will find fault. Yet Paul seems able to answer such complaints by affirming that believers are to serve one another in maintaining such previous identities and relationships to the full extent enabled by mutual honoring and sacrificial love. Paul's worked examples show once again that what Paul opposes by means of the baptismal unity formula is the exclusion and status differential implicit in the opposed pairs not the particularity or differences of those identities *per se*.

Chapter Five: Col 3:11 and the New Humanity

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! (Col 3:11)

Introduction

The unity formula in Col 3:11 literarily and theologically anchors the unit of exhortation in which it occurs (3:1-17). The ethics promoted there, in turn, constitute the positive vision of life in Christ towards which Paul's letter aims. Scholarly concern to identify the threat Paul attacks in Colossians has resulted in a relative abundance of reconstructions of what Paul opposes and a paucity of descriptions of the life to which he urges the believers.¹ In other words, the warnings (2:8, 16, 18) in the polemical section of Colossians (2:8-23) that discredit ways of life not according to Christ, find their positive complement in the imperatives of 3:1-4:6.² Thus, the formula in 3:11 may be viewed as the center of the vision for which the entire epistle advocates; namely, that the Colossians be united in their new identity and ethos, both of which Paul derives from the gospel of Christ.³

The grand themes of Colossians that characterize the first half of the epistle—its all-inclusive eschatological vision, the hymn to the cosmic Christ (1:15-20) and the danger

¹ Wayne A. Meeks, "In One Body: The Unity of Humankind in Colossians and Ephesians," in *God's Christ and His People* (ed. Jacob Jervell et al.; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 210, comments, ". . . for fascination with 'the errorists in Colossae' has so preoccupied scholarly discussion of this letter that we are in danger of overlooking the general shape and evident purpose of the writing."

² Below I will treat the relationship between 3:1-17, the primary context of the unity formula, and the broader hortatory section (3:1-4:6) in which it appears.

³ Wayne A. Meeks, "'To Walk Worthily of the Lord': Moral Formation in the Pauline School Exemplified by the Letter to Colossians," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology* (ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 39: "If the writer is concerned with correcting the beliefs of the Colossian Christians, it is not for the sake of beliefs as such, but in order to shape the audience's moral dispositions and behavior. The contents of the rest of the letter confirm this judgment; it is predominantly a letter of moral advice, which the ancient rhetorical classifiers would call 'parenetic.'"

of the alternate “philosophy”—land firmly in the mundane lives of the Colossian Christians in the hortatory section, 3:1-4:6. The general exhortation in 2:6, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live [περιπατέω] your lives in him,” picks up the goal of Paul’s prayer from 1:10, “so that you may lead lives [περιπατέω] worthy of the Lord,” and anticipates the specific imperatives of 3:1-4:6. The metaphor of walking (περιπατέω) in a way of life connects Paul’s purpose statements in the first half of the letter (1:10; 2:6) with his characterization of that way of life in the latter half of the epistle (3:7; 4:5).⁴ By opening the hortatory section, “Since, therefore, you were raised with Christ . . .”,⁵ Paul underscores that the following ethical vision is the goal towards which the earlier christological concerns have been driving.⁶

Paul’s appeals in 3:1-4:6 are grounded in the Colossians’ new identity and status in Christ. Such indicative-imperative logic is already apparent in his summary exhortations at 2:6 and 3:1-4. He consistently urges them to live according to the transformed identity

⁴ Eduard Lohse, *Colossians*, 93 n.7, in commenting on how the *topos* of walking coordinates 2:6 with 1:10, projects this logic forward to the rest of the letter: “Thus, Christology and ethics are intimately conjoined. The second part of the letter (3:1-4:6) follows upon the first part (1:9-2:23) as its necessary consequence.” Cf. Meeks, “To Walk Worthily of the Lord,” 38-39, 47-48. Meeks, “One Body,” 209-10, argues that “walking worthily” is the goal of this parenetic letter. Regarding the Jewish background of the ethical metaphor of walking, see Dunn, *Colossians*, 71; Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), 22.

⁵ This translation is the modification of the NIV by O’Brien, *Colossians*, 159. Major translations either translate εἰ with “if,” failing to catch the reality implied by this conditional or weaken the force of οὖν at this critical juncture in Paul’s argument by translating it “then,” or both.

⁶ Dunn, *Colossians*, 132; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 157-58; Lohse, *Colossians*, 157-58. David M. Hay, *Colossians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 115, following the NRSV, comments, “The ‘so’ at the beginning of verse 1 does not refer to any single affirmation in the previous lines of the letter, but rather signifies that in general the definition of Christian responsibility to come is based on the theological affirmations of the first two chapters.” This presumed resurrected status depends on and evokes Paul’s preceding affirmations of the believers sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection (2:12-13, 20), as well as the earlier hymnic celebration of their participation in Christ’s elevated status as “the head of the body, the church . . . the first-born from the dead” (1:18). Cf. Allan R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians* (JSNTSup 226; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 149-50.

granted them in the gospel (c.f. 3:12, 17, 23; 4:5-6). Identity in Christ warrants Paul's ethical vision. Furthermore, that new identity is configured corporately, as the social emphasis of Paul's exhortations shows. The vice and virtue lists in vv. 5-9 and vv. 12-15, respectively, feature interpersonal dynamics and characterize the church's new life in terms of communal harmony and solidarity.⁷ Between these catalogues of what the Colossian believers are to "take off" (vv. 5-9) and "put on" (vv. 12-15), vv. 10-11 encapsulate Paul's vision for their new life in Christ, presenting them as a re-created, reconciled humanity.⁸ This vision of the new humanity in Christ anchors the parenetic section surrounding it and is the indicative basis for Paul's imperatives.⁹

Only in 3:12 does Paul finally specify the desired ethos toward which his argument has been building. He has exhorted against things that are not according to Christ (2:8, 16-23) and has given general exhortation to walk worthily of the Lord (1:10, 23; 2:6; 3:1-2, 10) but has not characterized the manner of life that is according to Christ. The unity formula in 3:11 provides the basis for the characteristics elaborated in 3:12, which

⁷ Roy Yates, "The Christian Way of Life: The Paraenetic Material in Colossians 3:1-4:6," *EvQ* 42 (1991): 243: "In Colossians each list contains a series of five vices or five virtues, and each series seems to be related to a central theme. The vices listed in 3:5 are all associated with sexual sins, and call to mind the holiness code of Leviticus 18. They are sins which belong to their pagan past, being vices for which the Jews especially reproached Gentiles. The vices in the second list in 3:8 are centred on the attitudes and practices which are detrimental to personal relationships, and which could easily develop in the life of the Christian community. . . . The virtues in the third list in 3:12 are those which show how Christians should behave in their dealings with others, and especially with fellow believers." The same pattern and emphases are apparent in the vice and virtue lists of Gal 5:19-23.

⁸ The prevalence of the disrobing and clothing metaphor for ethical instruction in antiquity suggests caution against too quickly presuming that the image here evokes a baptismal liturgy; however, the continuity of thought and vocabulary from 2:11-12 together with the association of the unity formula with baptism in Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 12:13 make such a supposition reasonable (O'Brien, *Colossians*, 189; Dunn, *Colossians*, 220-21). If such a recollection of their baptismal catechesis is intended, my case that the unity formula of 3:11 is the mainspring of Paul's parenesis is further strengthened.

⁹ Dunn, *Colossians*, 221, 227; Hay, *Colossians*, 121-22; Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 34B; trans. Astrid B. Beck; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 392; Lohse, *Colossians*, 145.

begins, “Put on therefore . . .” (KJV).¹⁰ The imperative “put on” reiterates the introduction of this verb (ἐνδύω) in 3:10. The resumption of the verb, “put on,” together with the “therefore,” in v. 12, demonstrate that Paul’s preferred, positive vision for their life in Christ actually begins in vv. 10-11, which function as the basis for what follows.¹¹ Thus, the new identity they have adopted in 3:10-11, in which there is “no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free,” replaces those divisions with the identity, practices and unity of “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved” (v. 12). Paul contrasts social dichotomies with a new social unity. The vice list of v. 8 expresses the exclusions implicit in these social dichotomies; whereas the virtue list commends attitudes in keeping with social solidarity. Paul imagines this new identity with its practices variously as the new humanity (v. 10),¹² God’s chosen people (v. 12), and one body (v. 15). He has established each of these conceptions of the church

¹⁰ By reflecting the Greek word order that begins 3:12 (ἐνδύσασθε οὖν . . .) and by rendering οὖν with “therefore,” the KJV helpfully highlights the logical connection between vv. 11-12. O’Brien, *Colossians*, 195, comments, “With the introductory imperative of verse 12, ἐνδύσασθε (“put on”), which governs the sentence structure to verse 13c, the positive exhortation begins: it stands in contrasting parallelism with the preceding section, verses 5-11, which also began with an aorist imperative (νεκρώσατε, “put to death”), the conjunction οὖν (“therefore”) and a list of five items.” Each of the five occurrences of οὖν in Colossians (2:6, 16; 3:1, 5, 12) introduces an imperative the basis of which is an immediately preceding statement about the believers’ status in Christ.

¹¹ I construe the aorist participles, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι (v. 9) and ἐνδυσάμενοι (v. 10), temporally and circumstantially as the basis for the imperatives ἀπόθεσθε (v. 8), μὴ ψεύδεσθε (v. 9) and ἐνδύσασθε (v. 12), along with Dunn, *Colossians*, 210 n.6; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 188-89. Lohse, *Colossians*, 141, stands with those who have argued for taking these participles in an imperatival sense, continuing the series of imperatives surrounding them in vv. 5-15.

¹² The NRSV’s translation of ἄνθρωπος by “self” obscures the corporate dimension implied here and plays into modern, western individualistic readings. The immediate context correlates the old humanity (v. 9) with the corporate identities and divisions negated in v. 11 and the new humanity (v. 10) with Christ who in 1:18 is the first-born of a new, resurrected humanity. The fact that the exhortations continue to emphasize corporate life in 3:12-17 confirms this understanding. On this corporate dimension of the new humanity in 3:9-10, see O’Brien, *Colossians*, 189-90; Hay, *Colossians*, 126; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 412; Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 119-20, 174, 216-17.

community previously in the epistle, as we shall see below. Here he reiterates them so as to expand on the corporate practices that correspond to this self-understanding. This moral reasoning conforms to the logic of Paul's prayer for them in 1:9-10, that they have full understanding so that they may walk worthily of the Lord.

Conversely, in 2:8, 16-23, Paul has countered certain practices and requirements because they are not according to Christ. His rhetorical strategy is to demonstrate that certain attractive, religious options are incompatible with the gospel and then to direct their spiritual zeal into alternate channels that derive from the gospel.¹³ Throughout the letter he has reminded them of familiar gospel traditions on which he grounds his arguments; here, also, the unity formula in 3:11 seems to be a non-controversial affirmation he can employ to build his case for behavior consistent with the gospel of Christ.¹⁴ Paul frames the unity formula in 3:11 with terms borrowed from the earlier traditional material in 1:15-20. In 3:10, "according to the image of its creator (κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος)" recalls εἰκὼν and κτίσις (1:15) and κτίζω (twice in 1:16). The concluding acclamation of Christ's universal reign in 3:11, "but Christ is all and in all (πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός)" reflects not the formula's Pauline parallels (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13) but echoes the hymn to Christ in 1:15-20, where πᾶς underscores Christ's universality and supremacy eight times. The social unity and reconciliation suggested by the formula in 3:11 must be understood in Colossians as the social entailments of Christ's

¹³ Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 131-32, comments about this polemical section of Colossians, "There is every indication that the Colossians are quite willing to walk in Christ. As the following verses show, however, they need instruction about what the implications of God's activity in Christ are for their present situation."

¹⁴ Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 44: "The traditional materials incorporated in the letter most likely were known to the saints in Colossae, or else they would hardly have possessed evidential value." Surprisingly, George E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Material in Colossians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), leaves Col 3:11 out of his catalogue of traditional materials in Col despite his passing recognition of its traditional nature (219 n. 88).

cosmic reconciliation celebrated in 1:15-20 and concretized in the church in both 1:21-23 and 3:10-17.¹⁵

The remainder of the parenthetic material, 3:18-4:6, also emphasizes how they are to live together in accordance with their new status. The Household Code of 3:17-4:1 that dominates this section seems to be in tension with the status change promoted in 3:11. However, this unit will be shown below to contribute to our understanding of two aspects of Paul's corporate vision for the church in Colossae, which for now it will suffice to mention briefly. First, the unity and solidarity Paul urges on the church is construed ethnically. That is, when we inquire as to what unity and reconciliation mean for Paul practically, we find that he frames their new life together according to contemporary kinship norms among which proper household management was a chief societal concern. The Household Code is part of Paul's ethnic vision of the church's unity and solidarity.¹⁶ Far from being an abstract or spiritualized unity, Paul's social vision is stridently concrete. Second, by juxtaposing the Household Code to the new creational unity of 3:10-11 Paul complicates his social vision with his eschatological reserve. Paul's eschatological social vision is both oriented to Christ's cosmic reconciliation and grounded in present realities. These two points, the ethnic character of the church's unity and Paul's eschatological reservation will be explored below after first tracing how social dimensions of Col 1-2 prepare for Paul's affirmation in 3:11.

I will comment below, where I analyze Col 2, on the even more intractable debate over the nature of the Colossian philosophy that this letter counters. There I will explain

¹⁵ Meeks, "One Body," 211: "The chief symbolic terms of the Colossians poem [1:15-20] coincide with elements of the reunification formula [3:11]"

¹⁶ Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 245: "The *Haustafel* in Colossians is not about equality, it is about unity. As we have seen unity is a major motif in Colossians (1.20, 22; 3.11). Indeed, the entire paraenesis of Colossians 'continues the theme of unity in Christ, and order in creation'" (quoting Morna D. Hooker, "Were There False Teachers in Colossae?" in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* [ed. Barnabas Lindars et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 329).

why I am largely sympathetic with those who locate the opposition in the Jewish community, though I find evidence and rationale in the text of Colossians that the letter was meant to counter a broader threat than solely pressure to convert to Judaism.¹⁷

Social Identity and Solidarity in Col 1:1-2:23

Col 1:1-23—Prayer and Thanksgiving

The corporate, familial, and ethical dimensions of the Colossians' identity in Christ are featured from the first verses of the epistle. Paul calls Timothy and the Colossian believers "brothers," and his standard greeting invokes grace and peace from God, their Father. Furthermore, his characterization of them as "saints and faithful brothers" combines identity with its ethical implications.

Paul's extended thanksgiving and prayer in 1:3-23 conform to Pauline convention "that each thanksgiving not only announces clearly the subject-matter of the letter, but also foreshadows unmistakably its stylistic qualities... ." ¹⁸ In the case of Colossians, the thanksgiving period, 1:3-23, is extended to include a large block of traditional material, 1:13-20.¹⁹ This traditional material gives content to "the word of the truth, the gospel" (1:5) that the Colossians received and for which Paul is rejoicing. Paul rounds out the thanksgiving section in vv. 21-23 by touching again on the Colossians' reception of this

¹⁷ Even today's leading exponent of the Jewish nature of the Colossian philosophy, Dunn, *Colossians*, 144, grants, "However, the possibility continues to remain open that as well as the more specific religious system and praxis referred to, the writers recognized the possibility of other philosophies or cults proving attractive to their readers and framed their warnings in more general terms in consequence."

¹⁸ Paul Schubert, "Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings" (Issued in substance as PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1935; A. Töpelmann, 1939), 12. Terrence Y Mullins, "The Thanksgivings of Philemon and Colossians," *NTS* 30 (1984): 288-93, has demonstrated that the Colossians thanksgiving fulfills this Pauline function. Cf. Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary* (trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 36 n.1; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 29-30; O'Brien, *Thanksgivings*, 69; Dunn, *Colossians*, 53, 55.

¹⁹ For the view that the Colossian thanksgiving period includes 1:3-23, see Pokorný, *Colossians*, 23-25, 94; Dunn, *Colossians*, 41, 53; Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 143-49; Lohse, *Colossians*, 13.

gospel and the benefits that accrue to them by it. Recollection of their faith and gospel-inspired hope in v. 23 echoes those emphases that were registered in the beginning of this section, vv. 4-5. This *inclusio* is enhanced by the fact that vv. 5 and 23 contain the only occurrences in Col of εὐαγγέλιον or any of its cognates. Paul elaborates this gospel in vv. 13-20 as he gives thanks for the Colossians' participation in it.

The gospel has effects in the lives of those who hear it, whether in Colossae or elsewhere, as Paul notes in v. 6: "it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it." Paul prays for their continued understanding of the gospel so that they will "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (vv. 9-10 NASB).²⁰ Concern for a lifestyle consistent with the gospel ties the didactic and theological first two chapters of Colossians to the hortatory third and fourth chapters just as it ties Paul's prayer for understanding in v. 9 to his prayer's goal that they walk worthily in v. 10. The traditional material in 1:13-20 specifies the theological generalities of 1:3-12, as Col 3-4 specifies how they are to walk worthily of the Lord.

In 1:4-23, the introduction characterizes Christian living according to the trinity of faith, love, and hope (vv. 4-5, 23). Paul provides content to the faith in 1:13-20, but the only hint of the practice implied by the gospel is in vv. 4 and 8, namely, love for all the saints. In v. 5 Paul grounds this love in hope, which is their eschatological identity as saints and co-inheritors in Christ (vv. 2, 12, 22). For Paul, love for the saints is the fitting ethos of a community defined by this faith and this hope. Paul emphasizes this eschatological identity and solidarity by how he deploys the traditional material in vv. 13-20, which concludes in vv. 21-23 with an exhortation to remain faithful to that transformed, corporate identity.

²⁰ The NRSV's "lead lives worthy of the Lord" obscures the motif of "walking" (περιπατέω) in Colossians (1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5) as well as the Jewish character of this *topos*; cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 71; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 22.

Traditional Material in 1:13-20

It is widely recognized that in 1:13-20 Paul makes use of traditional materials, vv. 13-14 reflecting a confession and vv. 15-20 containing a doxology or hymn. Paul arranges this material to propel his case for a corporate ethos commensurate with their transformed identity.

Previously in Col 1:1-12 Paul has not specified the content of the knowledge for which he prays. He is able to assume some shared understanding of the gospel they received from Epaphras (vv. 5-7). Ultimately, it is knowledge of God (v. 10), including knowledge of his grace (v. 6), truth (vv. 5-6) and will (v. 9). Yet these abstract terms invite specification, such as, “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3; cf. “Father” and “son” in vv. 12-13). God, together with God’s grace, truth, and will are known according to confession and tradition, which were taught first by Epaphras and now by Paul. Only in v. 12 does Paul begin to recount the content of this wisdom and understanding and then further specify it in vv. 13-20 by rehearsing traditional thanksgivings and confessions. The participle, εὐχαριστοῦντες, in v. 12 is the last in a series of four participles in vv. 10-12 (following καρποφοροῦντες, ἀύξανόμενοι and δυναμούμενοι) modifying how they are to walk worthily of the Lord (v. 10, περιπατήσαι). The participle introduces the content of their thanksgiving, vv. 12-20, which reflects the understanding and attitude with which they are to live for the Lord. Paul prays that the Colossians “be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (v. 9) *so that* they walk worthily of the Lord.²¹ These theological affirmations are to guide a life pleasing to the Lord.

This logic of confessing and doing in vv. 9-12 extends into the letter through the continued combination of “thanksgiving” (εὐχαριστέω) and “walking” (περιπατέω). Lohse, noting that in Hellenistic Judaism εὐχαριστεῖν had become the Greek equivalent for the Hiphil of פָּרַח meaning to confess or praise, proposes that the thanksgiving urged

²¹ The infinitive περιπατήσαι is universally regarded as an infinitive of purpose.

in v. 12 be understood as introducing the confession that follows.²² The subsequent uses of εὐχαριστέω or εὐχαριστία in Colossians, may also carry this confessional connotation. In 2:7, the Colossians are told to abound in thanksgiving just after they are reminded of the traditions they have received about Christ and the faith they have been taught; thus, this thanksgiving could be confessing these very traditions. There, as in 1:10-12, they are being exhorted to walk (περιπατέω) accordingly. In both cases, the call to thanksgiving/confession is in an adverbial, participial phrase modifying how they are to walk. In 3:17, giving thanks again modifies how the Colossians are to be living, here expressed not by walking but as “whatever you do in word or deed.” This verse is the counterpoint to 3:7, “in them you also once walked, when you were living in them” (NASB), implying that they now walk in a different way.²³ Finally, in the unit, 4:2-6, on prayer and speaking the word, Paul exhorts them to pray with thanksgiving (4:2) and to walk in wisdom (4:5), where wisdom has been characterized in the epistle as that which is according to Christ (1:28; 2:3; 3:16). Thus, recognition of all God has done in Christ both spurs thanksgiving and propels behavior commensurate with Christ’s gospel. The boundary-marking nature of this logic becomes explicit in the final occurrence of περιπατέω where their walking in wisdom (4:5) differentiates their community from

²² Lohse, *Colossians*, 34-35, largely depending on James M. Robinson, “Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums” in *Apophoreta* (ed. Walther Eltester; BZNW 30; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 194-235. Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 12-14, has since adopted this interpretation noting the earlier case for it in Günther Bornkamm *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum* (BEvT 28; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1959), 188-203; repr. from *TBI* 21 (1942) and the endorsement of Bornkamm in Ernst Käsemann, “Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), 153. Cf. Pokorný, *Colossians*, 50-51. However, recognition that εὐχαριστεῖν includes confession within its semantic range here does not require one to follow Lohse’s attempt to take the participle here as a finite verb demarcating a formal confession, rightly criticized by O’Brien, *Thanksgivings*, 73. O’Brien also rightly cautions that recognition of traditional material here does not require acceptance of the overly rigid form-critical supposition that it must be a pre-set liturgical piece, as, for example, in Käsemann, “Baptismal Liturgy.”

²³ Here again the NRSV’s “the ways you also once followed” does not feature the motif of walking that I am following, though its rendering does reflect the metaphor.

“outsiders.” Connecting a group’s patterns of behavior to the story on which their identity is based conforms formally to our model of ethnicity.

On this reading, 1:9b-10a, “that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,” might be taken not only as the main point of Paul’s prayer but as the purpose of the introduction and of the letter. The Christ hymn in 1:15-20 would then be a reservoir of “knowledge,” “spiritual wisdom” and “understanding” for right living. It would also constitute part of the gospel of hope that inspires thanksgiving. Attention to how Paul draws on the hymn’s language and vision later in the letter supports this idea that its theological content is the engine of his persuasion towards a life-style according to their eschatological identity in Christ.²⁴

How Paul harnesses the hymn into the introduction underscores this emphasis. The shift from Paul’s intercession to thanksgiving in v. 12, reminds them of “the Father, who has enabled you²⁵ to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.” The threefold reference to them as saints (ἅγιος) at the beginning, middle, and end of this section (vv. 2, 12, 22), evokes their collective identity as God’s elect. This evocation is reinforced by the overtones of the exodus and Promised Land in vv. 12-14, which themes were also

²⁴ This argument emphasizes the literary connections between the hymn in 1:15-20 and the rest of the letter to the Colossians. The extensive scholarship on the theology, form, and background of the hymn is documented in the major commentaries. Of course, the origins, redaction, and implicit ideologies of the hymn bear on our understanding of its function in this letter. Nevertheless, I believe the brief literary analysis provided here will suffice to validate my reading Colossians with a view to understanding Col 3:11 in its epistolary context.

²⁵ With Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3rd ed; New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 620. Textual evidence is divided, but contextual issues and the argument of assimilation favors ὑμᾶς as original. This choice corresponds with Paul’s rhetorical emphasis on *their* inclusion in God’s people. Only KJV and NASB chooses ἡμᾶς.

appropriated eschatologically in Hellenistic Judaism.²⁶ The Colossians have been redeemed from slavery and included as God's elect in a new exodus with a promised inheritance, as the land had been promised to Israel. However, in this exodus their destination is not a particular homeland but identification with Christ's body in which God will reconcile all things in heaven and on earth (vv. 18, 20). The aorist tenses of the verbs in this traditional material together with the placement in the future of the promised inheritance, locate the present life of the Colossian believers as on the way, where they must walk worthily of the Lord (v. 10). In this construal they conform to what we have been calling a diaspora identity. Paul's use of these allusions reveals two things about his correspondence with the Colossian church. First, despite not having been to Colossae himself, he is able to presume that the foundational teaching they received from Epaphras included orientation to their new identity in terms of Israel, the exodus, and the Promised Land. Such catechism must have been standard in Pauline churches. This observation justifies attending to further allusions to Israel in Paul's depiction of the church in Colossians. Second, this exodus-based identity is corporate. Paul here reminds the Colossian saints that their reception of the gospel has reconfigured their identity by including them in God's covenant people.²⁷

This communal identity patterned on Israel's exodus carries over into the Christ hymn in 1:15-20 by means of the relative pronoun ὅς, that links the hymn back to the Father's "beloved Son, in whom we have redemption." Furthermore, the significance of "in whom" their identity is (v. 14) explodes when filled out by the "in him" repetition within the hymn.²⁸ From this perspective, v. 18 of the hymn takes on prominence as the place

²⁶ On the OT allusions and traditional character of the language in 1:12-14, see Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 12-19; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 25-29; Lohse, *Colossians*, 32-40; Dunn, *Colossians*, 75-82; Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 143-47.

²⁷ Gary S. Shogren, "Presently Entering the Kingdom of Christ: The Background and Purpose of Col 1:12-14," *JETS* 31 (1988): 179-80.

²⁸ The relevance of this collocation is supported by the absence of any use of ἐν + dative construction referring to Christ in a locative sense between the letter's address in 1:1 and

where the Colossians' story is framed within the story of Christ. Here their identity is corporately conceived as "the body, the church" of which Christ is the head. If their new exodus occurs in Christ, then the hymn tells the story of how they have been rescued from "the domain of darkness" and transferred into the promised land of the beloved son's kingdom, namely, through Christ's work of cosmic reconciliation as depicted in the hymn (vv. 18, 20).²⁹ This appropriation of Israel's history conforms to our description of ethnic discourse and a diaspora identity. The language here claims for the letters' recipients the identity recounted in the exodus story now re-envisioned through Christ. The traditional ethnic territorial mandate has been modulated from Judea to "the kingdom of his beloved Son" and "in him."

The introduction of the church in v. 18b is striking, following as it does the celebration in vv. 15-17 of Christ's supremacy in the creating, sustaining and directing of the cosmos. The beginning of v. 18, "He is the head of the body," would have followed naturally from the common Hellenistic conception of the cosmos as a body with a rational soul and would simply have continued the theme of Christ's supremacy.³⁰ However, by focusing on the church as Christ's body, the hymn makes the church central

this occurrence in 1:14, whereas it becomes a regular feature of the epistle's rhetoric from here on. The one instance between 1:1 and 1:14 of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ refers to their faith in him, not to their location or identity "in him." Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 80, 82, 87.

²⁹ Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 202, notes that Paul's applications of the Christ-hymn present "the doctrine of Christ in an eschatological-soteriological framework." Of course, the hymn trades in a different set of traditions than the exodus background of vv. 12-14. The point here is purely literary; namely, that in the present arrangement Paul has linked them through the relative pronoun so we are justified in coordinating the stories implied in these confessions.

³⁰ James D. G. Dunn, "The 'Body' In Colossians," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* (ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva; JSNTSup 100; Sheffield, Eng: JSOT, 1994), 174: ". . . the imagery would be a variation on what has already been said, identifying the one praised as being over the body, ruler of the cosmos . . ." Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 94-96; Lohse, *Colossians*, 52-55. This cultural background would have enabled such a play on this *topos* irrespective of whether one reconstructs an earlier version of the hymn without the words, "the church," in v. 18.

to God's plan for cosmic reconciliation.³¹ Dunn comments that it is not only that the hymn's vision for Christ's reordering of the disordered creation is vast. In addition,

[i]n some ways still more striking is the implied vision of the church as the focus and means toward this cosmic reconciliation—the community in which that reconciliation has already taken place (or begun to take place) and whose responsibility it is to live out (cf. particularly 3:8-15) as well as to proclaim its secret (cf. 4:2-6).³²

Indeed, the implication Paul immediately draws from the hymn in vv. 21-22, concerns the change in identity of the Colossian believers from “enemies” to “reconciled,” “holy and blameless and beyond reproach” and no longer “engaged in evil deeds,” but set on “the hope of the gospel.”³³ The cosmic drama recounted in the hymn applies directly to the past conversion, present persistence, and future hope of the Colossian believers. The shocking juxtaposition of this supra-historical cosmology with the small, insignificant band of Colossian believers serves to place their corporate life at the center of God's purposes for the universe.³⁴ This rhetorical move underscores the placement of the church in the center of the hymn as the body of Christ who is the beginning and end of all things. The church is a microcosm of the future of the cosmos. It is this hope from which they are not to be moved and that is to inform their current way of life. The future reconciliation of all things is the purpose of Christ's death on the cross (v. 20); therefore, reconciliation ought to characterize the believing community that has

³¹ Dunn, "The 'Body' In Colossians," 175: "This suggests that the church under Christ's headship is being consciously depicted as the microcosm which is to mirror the divinely ordered cosmos, the coherence of Christ's headship over the church and his priority over all things indicating that one ought to reflect the other or provide a model for the other."

³² Dunn, *Colossians*, 104.

³³ Hooker, "False Teachers," 322: "We suggest that the themes which are found in these verses [1:15-20] are intended to underline the points which Paul has made in verses 13-14, and which he will take up again in verses 21-3."

³⁴ Meeks, "To Walk Worthily of the Lord," 43, notes regarding 1:21-22, "The letter-writer immediately echoes the motif of cosmic reconciliation on the personal level" Similarly, Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 130: "In these verses [1:21-23] Paul relates how the Colossians came to be in Christ. In effect, he is showing the Colossians how they are related to the Christ of 1.15-20."

been caught up into this cosmic drama of reconciliation. Paul later makes this explicit in 3:15 where he reminds them to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body,” echoing both the church as the body of Christ from 1:18 and the “peace through the blood of His cross (1:20)” as the basis of reconciliation.³⁵ Already in Col 1:1-23 we have seen Paul’s emphasis on the saints’ mutual love one for another as the primary outworking of their gospel hope (1:4-5, 7, 8).

Paul’s Exemplum: 1:24-2:7

According to Paul’s self-presentation of his ministry, he strives for the Colossian believers to be united in their new life together based on recognition of all they have jointly received in Christ. Once again, understanding the mystery revealed in Christ produces unity in a new identity and way of life. Building on the immediately preceding section, especially on the Christ hymn, Paul configures his ministry as derivative of Christ’s work of establishing the united church in the midst of the world that God is reconciling to himself.³⁶ In 2:1-2, Paul makes explicit what impact he desires his example to have on the Colossians, namely, their encouragement and unity. Complementing this positive goal is a prophylactic warning (v. 4), the specifics of which he will develop in 2:8, 16-23.

As Paul focused the Christ hymn in 1:15-20 on its implications for the Colossian church’s new identity, future, and way of life in 1:21-23, so here in 1:24-2:5 Paul presents his own ministry as a sub-plot of Christ’s cosmic story of reconciliation. He identifies himself as a servant of this gospel (1:23) whose own tribulations participate in

³⁵ Meeks, "To Walk Worthily of the Lord," 43: “Later the “peacemaking” motif is likewise transmuted from a cosmic and mythic to a personal and moral plane”

³⁶ Meeks, "To Walk Worthily of the Lord," 44, understands this section to function as an *exemplum* and comments, “Significantly the poem about Christ and its application to the Colossians is followed immediately by the apostolic autobiography 1:24-2:5, and the relation of the latter to the letter’s parenthesis is analogous to that for the former.”

the sufferings of Christ for the church, Christ's body (1:24).³⁷ The echoes of 1:18, 22 in 1:24 are unmistakable. The plot of the Christ hymn continues in Paul's life for the sake of the church. Paul's goal to "present everyone mature in Christ" (1:28) is a restatement of the purpose of Christ's death in 1:22, "to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable." The universal scope of Paul's ministry (v. 27, "among the Gentiles"; v. 28 "everyone") imitates that of Christ (1:20) and suggests the need for reconciliation and unity as people of all backgrounds are called into the church ("that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love," 2:2a NASB).³⁸ Parallel to his deployment of the Christ hymn in 1:13-23, Paul's exemplum first presents a universal vision (1:24-29 = 1:13-20; note the repetition of πᾶς), then applies that vision specifically to the Colossian congregation (2:1-5 = 1:21-22) and concludes with exhortation to remain steadfast in the faith (2:6-7 = 1:23; note βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει [2:7] = τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι [1:23]). The pivotal and programmatic 2:6-7 looks back to the content, proclamation and reception of the gospel recounted in 1:1-2:5 and forward to how they are to preserve and live the gospel (2:8-4:5). These two verses recapitulate 1:10-12 and

³⁷ I understand the difficult v. 24 as alluding to the apocalyptic tribulations associated with Paul completing his task of bringing to all nations this revelation of God's promises for his eschatological people. Thus, what is lacking is the fulfillment of his assignment as apocalyptic messenger described in vv. 25-28. For defense of such an interpretation, see Richard Bauckham, "Colossians 1:24 Again: The Apocalyptic Motif," *EvQ* 47 (1975): 168-170; Hanna Stettler, "An Interpretation of Colossians 1:24 in the Framework of Paul's Mission Theology," in *Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (ed. Ådna Jostein and Hans Kvalbein; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 185-208. The NASB follows this line of interpretation, rendering πληρόω in terms of Paul's assignment and supplies "preaching" to render v. 25b in this missional sense, "so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of the word of God*" (italics added). *Pace* the NRSV's "to make the word of God fully known." BDAG, s.v. πληρόω 3. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 118-19; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 82. Readings that have understood this verse in terms of Paul's vicarious sufferings for Christ or the church or in terms of the dubious concepts of "mystical union" or "corporate personality," have rightly fallen out of favor; cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 114-15 n.7; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 77-78.

³⁸ The NRSV's rendering, "I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love," obscures the ἵνα plus subjunctive purpose clause construction that links v. 2 with v. 1.

may be viewed as the thesis statement of the epistle.³⁹ Paul's rehearsal here both of gospel traditions and of his own ministry serve to build up the Colossian congregation in their new identity derived from their understanding of the gospel.

2:8-23: The Polemical Core

Paul first hints at some threat to the Colossians' faith when, near the end of his autobiographical section, he cautions, "I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments" (2:4). However, what he is saying there—a description of his ministry—emphasizes his ultimate goal of their unity in love and full assurance of God's riches, wisdom and knowledge in Christ (2:2-3; cf. 1:4-5, 22-23). Paul worries that deceitful arguments could undermine that unity and confidence. Paul's warnings in Colossians are the defensive prerequisite to his ultimate pursuit of the church's maturity and completion. His warning in 2:8 is the second imperative of the letter, the first one, "walk in him," just having appeared in the letter's thesis statement (2:6-7). The warnings in 2:8-23 serve to clear impediments to the Colossians walking in Christ. Paul then proceeds to fill out the positive vision of how to live in Christ in 3:1-4:6. In keeping with the focus of my argument, I will assess how this polemical section of Paul's argument anticipates the unity formula of 3:11 and the ethical vision the formula supports.

In 2:8 Paul begins attacking an alternate philosophy. Scholarly attempts to reconstruct the target of Paul's attack have necessarily focused their inquiries on 2:8-23, verses generally referred to as the "polemical core" of Colossians.⁴⁰ In these verses Paul

³⁹ For identification of 2:6-7 as the thesis statement of the letter see, O'Brien, *Colossians*, 102, 105; Hay, *Colossians*, 28; Meeks, "To Walk Worthily of the Lord," 47; Dunn, *Colossians*, 136-38; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 98. Dunn and O'Brien in particular note its pivotal character in summarizing what has preceded and in setting the terms and logic that will govern the remainder of the letter. Thus, it could as easily be seen as the conclusion of the introduction and Paul's *exemplum* (1:3-2:5) as is it is the introduction to the body of the letter, 2:8-4:6.

⁴⁰ There exists no scholarly consensus regarding even a rough description, let alone the identity, of the target of Paul's polemic in Colossians. Richard E. DeMaris, *The*

characterizes the inimical influence, providing us indirect evidence of the nature of the threat. To dissuade them from deception and urge them to unity, he draws from the traditions he has rehearsed previously in the epistle an implied apocalyptic disruption and a cosmic understanding of the body of Christ. I will assess under these headings, apocalyptic disruption and the body of Christ, how Paul in 2:8-23 prepares for 3:11 in its parenetical context.

Apocalyptic Disruption

The Christ hymn in 1:15-20 presented the radical notion that the preeminent one, in whom all things have been created, had to die on a cross and be raised in order to make possible a renewed creation. It presumes two realms hinged at Christ's cross and resurrection. As he had been preeminent in creation, so he is in renewed creation (v. 18).

Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae (JSNTSup 96; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 18-40, helpfully categorizes the plentitude of reconstructions on offer into five schools of thought. For a recent evaluation of these various approaches by a scholar arguing for the predominantly Jewish character of the philosophy, see Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 19-46. On the basis of Occam's Razor, i.e., this hypothesis provides the most explanatory power with the fewest assumptions, I favor readings of Colossians that focus Paul's concerns primarily on influences from the Jewish community (cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 33-35).

Hooker, "False Teachers," 315-19; Meeks, "To Walk Worthily of the Lord," 38, both soberly suggest that modern scholars care more about identifying the threat in Colossae than did the author of the letter. Both emphasize that much can be gained by correlating the parenetic goals with the theological vision in the letter apart from a precise description of the threat. In that vein, I believe I have avoided dependence on any proposed identification of the philosophy for of my argument that 3:11 is the capstone of Paul's insistent vision for church unity throughout Colossians.

Reconstructing the opponents reflected in Paul's letters necessarily brings methodological concerns to the fore. Taking historical and literary criteria seriously ought to sober proponents of any hypothesis, as is noted by John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 52-54. These methodological concerns and the many reconstructions proposed are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, this study makes an oblique contribution to the conundrum by sketching aspects of the broader theological and literary canvass of Colossians. In an important article on the methodology of adducing ancient parallels, Sandmel, "Parallelomania," has emphasized that comparison of supposed parallels may be made soundly only after taking full account of the immediate literary and ideological context of each expression.

In both spheres he is “first-born” (vv. 15, 18). Whereas in him were created “all things in heaven and on earth” (v. 16); in the renewal “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (1:20) have been reconciled to God through his blood. Paul’s framing of the hymn with vv. 13-14 and 21-23 clarifies the apocalyptic dualism of the hymn. Christ’s death has “rescued us from the power of darkness” (v. 13) under which they “were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” (v. 21). This pessimistic vision of humanity is transformed by the extremity of the remedy into the “hope promised by the gospel” (v. 23). That remedy is the believers’ participation in the death and resurrection of the Christ. Paul’s depiction of his own participation in Christ’s death and resurrection in 1:24-2:5 has paved the way for his further explication of the gospel’s apocalyptic disruption of the Colossians’ world in 2:8-23.

According to Paul, the chief problem of the alternate philosophy is merely that it is not according to Christ, whereas the way he promotes is in and according to Christ (2:8, 17, 19). This disjunction is foundational because of the totality of the vision painted in 1:15-20: It is only through Christ’s reconciling work that all things and people reconnect with their creator.⁴¹ This gospel implies a disruptive transformation of the believers, a disruption Paul describes as death and resurrection with Christ (2:12, 13, 20). This death signifies the negation of ways and authorities that do not derive from Christ (vv. 14, 15, 20), as is especially clear from how v. 20, “If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe,” relates the believers to the dichotomy set forth in v. 8, “according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.”⁴²

After having posited this cosmic divide between the way of Christ and the way of the alternate philosophy in v. 8, Paul backs off his attack to recollect with the Colossians the gospel that supports his argument and does not resume his critique until v. 16. The

⁴¹ Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 136, comments regarding 2:6-23, “The basis of Paul’s attack is the presentation of Christ in 1:15-20.”

⁴² Dunn, *Colossians*, 188-89.

absence of explicit polemic in vv. 9-15 leads some scholars to exclude it from the polemical core and use only vv. 8, 16-23 as the sound basis for historical reconstruction of the Colossian philosophy.⁴³ However, vv. 9-15 are essential to his polemic in that they establish the apocalyptic duality on which the polemic is based, as the “therefore” beginning v. 16 shows. For instance, Paul can only argue in v. 20, “If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?” because vv. 11-12a have established their participation in Christ’s death, something that was not explicit in 1:13-23. Similarly, exclusive dependence on Christ, the head of the body, in 2:19 is compelling because 2:9-10 have recapitulated from the hymn Christ’s preeminence over every ruler and authority (1:16) and the believers’ membership in him, who is the head (1:18). In 2:20 they are not to “submit to regulations” (δογματίζεσθε) because in 2:14 Christ’s death annulled the “legal demands”

⁴³ Several methodological observations deserve mention regarding this choice. First, the reconstructions based on this narrow, polemical core all presume there to have been a particular threat known to Paul and his recipients; that is, they rule out the possibility of Paul presenting a generalized, prophylactic warning that relates to numerous realistic threats. Though few have embraced it, the argument of Hooker, “False Teachers,” still has merit. Second, scholars justify this narrowing of the polemical core as being methodologically conservative; e.g. Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique* (JSNTSup 118; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996); Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); DeMaris, *Colossian Controversy*. However, this contradicts the important methodological criterion of how terms function in their broader literary context, as argued by Sandmel, “Parallelomania”; John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73-93. In the case of Colossians, the universality and exclusivity of Paul’s Christology (1:15-20; 3:11b) grounds a warning against any possible competition. Finally, those scholars who locate the threat primarily as coming from the local synagogue do not limit themselves to the narrow, polemical core of 2:8, 16-23, but seek to locate those verses in the broader argument. E.g. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*; Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks, *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity, Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies* (rev. ed; Sources for Biblical Study 4; Cambridge, Mass.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 216-17; Dunn, *Colossians*, 23-35; Wright, *Colossians*, 24-30.

(δόγμασιν). Verses 14-15 elaborate the extent to which the world has been terminated in Christ's cross. This apocalyptic disruption undergirds the polemic of vv. 16-23.

The more explicitly theological section 2:9-15, complements 2:16-23 just as 2:6-7 complement 2:8; the former section of each set affirms the way of Christ, the latter discredits the alternate way. Viewed this way, vv. 6-7 are a general exhortation to walk according to the traditions about Christ, and vv. 9-15 expand on the traditions relevant to Paul's present argument. Verse 8, having introduced the alternate way and its incompatibility with Christ, prepares for vv. 16-23 which expand on that incompatibility. Finally, Paul's parenthesis in 3:1-4:6 fills out how to walk according to Christ.⁴⁴

Each of these mutually exclusive options in 2:8-23 involves a set of traditions or foundational principles as well as a manner of life deriving from them. Paul's criterion for rejecting the alternate philosophy (2:8, 16-23) is the apocalyptic gospel he re-proclaims here in 2:9-15. The "kaleidoscope of metaphors" in 2:9-15 has caused much consternation to commentators seeking to trace Paul's argument.⁴⁵ O'Brien provides a helpful map of Paul's logic noting that vv. 9-10 rehearse both Christ's supremacy (vv. 9, 10b) and the believers' incorporation into him (v. 10a).⁴⁶ The linking of their fulfillment (ἔστέ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι, v. 10a) to Christ's fullness of deity (τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος, v. 9b) by means of the Greek play on the word stem πληρο- highlights Paul's argument that he subsequently develops in vv. 11-15. Both these affirmations are needed to preempt an alternate means to fulfillment. Verses 11-13 then dwell on the latter

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Colossians*, 199, comments, "It was not enough to remind the recipients of the letter of the ways of life and worship which they should have left behind and/or should not be adopting now. It was equally important, if not more important, to give a clear indication of the characteristic features of Christian living and worship, the positive alternative to be pursued over against the negative alternative to be avoided. The change of emphasis is indicated by the opening term (3:1—"Since you have been raised with Christ"), balancing the reminder of what they had left behind (2:20—"Since you died with Christ")."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁴⁶ O'Brien, *Colossians*, 103.

affirmation (v. 10a)--their incorporation into Christ with the benefits of his death and resurrection. Christ's triumphs are celebrated in vv. 14-15, echoing vv. 9, 10b. The fullness and finality of what God has done in Christ, renders useless any alternate or additional strategy for improvement. Paul issues his warnings because the alternate(s) on offer in Colossae implies that the gospel of Christ is either ineffectual or insufficient.

By choosing in 2:11-13 to describe their incorporation into Christ by means of the metaphor of circumcision/uncircumcision, Paul necessarily registers the communal, boundary-marking significance of these terms.⁴⁷ The fact that ἀκροβυστία (v. 13) occurs only here and in 3:11, and the terms περιτέμνω and περιτομή (v. 11) occur only here, 3:11 and 4:11, suggests that 2:11-13 prefigure 3:11. This linguistic connection is strengthened when we recall that Paul has added the pairing “circumcised and uncircumcised” to this iteration of the baptismal formula in 3:11, making this motif in Colossians his invention. Here, as in 3:11, Paul envisions their participation in Christ as being irreducibly corporate. Paul's topic here is not circumcision but their incorporation into Christ; however, he has chosen this language to characterize that incorporation.⁴⁸ However, circumcision for Paul here refers not to circumcision in the flesh (Gen [LXX] 17:11, περιτμηθήσεσθε τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκροβυστίας; cf. Gen 17:13-14, 24; 34:24; Lev 12:3; Rom 2:28; Eph 2:11) but to “a circumcision made without hands” (2:11 NASB).⁴⁹ The apocalyptic disruption wrought by Christ's death and resurrection has reconfigured even this central affirmation of Jewish covenant identity. No longer do Gentiles enter

⁴⁷ Dunn, *Colossians*, 153-56.

⁴⁸ Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 142: “While the statements on baptism in this verse [v. 12] are parallel to the statements concerning circumcision in v. 11, Paul is not discussing a doctrine of baptism in this verse. He uses the images of circumcision and baptism to describe the entrance of the Colossians into union with Christ”

⁴⁹ The NRSV's “spiritual circumcision” obscures the play on the biblical *topos* χειροποίητος (“made with hands”) that denotes pejoratively human production, here turned to ἀχειροποίητος to suggest that which is done by God; cf. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 68; Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 139; Dunn, *Colossians*, 156; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 115-16.

God's covenant people via conversion and circumcision, but "the disadvantaged state of 'uncircumcision' has been remedied by a 'circumcision not performed by human hand' (2:11)."⁵⁰ Thus, Paul describes their incorporation into Christ with a metaphor appropriate to incorporation into God's chosen people. This reminder and interpretation of their conversion carries on the corporate, covenantal dimensions of their conversion we observed above in Paul's previous rehearsals of their transformation (1:12-14, 21-22).

Paul does not criticize the practices mentioned in 2:16, 18 and 21 *per se*, but for the judgment accompanying them. The key imperatives, "do not let anyone condemn" (v. 16) and "Do not let anyone disqualify you" (v. 18), tell of attempts at exclusion from an esteemed status. The letter recipients must not submit to these judgments because they have already been fully included (2:10-13) and because these false judgments are based on principles that have been nullified by the cross (2:14-15). Ironically, it is those who insist on these practices who have disqualified themselves by not holding onto the sole source of fulfillment (2:19). In turning the tables on these critics, Paul provides the only concrete glimpse within the polemical section of his positive vision for life in Christ. It is irreducibly corporate. Those who cling to Christ, the head, are united to one another in his body, even as they affirm his supremacy. The judgments of a worldly philosophy rend this body apart. Paul's vision of bodily unity echoes his stated purpose for his autobiographical section (1:24-2:5) by repeating the verb, συμβιβάζω (2:2, 19), and intensifies that vision by further developing the body metaphor of the church (1:18, 24) to emphasize the unity and collaboration of "its ligaments and sinews." Clinging to the supremacy of Christ requires clinging to others who are in Christ, which is precisely what Paul said in 2:2-3.

This is the manner of life according to Christ that he will develop in 3:10-17. Paul excludes human bases of exclusion within the body of Christ, as the unity formula will

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Colossians*, 163.

reiterate in 3:11. Instead of being judged (2:16) and disqualified (2:18, καταβραβεύω), the peace of Christ is to rule (3:15, βραβεύω) among them.⁵¹ In 3:14 Paul picks up the ligament metaphor from 2:19 (σύνδεσμος) to define it as the love they are to have for one another. Since this love is the supreme virtue completing those listed in 3:12-13, one might retroject that the other listed virtues define other the metaphorical “sinews” (ἀφῆ) evoked in 2:19.

The Body of Christ

Having noted that the polemical core contains a counter-vision of unity in the body of Christ, we can now observe how Paul develops the image of the body in the polemical core in preparation for its final deployment in 3:15. Paul has previously construed Christ as the head of the body, which is the church, in 1:18, 24. In 2:9-10, Paul draws on language from the Christ hymn (ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος) from 1:19; κεφαλὴ from 1:18; ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας from 1:16) in order to stress the completion of the Colossian believers in him who embodies the fullness of deity.⁵² Their completion in the preeminent one leaves them lacking nothing. From this triumphant position they may resist authorities that detract from their fulfillment in Christ. However, the body metaphor in the polemical section pushes beyond its reference solely to the church as in 1:18, 24 and seems to draw from the universal vision of the Christ hymn, where vv. 16 and 20 affirm that *all things* are in, through, and for Christ. In 2:10 he is the head, not only of the church, but of “every ruler and authority.”⁵³ Ultimately, the body of Christ encompasses all reality.

⁵¹ Paul’s use of these antonyms in Greek suggests an English translation that captures the implied counter-point, such as “rule/rule out.” Cf. *Ibid.*, 177, 234; Hay, *Colossians*, 133.

⁵² Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 39: “The traditional character of Colossians 2:9, 10 is made evident in the fact that practically all of its ideas and vocabulary are drawn directly from the traditional Christ-hymn in 1:15-20.”

⁵³ Dunn, “The ‘Body’ In Colossians,” 174: “The idea that Christ is the ‘head of every ruler and authority’ (2.10) stands in direct continuity with the idea that Christ is the head

As we noted when examining Paul’s rhetorical use of the hymn, the church now is a microcosm of what the entire cosmos will be. Far from needing guidance from human traditions, the church, rather, shows those traditions their true end, rendering them moot. Thus, in v. 17 Paul can say of the human rules, “These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance (σῶμα) belongs to Christ.” Certainly, English translations are correct to render σῶμα here in its meaning of “substance” or “reality” in contrast to “shadow” in the first half of the verse.⁵⁴ But the pun present in Greek also captures the direction of Paul’s thought that the body of Christ as the church is at present the fullest and clearest presentation of the reality that all things are in, through, and for Christ (1:16, 20) who will be “all and in all” (3:11).⁵⁵ Thus, in 2:19 clinging to Christ the head, is clinging to reality, and clinging to one another in the church is faithful participation in that reality. Paul means for this vision of Christ as the beginning and goal of all things to inoculate them against other authorities offering access to ultimate reality apart from Christ’s body. As he turns in 3:1-4:6 towards positive exhortation, he urges them more fully to live in the identity and benefits they have gained through sharing in Christ.

3:1-4:6: Seeking Unity in Christ

Having expounded their participation in Christ to discount alternate paths to wisdom or completion, Paul in 3:1-4 highlights that same basis for the moral reasoning he models

of the cosmic body (2.18 [*sic*, 1:18]) which includes the ‘rulers and authorities’ of 2.16.” Cf. O’Brien, *Colossians*, 114; Lohse, *Colossians*, 101 n. 57.

⁵⁴ Regarding the platonic background of the σκιά versus σῶμα contrast and Paul’s modulation of it into a Jewish eschatological frame see Dunn, “The ‘Body’ In Colossians,” 177-78.

⁵⁵ Scholars who argue for the essentially Jewish character of the philosophy at issue in Colossae highlight this verse for support, noting that Paul would not likely have referred to pagan traditions as fore-“shadows” of the gospel, but he would affirm that of Scripture. However, the epistle’s insistence on the gospel’s universal scope, reconciling all things in Christ, which has been reiterated in 2:10, suggests that other traditions have some sort of consummation in Christ. However, as with the law itself, correlation between the shadow and reality, or type with antitype, can only be perceived retrospectively. Paul’s eschatological vision does not specify in what manner the present “shadows” will be realized in Christ. Cf. Campbell, *Quest*, 65-67.

for them in 3:5-4:6. Throughout the parenthesis participation in Christ is corporate. The exhortations of 3:5-4:6 describe in communal terms what it means for them to live in view of the gospel they have received. The “heavenly mindedness” of 3:1-4 produces not disinterest in concrete daily life but a particular social vision and practice.⁵⁶

The parenthesis of 3:5-4:6 is usually divided into three sections, 3:5-17, a description of their new communal identity and ethos, 3:18-4:1, the so-called *Haustafel* on the proper comportment of the members of the household unit, and 4:2-6 on prayer and witness to outsiders.⁵⁷ Each of these subsections emphasizes corporate identity and behavior. Paul conceives of them as a group and exhorts them in terms of group solidarity and ethical norms. Thus, it appears that to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (3:1) equals seeking the well-being and integrity of the church community. Such a vision coheres well with the theological engine of the epistle, the hymn to Christ (1:15-20), where the preeminent one, Christ, is the first-born of a new race who has brought about reconciliation and peace by the blood of his cross (1:20).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 130: “. . . [Paul] can insist both on the reality of the transcendent dimension where Christian existence has its source in the exalted Christ and on the quality and fullness he expects to see in the personal, domestic, communal and societal aspects of Christian living.”

⁵⁷ Dunn, *Colossians*, 199; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 391-92; Lohse, *Colossians*, 136, 54, 64; Hay, *Colossians*, 114. Some commentators divide 3:5-17 into two sections, vv. 5-11 and vv. 12-17, construing the first half under the rubric “taking off” and the second as “putting on,” e.g. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), 139; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 174; Wright, *Colossians*, 129. With the former commentators, I prefer to view vv. 5-17 as a unity centered on the formula in 3:11. A weakness with the proposed division is that the “putting on” metaphor actually begins in v. 10. If one were to divide according to the “taking off” and “putting on” themes, that division ought to occur after v. 9, but no commentator I have consulted suggests that.

⁵⁸ Hooker, “False Teachers,” 329: “It is perhaps worthy of note that the final ethical section in 3:18-4:6, often seen as entirely separate from the main argument of the epistle, continues this theme [from 1:15-20] of unity in Christ, and order in creation.” Similarly, Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 245: “The Christ-hymn in this sense sets up the argument for unity in the paraenetic material.”

As we saw above in the introduction to this chapter, the unity formula in 3:11 recalls the imagery and vocabulary from the Christ hymn in 1:15-20, confirming that this foundational theological vision produces the moral vision in Colossians. Their participation in Christ governs this correlation of theological and ethical vision. Paul continues the metaphor of dying and rising with Christ from 2:12-13, 20 in 3:1-5a, and then develops a metaphor of disrobing and putting on clothes in vv. 8-14 to express their conformity to renewal in Christ. Verses 15-17 switch from the external image of clothing to one of indwelling, where “the peace of Christ” and “the word of Christ” transform them inwardly. Then seven times in the nine verses of the *Haustafel* (3:18-4:1) Paul mentions their orientation to the Lord Christ as warrant for the behavior he urges. Finally, 4:2-6 emphasize that they reflect Christ appropriately to outsiders. Thus, when Paul says, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (3:2), he seems to mean not detachment from earthly realities but rejection of relational practices that would destroy community, as is clarified in 3:5-8 where the things on earth (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is repeated in vv. 2 and 5) are identified in the vice lists of vv. 5-9. As noted above, these lists are weighted towards those practices that destroy community. In other words, the gospel creates a new community with a particular social ethos. The unity formula in 3:11 is the distilled expression of this gospel vision.

Unity as Ethnic Solidarity

Paul’s vision for the united church that begins in earnest at Col 3:12 is explicitly ethnic from the outset. The divisions of the old humanity rejected in 3:11 emphasize ethnic exclusion. Three of the four pairs refer to ethnic identity: Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian (see my assessment of these labels in Chapter One, pp. 8-10). In contrast to this ethnic exclusion, Paul, in v. 12, construes them as a new united covenant people, on analogy to Israel. As all commentators note, the three adjectives together in “God’s chosen ones, holy and

beloved” could not but evoke Israel as God’s elect, covenant people.⁵⁹ No sooner has v. 11 excluded Jewish boundaries to Gentiles than v. 12 reclaims the concept of an elect people who are set apart (ἁγίοι) for God, presumably this time including people of all ethnic backgrounds. But because this new corporate identity is patterned on that of Israel it immediately has ethnic connotations, though with reconfigured indices of that identity. Even in the letter greeting, 1:2, Paul has expressed their identity as holy ones in familial terms, “To the saints (ἁγίοις) and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”⁶⁰

Paul has previously in Colossians patterned the church on Israel as God’s elect, most recently in the first vice list (3:5), where the vices echo Jewish diatribe against the typical sins of the Gentiles--idolatry, unchecked passions and sexual immorality.⁶¹ Even as Paul presents Christ’s death and resurrection as overthrowing the demarcation between Jew and Gentile, he characterizes the church in very Jewish terms.⁶² We noted above how Paul has mapped the Colossians onto the story of Israel and the exodus in 1:12-14, 22 via their participation in Christ (v. 14, “in whom”). Then in 2:11 he described their participation in Christ as having been circumcised without human hands, implying a greater circumcision, namely, the “circumcision of Christ.” Their new corporate identity

⁵⁹ E.g. Deut 7:6-7; Isa 44:2 (LXX); 65:9 (LXX); Dan 3:35 (LXX, Pr Azar); Wis 3:9. Dunn, *Colossians*, 228: “More clearly than anywhere else in Colossians it is evident that the Gentile recipients of the letter were being invited to consider themselves full participants in the people and heritage of Israel.”

⁶⁰ Cannon, *Traditional Material*, 141: “The description of the Colossians as ‘saints and faithful brethren in Christ’ is not so much a description of their religious condition as it is the use of Old Testament designations for the people of God placed in the new eschatological context (“in Christ”).”

⁶¹ Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 188-98; Easton, “New Testament Ethical Lists,” 2-5; Dunn, *Colossians*, 213-14; Lohse, *Colossians*, 138-39; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 179-84.

⁶² Dunn, *Colossians*, 214: “Paul did not want his readers to follow the Colossian Jews in their ritual and worship, but their ethical standards were to be Jewish through and through.”

derives from that of Israel, and Paul adopts, with modifications, both the genealogical reckoning and some of the characteristic boundaries of Israel.

Ethnic Criterion of Genealogy

According to the model we are employing, the primary criterion for labeling a defined group as ethnic is the presumption of a common genealogy. Whereas fleshly circumcision was a sign of descent from Abraham and a share in God's covenants, this new circumcision not done by human hands is in Colossians a sign of the believers' common genealogical relationship to God as father. Paul explicitly refers to God as their father in 3:17, concluding his positive ("put on") explication of the unity formula in vv. 12-17. In summarizing the entire parenetic section aphoristically in 3:17, Paul can appeal for motivation to their identity as God's children. Of course, this affirmation of God as their father was familiar to them and echoes Paul's formulaic introduction of it in 1:2-3 as well as his call for them to give thanks to the father in 1:12. This appeal to ethnic identity is strengthened by Paul's introduction to the unity formula in 3:10 where he asserts that their new identity bears a family resemblance to the creator. Through and in Christ they have become children of God and are being regenerated in God's image. Consistently with ethnic rhetoric, Paul goes on in vv. 12-17 to describe the behavior that reflects the character of their glorious ancestor. They have become children of God; Paul urges them to act like it.

This ethnic vision of the church is further strengthened when we take account of how Paul presents Christ as their ideal, elder sibling. Their status as children of God is entirely dependent on their participation in Christ, the "firstborn from the dead." They are those who are subsequently born from the dead in Christ. In an overlapping image, Paul described their participation in Christ's sonship as *the father* (N.B., v. 12, expressing the subject of the verbs "rescued" and "transferred") having transferred them into "the kingdom of his beloved Son" (τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, 1:13). In 3:12, Paul applies

to the Colossian believers this parental affection in calling them “beloved” (ἠγαπημένοι) of God. He turns this characteristic virtue of the father in a social direction in 3:14 calling love for the saints (ἀγάπη) the summation of all the previously mentioned virtues. In fact, love can be seen to be a virtual family characteristic of the believers throughout Colossians (1:4, 7; 2:2; 4:7, 9, 14). Particularly telling for our present concern is Paul’s characterization in 4:7 and 9 of both Tychicus and Onesimus as “a beloved (ἀγαπητός) brother.” The believers are siblings who reflect the loving character of their father in how they love each other. In so doing, they confirm their status as participants in the beloved son.

A further strand of ethnic rhetoric that establishes this genealogical criterion is Paul’s use of inheritance language. Only descendants inherit. The ethnic construal of the believers’ identity as heirs in 1:12 is unmistakable, “giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.” They may call God “Father” and they are his heirs. The description of their inheritance as shared with the saints is a further identification of them with Israel.⁶³ Furthermore, because it is a jointly held inheritance, it immediately evokes the social dimension of being heirs together, namely fellow descendants. Then in the midst of the *Haustafel* in the parenetic section, Paul reminds slaves (and the whole church hearing this letter), “you will receive the inheritance as your reward” (3:24). Given the fact that slaves did not inherit anything except for their slave status because they were not legally persons with rights, this is a shocking affirmation. These slaves “according to the flesh” (the corollary of οἱ κατὰ σάρκα κύριοι, v. 22)⁶⁴ are in fact, children and heirs of God, their slave status having

⁶³ E.g. Num 18:20; Josh 14:1-3; Jer 51:19; Sir 44:19-23. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 75-76: “Certainly the phrase “the share of the inheritance of the saints” is unmistakably Jewish in character. And for anyone familiar with the Jewish Scriptures it would immediately evoke the characteristic talk of the promised land and of Israel as God’s inheritance.”

⁶⁴ The NRSV’s rendering of οἱ κατὰ σάρκα κύριοι in 3:22 as “your earthly masters” obscures the devaluation implicit in the modifier “according to the flesh” in Colossians, e.g. 2:11, 13, 18.

already been qualified in 3:11. The only uses of slave words (δουλ-root) outside of the *Haustafel* and the unity formula equate slaves with beloved siblings (1:7; 4:7, 12). Thus, for Paul their identity in Christ as heirs of God and siblings to each other takes precedence over their earthly identity as slaves. Paul's use of inheritance language participates in his overall construal of the new communal identity in ethnic terms.

Confirming Indices of Ethnicity

Since Paul's construal of the Colossian church meets our criterion of genealogy for an ethnic identity, we may fill out his ethnic vision by noting how he corelates other practices and values to this identity in Christ. These indices of their identity further characterize the believing community in typically ethnic terms. In distinguishing the church community from the surrounding social milieu, Paul highlights salient boundaries that derive from their corporate identity in Christ. These boundaries are corelated to the ethnic calculus we have noted above and conform to the strategies of ethnic identity construction introduced above in Chapter Two. Furthermore, the internal ethos Paul urges upon the Colossian believers follows contemporary kinship norms such that the church seems to be patterned on family solidarity. The presence of the *Haustafel* as part of Paul's moral guidance is further evidence that he considered familial ideals to be entailed in their identity in Christ.

Boundaries

We have noted above the centrality of the unity formula for the surrounding parenthesis in 3:5-17. The social dichotomies of the formula in v. 11 reflect the self-definition of privileged groups by means of a boundary that excludes others. Jews identified themselves by defining all others as "Greeks" or "foreskins" (ἀκροβυστία); Greeks did the same by defining non-Hellenes as "barbarians." The free were simply those who were not owned, yet this fact made them persons, in contrast to slaves, who were things. In citing the formula, Paul forbids such social divisions within the church. However, just

before he forbids these boundaries, he erects another one that excludes those who follow the way of life reflected in the vice lists of vv. 5-8. This perception of a group boundary is confirmed at the end of the parenthesis where Paul explicitly calls non-members “outsiders” (4:5).⁶⁵ Yet this stereotyping of the outsiders according to these vices would hardly have been perceived as exclusive in the ancient world. Few if any people would have identified with the negative characteristics Paul lists in vv. 5 and 8. They fulfill the same function as the out-group term “barbarian” in v. 11. Like the named identities in v. 11, so in the vice lists, Paul’s aim is not balanced social analysis. Rather, such stereotyping of out-groups is a rhetorical strategy of identity formation for insiders.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, what would have been striking is that Paul is creating a social group that unites members from normally exclusive and alienated social identities. That is, the circumcised need to include the “foreskins,” and Greeks need to identify with barbarians.

The boundaries of this new group in Christ do not follow conventional ethnic lines, as the unity formula makes clear. Rather the chief boundary seems to be the members’ confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ and their worship of God the father through him. This confession would constitute a social boundary vis-à-vis the pervasive cultic religious obligations of ancient Mediterranean life. That is, like Israel, this is an ethno-religious group whose chief distinctive and boundary is its exclusive worship of the God of Israel through Jesus Christ who has included them in God’s chosen people. The distinctiveness of the ethics promoted in these vice and virtue lists is debated, but what matters for this argument is that they are correlated to a new ethno-religious communal identity.⁶⁷ Paul

⁶⁵ Hay, *Colossians*, 129: “Thus 3:11 hints at a new division within humanity, one between those inside the church and those outside”

⁶⁶ Esler, *Galatians*, 44, 55-57; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 165.

⁶⁷ Regarding the argument that the ethos described in Paul’s vice and virtue lists is not distinctive in its Hellenistic environment, Hays, “Christology and Ethics,” 270, writes, “This reading imputes—unintentionally, no doubt—a peculiar bathos to Paul’s position: the eschatological spirit of God is given as a gift of grace to the nations through the death of God’s Son on the cross in order to enable Christ’s people to live in accordance with the conventional standards of cultured persons! Is it conceivable that Paul held such a

calls them to “lead lives worthy of the Lord,” 1:10. The contrast present between their former life in 3:7, “the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life,” and their new identity in 3:12, “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,” presumes a social and ethical reorientation. Paul characterizes both their former and their new ways as a shared social ethos. It bears recalling from the social science methodology introduced above in Chapter Two (pp. 69-74) that ethnic boundary markers do not imply an ethos entirely different from the surrounding culture. A high degree of cultural assimilation is possible without threatening the integrity or identity of the group so long as they maintain salient boundary markers that identify distinctively.

A key distinctive of this group is precisely its gathering together in manifest solidarity people who were defined in broader society by their mutual exclusion. A boundary for this group that identifies as God’s children in Christ Jesus is its members’ willingness to treat as family precisely those they are not expected so to treat. They are the people of reconciliation, just as they identify with the Lord through whom, “God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things.” Conversely, it seems one of the chief problems of the alternate philosophy in Colossae was that it drew boundaries where there ought to have been none, as implied by Paul’s warnings, “do not let anyone condemn you” (2:16), and “Do not let anyone disqualify you” (2:18).

It is important to note that the formula does not repudiate the existence of their various earthly identities, merely the social exclusion they entailed. This is consistent with our observation above in Chapter Two that the formation of an ethnic identity does not require denial of all other identities. Nested or overlapping identities are the norm, and difficulty arises only when heavily weighted indices of those identities conflict with each other. It is precisely instances of such role conflict that Paul negotiates in 3:18-4:1.

view?” I have been arguing that the unique feature of God’s people in Christ is precisely their inclusion on familial terms of people who would be considered social competitors or inferiors in society at large. This social reconciliation is the praxis coordinated with God’s cosmic reconciliation in Christ.

The *Haustafel* shows the saints' roles in society at large continuing in life in Christ. Similarly, Paul mentions several of his Jewish companions in 4:10-11 and says, "These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me."⁶⁸ Clearly, their ethnic identity as "the circumcision" is for Paul both positive and important in the kingdom of God. However, his new kinship with "co-workers for the kingdom of God" takes precedence over his birth and original socialization as a Jew. Just as the new identity in Christ relativized the status of a slave within the community, as we saw above regarding Paul's deployment of the inheritance metaphor, so also it reorders original ethnic identity behind the priority of the new community of brothers, while still allowing a continuing and positive evaluation of one's ethnicity by birth.

Kinship norms

Whereas the vices listed in vv. 5 and 8 are fairly stereotypical, Paul's positive vision in vv. 12-17 is remarkable for its familial ethos. The communal life described in these verses would not have been typical of adults in public in the ancient world. Rather these behaviors would have been considered weak and shameful outside of the safe harbor of one's family. As I surveyed in Chapter Two, above (pp. 57-58), in the ancient, honor-shame, agonistic society, non-related males in public would not and could not show "humility, meekness and patience."⁶⁹ Conversely, siblings were expected to look after one another's honor, showing mercy and deference in order to maintain familial harmony

⁶⁸ Hay, *Colossians*, 129: "This image makes them all spiritual equals, though 3:11 hints that they remain aware of their differences. In 4:11 Paul will indicate that he is very conscious of his Jewishness and that of his companions, and in 3:22-4:1 he will make it clear that differences between slaves and masters continue not only in consciousness but in outward conduct and obligations."

⁶⁹ Dunn, *Colossians*, 229; O'Brien, *Colossians*, 200-01; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 210. Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame," 29: ". . . Mediterraneans tend to consider all social interactions outside the family, biological or fictive, as potential contests for honor."

internally and collective honor externally.⁷⁰ As Bartchy asserts, “In the blood-kin family, such behavior was regarded as essential to its life. Paul now asserts that Israel’s God expects such solidarity to characterize the life of all those who have been called by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, without regard to one’s social status in the domestic or public realms.”⁷¹

Paul also transfers to the community in Christ this metaphor of consubstantiality that underwrites the social solidarity among “blood-kin.” Having elaborated this familial ethos in vv. 12-14, he recalls their identity as one body in v. 15. This metaphor of the body registers the typical ethnic bond of shared essence and has been shown to be a common *topos* in antiquity for urging familial concord. The culmination of this first section of parenesis rounds out their ethnic figuration by calling them together to give “thanks to God the Father” (v. 17) as they embody this ethos.

Household

The insertion of the *Haustafel* in the middle of the Colossian parenesis strengthens the argument that Paul conceives of the church community as an ethnic group.⁷² In their social milieu proper household management was a general concern, so it would be natural

⁷⁰ S. Scott Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings," *BTB* 29 (1999): 68-70.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷² It is commonly noted that “the syntactical flow of the ethical paraenesis would not be affected if one skipped 3.18-4.1 and read straight on from 3.17 to 4.2 . . .” — so Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians," *JSNT* 74 (1999): 94-95. With Lincoln, “The Household Code,” 95, I conclude that the absence of textual evidence for later interpolation, together with the links the author has created between the *Haustafel* and its context (ὁ ἕαν ποιῆτε, vv. 17, 23 and the insistent motivation being in and unto the Lord) require the interpreter to inquire as to why it was inserted here. Sandnes, *A New Family*, 107: “Injunctions concerning the Christian service in fact continue after the household code in Col 4:2-6 (cf. Acts 2:42), which is thus embedded in a larger structure that deals with life in the congregation, not particularly in the family. It is unnecessary to think that Paul is here interrupting his presentation of congregation by adding a section on family life.”

for a newly minted kinship network to need assurances of expected household ethics.⁷³ Apart from any theory of apologetic accommodation to a hostile social environment or of creeping institutionalism in the early church, these social concerns would arise as immediate concerns in a society where vigilance in household management was a chief preoccupation. The offense to the sensibilities of readers in modern, liberal democracies over the patriarchy reinforced by the *Haustafel*, is largely anachronistic.⁷⁴ Paul's adaptation of contemporary norms for the Christian household shows both his readiness to work within cultural norms and his insight into how the gospel relativizes those norms.

Angela Standhartinger has noted that despite the conservative and conventional vision encoded in the *Haustafel*, the most expansive section of exhortation, that to slaves and masters (3:22-4:1), contains several features that undercut a conventional reading.⁷⁵ First, as I noted above (pp. 228-29), casting slaves as heirs (v.24) enobles them as valued *persons* rather than reinforcing their legal status as *things* incapable of inheritance. Second, the assertion that with God there is no partiality (v.25), just as the address switches to the masters in 4:1, can only be a warning to masters and a comfort to slaves. Third, Paul's choice of the term ἰσότης (4:1) for how masters are to treat slaves underscores that God's impartiality has direct social implications for their treatment of slaves. Finally, the reminder that Christian masters are in fact slaves with a master in

⁷³ This has become the consensus view of the origins of the *Haustafeln* in the NT following the conclusions of David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 21-62. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "The Household Rules," in *The Family in Theological Perspective* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 49; Lincoln, "The Household Code," 100; Angela Standhartinger, "The Origin and Intention of the Household Code in the Letter to the Colossians," *JSNT* 79 (2000): 117-18; Dunn, *Colossians*, 243; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 78.

⁷⁴ Bartchy, "Undermining Patriarchy," 77: "His [Paul's] apparent goal was not the creation of an egalitarian community in the political sense, but a well functioning family in the kinship sense" Cf. Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers*, 20-21, 91.

⁷⁵ Standhartinger, "The Household Code," 127-129.

heaven, their purchase already having been evoked in 1:13-14, equates them with their own slaves, as has been implied by Paul's invocation of God's impartiality and his urging of ἰσότης. These features of the treatment of slaves and masters in the *Haustafel* confirm the social leveling pressure of the gospel and reflect the unity formula's vision (3:11) that familial unity and love take precedence to extant slave and free statuses. Thus, even though the *Haustafel* does not reflect modern, democratic egalitarianism it does reflect how the Pauline vision for familial unity in the church could relativize certain cultural forms without erasing them entirely. The extent to which we laud our bemoan such preservation depends largely on our own cultural assessment of the merits of those forms. But, as I have been arguing, apart from idolatry and sexual immorality, Paul does not judge cultural particularities *per se* but relativizes them inasmuch as they interfere with pursuit of familial solidarity in Christ and Christ-like love for fellow members. We see this dynamic confirmed in his treatment of household relationships in the Colossian *Haustafel*.

Whatever may have been Paul's full evaluation of these extant social roles—husband, wife, children, slaves—here he bends them to support his primary goal of building up the familial character and solidarity of the church. His implicit undercutting of the master/slave status differential, as I proposed above, and his softening of the harsher edges of patriarchy (3:19, 21; 4:1) can be seen as the effects of applying the virtues of 3:12-17 to their life together in that concrete social context. In this sense, the *Haustafel* confirms what we have observed previously, namely, that unity in this new ethnic identity does not entail the erasure of other extant social identities; rather it entails their reconciliation in a new overarching identity. The *Haustafel* configured the Christian household as a model community into which other believers could be welcomed as kin.⁷⁶ The importance of a well functioning household for Paul seems evident from the fact that

⁷⁶ Sandnes, *A New Family*, 106-11, 181-88.

all his churches were house-churches (e.g. Col 4:15), hosted by households whose inner-workings would necessarily affect community life in the church.⁷⁷ Conversely, the new world inaugurated by Christ ameliorates the hierarchy of the household system. This is consistent with Paul's objective of building ethnic unity and solidarity among the believers as the way of life "worthy of the Lord" who has made them kin.⁷⁸

Summary

This chapter has argued for reading Colossians as an instance of Paul's own description of his calling, "warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ." The theological wisdom he expounds in Col 1-2 has as its purpose the formation of mature community, united in proper self-understanding. His use of the baptismal unity formula in 3:11 may then be seen as foundational to his appeal and as expressing in distilled form the reconciliation he envisions. He constructs this identity and solidarity as ethnic unity that is the converse of the ethnic polarities rejected by the baptismal formula. Throughout Colossians we have seen that the identity for which Paul advocates is grounded genealogically through their identity in the Son with God as their father. The numerous ways in which Paul claims for them Israel's history and writes them into it as inheritors of their future have fulfilled our working model of ethnic discourse and identity construction. Moreover, I have argued that numerous of Paul's rhetorical tactics coincide with the norms of ethnic rhetoric. These include his pronouncement of group boundaries on the basis of their genealogical identity, the expectation of a uniquely familial ethos among them, his construal of them as one body sharing a common essence, and the prominence of modified household management concerns. All this supports, once again, the main thesis of this investigation that in Paul's usage the baptismal unity formula is to be understood within the mythic

⁷⁷ Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 78.

⁷⁸ Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 245.

context of ethnic identity construction based on identification with Christ and with Israel and as supporting a unique mode of life that reflects the reconciling character of Christ in their familial ethos and that includes members who are normally socially estranged.

The foundational myth that underwrites Paul's social vision is recounted in Col 1:12-23 more explicitly than it was in either Galatians or 1 Corinthians. Paul correlates the baptismal formula in 3:11 with this mythic vision, thereby showing how his aim to reconcile people of various identities into one new community is but a sub-plot of Christ reconciling all things to himself. As in previous chapters, we have seen how Paul's vision for reconciliation calls for ethnic solidarity maintained by an ethos of self-sacrificial love among the church's diverse members. What Paul rejects by means of the opposed pairs of the unity formula in 3:11 is the social alienation he denounced just previously in vv. 8-9. Within the familial love of the one body to which they were called (vv.12-15) there is room for members of various cultures and previous identities to maintain their particularity, as is clear from Paul's recognition of unique value of Onesimus and Epaphras each being "one of you" (4:9, 12) and from the succour Paul receives from certain of his fellow Christian workers because they are his fellow ethnic Jews (4:11). Similarly, the *Haustafel* of 3:18-4:1 explicitly accounts for the on-going impact of pre-Christian social identities within the church.

Similarly, we have seen in the polemical core of Colossians, 2:8-23, that Paul does not reject any of the named practices as a violation of their identity in Christ as he does violation of Christian boundaries against idolatry and immorality (3:5). What he opposes in that polemical section is social division and rejection based on those practices. As we have seen in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, Paul rejects the superimposition of any alternative cultural norms as indices of identity in Christ. His fundamental vision is for the social solidarity of all in Christ solely on the basis of identity with Christ who reconciles all things to himself through sacrificial love. He rejects those who reject that vision by their rejection of fellow believers on extraneous cultural grounds.

Paul's conclusion to his citation of the baptismal unity formula in 3:11, ". . . but Christ is all and in all," summarizes his cosmic, eschatological vision in which Christ is reconciling all to himself. This coda implies that Christ is in particular cultures and their practices, gathering them into a renewed wholeness. Paul has previously hinted at this dimension of his vision in his repetition of "all things" in the Christ-hymn of 1:15-20, in his naming Christ the head of all rule and authority (2:10) and in his reference to particular cultural practices as shadows of the substance embodied in Christ (2:17). All these comments suggest that Paul envisions not the erasure of cultural particularity but the fulfilment of all cultures in Christ. Yet this completion lies in the indeterminate future (3:4), and, in the meantime, the church is to strive to approximate such fulfillment as a microcosm of this future cosmos.

This eschatological reserve insists both on the preservation of cultural diversity within the church and the relativization of those cultures by their call to embody Christ's reconciliation in a new familial community. Inasmuch as their pre-Christian identities would cause division within the community or violate identity with Christ, those aspects must submit to Christian indices. These Gentile Colossian believers have abandoned certain of their previous ways (1:21) in order to identify with this new community with its profoundly Jewish ethos. Yet Paul writes them into the story of Israel solely through participation in Christ (1:12-14) and undercuts attempts to enshrine certain Jewish boundary markers as normative for the church. He argues that in Christ they have received all the benefits of Jewish circumcision and more (2:11-13). Thus, in Christ, Jews remain Jews (4:11) and Gentiles remain Gentiles (1:27) and the norms of neither culture become identified with the new community in Christ without substantial Christological reconfiguration.

Paul's ecclesial vision also relativizes the identities and roles associated with the ancient household. The *paterfamilias* is certainly a "ruler and authority" of whom Christ is the head (2:10). Paul writes Christ into the *Haustafel* as the household becomes

reconciled to God in accordance with Paul's mythic vision (1:20). His repeated characterization of their behavior as in/for/from the Lord and his placement of the *paterfamilias* under "a Master in heaven" (4:1) locate this human structure within the economy of his foundational myth. His comments replicate within this structure the virtues he has commended for corporate unity in 3:12-17. He urges the weaker members—wives, children and slaves—to continue in what the culture demanded of them anyway but with a fresh motivation as it is now in the Lord and part of this greater vision God is accomplishing among them. The *paterfamilias*, on the other hand, is called to practice the love, gentleness and fairness appropriate to his new identity toward his household members.

As much as we today wish Paul had gone further in eliding these patriarchal structures into full egalitarianism, the social liberty to pursue such autonomy and equality did not exist in Paul's world. People were embedded in households and families which were in turn embedded in kinship and patronage networks. There was almost no social life outside these structures. Ramsay MacMullen paints for us a picture of urban life in the Empire in which being an independent free-lance laborer was worse than being a slave in a stable household.⁷⁹ Redeeming the household structure was likely the most progressive vision available. Paul provides for us here an example of pressing the implications of the gospel on a given social reality with which the church had to deal. These roles continue in Christ but are relativized by Christ's supremacy. This attenuation most affects the *paterfamilias* whose status is paralleled with that of his slaves as he is reminded of his ownership by Christ. His actual slaves have been characterized as children of God who receive an inheritance (3:24), even as he is characterized as a slave of the master in heaven whose household norms and values are explained in 3:12-17 and

⁷⁹ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 92-93.

4:2-5. We are justified to perceive in the *Haustafel* not a vision of egalitarianism but what David Horrell has characterized elsewhere as Paul's egalitarian tendencies.⁸⁰

The *Haustafel* shows the persistence of pre-Christian identities and roles, though relativized. How much we value the preservation of those identities or welcome their attenuation depends on our assessment of their inherent goodness. We may thoroughly welcome the continuing influence of members' ethnic heritage while wishing to weaken the presence of slavery. Paul does not provide a template for resolution of this dialectic between preservation and change, just as he refuses to resolve the tension implicit in his eschatological reservation. Yet he presents a foundational mythic vision that Christ is working in all things to reconcile them to himself. He seems to navigate the various social roles and identities within the church on a case by case basis governed by his commitment to preserving family-like unity through the practice of Christ-like love.

⁸⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 99 n. 3, 131.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The Aims and Methodology of this Study

I began this study by noting the ambiguity that characterizes most interpretations of the baptismal formula cited by Paul in Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:11. Wayne Meeks' and David Horrell's recommendation that perspectives from the sociology of knowledge govern examinations of this formula provided the framework for assessing the major streams of interpretation of this formula. That review showed that attempts to conform Paul's usage to ubiquitous Hellenistic philosophical and religious concerns for anthropological sameness (e.g. the myth of primal androgyny) were well grounded in the cultural realities of antiquity but failed as readings of these epistles. In particular, these approaches failed in their attempts to connect the formula with the social vision in support of which Paul cited it. On the other hand, we found that most proposals locating Paul's citation of the formula in the context of his reformation of Judaism failed either to adequately describe that mythic, ideological process or to specify the social vision Paul endorsed by the formula. The two exceptions to this weakness, studies by Ben Weibe and David Horrell, both showed the promise of characterizing Paul's inner-Jewish discourse as differential community construction rather than as focused on individualistic soteriology. In particular, Horrell's study highlighted the fecundity of merging so-called "new perspective" readings of Paul, which previously have tended towards functionalism, with sociology of knowledge insights into the processes of identity construction. In that vein, Horrell noted two story lines in the Pauline mythic context, that of Christ's death and resurrection and that of Israel's reconstitution in Christ.

This study has accepted these mythic histories as crucial for reading Paul's construction of identity and for understanding his use of the baptismal unity formula in each of these three epistles. But I have also moved to a greater level of generality and have located both of these symbolic resources within Paul's strategy of ethnic identity

construction. The main reason for this shift is that it works and is more easily defensible than specifying the contours of the stories of Christ and Israel in Paul's letters as well as their intersection in identity construction. I have shown that ethnic identity construction is everywhere apparent in Paul's rhetorical strategies and that he uses the baptismal unity formula to support that identity formation. He clearly also invokes Israel's heritage and identity, as well as the believers' identity with Christ in defining their corporate existence. Yet to isolate either of these traditions from the other cultural resources Paul utilizes in his ethnic identity construction would require a level of detail and theoretical precision that would exceed the limits of this study and, in the end, may not increase clarity.¹ Nevertheless, by demonstrating the fruitfulness of ethnic identity construction as a perspective from which to assess Paul's epistolary strategies, I have been able sufficiently to describe both the mythic context and social function governing Paul's citation of the baptismal unity formula. Moreover, this approach does not obscure the role of Israel and Christ in Paul's configuration of the church; rather, it brings those traditions into greater relief and coordinates them with his broader rhetorical strategy. This approach also has the advantage of focusing on the social function of Paul's discourse rather than on reconstructing the contours of implicit narrative substructure. The social function of his letters is apparent on their surface; their narrative substructure, while potent, is frustratingly subterranean.

Yet to accomplish my goal of locating the baptismal unity formula within a symbolic and social vision of ethnic group maintenance, I had to define both the concept of an ethnic group and the strategy of ethnic discourse. Ethnic theory serves well as a lens for my reading of Paul's letters because it attends to the discursive and social processes by which groups construct and maintain themselves. It is this social function of Paul's letters

¹ Note the studies in Bruce W. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), regarding the challenges of specifying the contours of the narratives guiding Paul's reflections, despite the general agreement that such narrative dynamics are present.

that I emphasize in this reading. My introduction to ethnic theory noted that the observable cultural phenomena that groups consider determinative of an ethnic identity serve that function only by group consensus that those phenomena signal the presence of a shared genealogy. That is, ethnic groups are discursively constructed because the connection between cultural norms and a genealogically defined identity is not objectively observable but must be asserted. It is just this genealogical validation of a group's identity and cultural practice that qualifies a group as ethnic. To the extent that Paul grounds their common identity and proper ethos in shared genealogical roots, his epistles exemplify ethnic identity construction.

Because ethnic identity “. . . classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background,” it governs other social roles and identities and presupposes a common essence and primordial bond among its members.² Metaphors of consubstantiality, such as blood or body metaphors or myths of autochthony frequently occur in ethnic discourse, functioning to reinforce ethnic solidarity. Typical ethnic social practices such as endogamy, commensality and common cult serve this same function of reinforcing the primordial ethnic bond. Paul's recourse to metaphors of common essence, such as his body metaphor in 1 Corinthians, and his promotion of typical ethnic social practices such as table fellowship and endogamy conform to this model of ethnic identity construction.

I introduced Anthony D. Smith's analysis of types, modes and content of ethnic myths to highlight that both ancient Judaism and Paul's ecclesial vision conform to the particular type of myth that Smith has identified as religious and communal. His historical survey demonstrates that this particular type of myth most effectively united all strata of society and mobilized for collective action and group persistence over time. The characteristics of such myths are shared religious as well as genealogical traditions that

² Barth, "Introduction," 10.

are usually fused as spiritual genealogies that, in turn, authorize strong in-group/out-group contrast. Their myths need not be formally recounted but are evoked by conventional allusions and symbols. By means of this symbol system and ritualized practice the group validates their boundaries, unique dignity and normative ethos. My subsequent chapters have traced Paul's recourse to just such mythic resources to reinforce his churches' distinct identity, unity and ethos.

Taking a cue from Daniel Boyarin, I further distinguished between genealogical myths and myths of autochthony as generating different social practices and visions. His proposal of a diaspora identity, that is, a genealogical ethnic identity that makes no claims to territorial origins or mandate, shows promise for highlighting how Paul constructs a society of servants whose ethnic bond is primary to other social loyalties but whose ethos eschews social power and values the embrace of difference.

Ethnic theory highlights that the norms and boundaries of an ethnic group are continually renegotiated in various social settings and in successive generations as their foundational myths authorize fresh self-understanding and practice in ever-new contexts. The ancestors, historical traditions, rituals and the named group identity persist through time but the group's actual membership and social practice is negotiable, though always on the basis of the foundational genealogical myths. Thus, as we observe Paul radically renegotiating Israelite identity by means of the intervention of Jesus the Messiah, we see ethnic identity construction on the basis of the Scriptures and the gospel. This socio-theological process did not terminate with Paul's letters; rather they have now become part of the mythic and symbolic resources by which the churches that claim them as canonical continue to negotiate their identity and practice in multi-cultural context. Careful observation of Paul's use of tradition, including the baptismal unity formula, to promote ecclesial solidarity and faithfulness may guide his heirs in embodying the Scriptures today.

Conclusions of this Study

Galatians 3:28 in Epistolary Context

We saw regarding Galatians that Paul's immediate aim in writing was to dissuade the Galatian believers from submitting to circumcision and from conformity to Jewish identity as essential to participation in God's new covenantal people. Paul's chief objection to this requirement is that it diminishes the radical reconfiguration of the cosmos wrought by the cross of Christ. Throughout Galatians Paul stresses that the concrete result of this apocalyptic transformation is a new community that reflects Christ's nullification of social division and alienation, including, most notably, the social impact of the law of Moses. The broad apocalyptic antithesis between Christ and cosmos is specified in Galatians in primarily social terms. In this way, the baptismal formula epitomizes Paul's entire argument in the epistle, reflecting social alienation in the dichotomies of the formula and affirming a new reconciled humanity as "all of you are one in Christ Jesus." We saw that the unity formula summarizes what Paul means by the phrase "the truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14; 5:7), from which he derives the social mandate for unrestricted table fellowship.

Paul's explicitly genealogical arguments in Gal 3-4 establish the believers' new ethnic identity as children of God through the unique son Jesus Christ into whom they have been incorporated. On this basis they are able to claim the Israelite ancestors Abraham and Sarah. However, even as their identity is typologically based on Israel, Paul has deferred the territorial aspect of that identity. They constitute a diaspora ethnic identity whose homeland is "the Jerusalem above" (5:26) and of whom Paul asserts, "through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" (5:5). In the meantime, their aim is not self-determination or autonomy, but loving one's neighbor as oneself (5:14).

This genealogically grounded ethnic identity is the basis of Paul's appeals that they act as kin and embody the archetypal ancestral virtue of faith(fulness) that characterized

Abraham and has now been fully modeled in Christ's faithfulness. This faithfulness is expressed in Galatians as self-sacrificial love for those who have formerly been excluded, as exemplified by Christ loving and giving himself for sinners. In this way, overcoming social division in a new community expresses the central characteristic of God's new, eschatological people.

Paul's gospel in conjunction with the foundational history of Israel as rendered in the Scriptures becomes the mythic framework in which the baptismal formula takes on significance. Paul's allusions to their baptism (3:27), Christ's crucifixion (2:20; 3:7; 6:11) and to "the Israel of God" (6:16) function as conventional symbols evoking that mythic context. The virtues Paul commends in Gal 5-6 derive from their identity with Christ and constitute the familial ethos commensurate with their new corporate identity in him. Paul further implicates the baptismal unity formula in this way of life by echoing it in 5:6 and 6:15. Most pointedly, this ethnic ethos is characterized according to the ideal Son, Christ whose self-sacrificial love for others establishes the standard of faithfulness as affirmed in 5:13c, "through love become slaves to one another." The baptismal unification formula epitomizes this christological mode of maintaining unity as a community drawn from diverse sectors of society.

Having noted Paul's grounding of the baptismal unity formula in this mythic context and the plea for ethnic solidarity he makes by means of it, I argued that in terms of the theory of ethnicity I am using, Galatians primarily argues against the assimilation model of the church ($A+B \rightarrow B$) and for amalgamation ($A+B \rightarrow C$), where the ethos and indices defining 'C' are derived solely from Paul's apocalyptic gospel of Christ. Galatians is a vigorous case against the dominance of any particular alternate cultural identity within the church while it embraces the presence of people of various identities within the new community. In fact, it seems to require embrace of the natural outsider in order to prevent a culturally homogenous church from defaulting towards identification of its own ethos and indices with Christ. Such a case would not be ethnogenesis at all but merely the

continuation of the original group with some change over time, as is normal for all ethnic groups. For Paul, the apocalyptic disruption of Christ's death and resurrection creates a new community in which previous identities continue only insofar as they do not impede the social solidarity and Christ-like ethos of the new community. The primary way this apocalyptic community is actualized is the family-like embrace of members who were formerly socially alienated. Inasmuch as such solidarity appears to members of the pre-Christian group, in this case Jews, to violate key boundaries of their identity, they will consider the new community a threat to their own integrity, as appears to be the case in the Antioch incident (Gal 2:11-21). In such settings of conflict, Paul expects believers to prioritize solidarity with the new Christian group to take precedence over demands for loyalty from the pre-Christian identity group. Such eroding of that identity takes place not because of its inherent incompatibility with Christ but because of demands for allegiance from the pre-Christian identity group.

Ethnic theory highlights that a group's boundaries may be renegotiated in changing social contexts without thereby undermining the continuity of that ethnic identity. Ethnic identity always involves such dynamic social construction according to its changing contexts. Paul's commitment to rapprochement with the Jerusalem church leaders highlights his vision that his churches preserve continuity with historic and ethnic Israel. Precisely how Jewish identity may persist within the Pauline communities is not elucidated in Galatians, however, it is clear in the epistle that Paul expects his churches to practice familial solidarity encompassing both Jews and Gentiles, as was initially demonstrated in the Antioch table fellowship. Navigation of the practical challenges that arise in a community whose members are from various cultural backgrounds is more prominent in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:13 in Epistolary Context

With regard to 1 Corinthians, I presented evidence implicating the baptismal unity formula in several sections of the epistle before its explicit citation in 12:13. These earlier sections helpfully elaborate for us the formula's mythic setting and social implications. My survey of Paul's language and imagery for social unity in 1 Corinthians highlighted his pervasive ethnic rhetoric. Furthermore, examination of how Paul urged unity regarding the various fractious issues in Corinth demonstrated that he bases his appeal on their new identity in Christ, which he presents as ethnic solidarity. As in Galatians, he construed this ethnic identity in terms of Israel's Scripture and history as mediated through the apocalyptic transformation of Christ's death and resurrection. This mythic framework provides the warrants for the social ethos he urges.

The believers' worship of Israel's God through his Son is at the heart of this apocalyptically reconfigured story of Israel. Their strict monotheism, avoidance of idolatry and sexual mores all imitate Israel's defining boundaries, though now revalidated christologically. Furthermore, the formula's vision for including non-Israelites is paradigmatic for how the new community pursues unity across previous social divisions. This disruption of Israel's identity allows also for continuity in that we showed how Paul's social vision embraces present social realities and differences within the body of Christ. The characteristic ethos of this new community is to be their imitation of Christ's self-sacrificial love on the cross in their disavowal of social privilege and status in order to include others as family. In this way former identities, status and roles persist in the new community but are subordinated to the chief goal of preserving unity in the body of Christ by deference to others. In this way, the baptismal formula in 12:13 epitomizes the goal of the letter that is expressed in his thesis statement in 1:10, "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose."

Paul's apocalyptic reconfiguration of Israel's identity through Christ not only has radically altered the boundaries of the covenant people, such that they now include Gentiles as Gentiles, but he has also reconfigured Israel's territorial aspirations. Whereas the exodus generation of Israel, with whom Paul identifies the believers in 1 Cor 10:1-22, were journeying to the Promised Land, Paul's churches' ultimate home is located beyond the end of history in the consummation of God's kingdom when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:24-28). In the present, their entire ethnic mandate is oriented towards building up the community in whatever place they are without aspiring to local social dominance. Rather, Paul expects the opposite because "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are" (1 Cor 1:27-28). This vision fits the proposal of a diaspora ethnic identity that I adopted from Daniel Boyarin.

Paul's development of the body metaphor for their corporate identity interprets his citation of the baptismal unity formula in 12:13 and conforms remarkably well to the amalgamation model of ethnogenesis I have promoted ($A+B \rightarrow C$), where the distinctives of A and B are not rejected but are valued and nurtured within the diverse solidarity of C. In the epistle, Paul addresses several concrete challenges arising from this cultural diversity within the new community. I analyzed the sources of tension that Paul engages in greatest details, namely, sexuality, marriage and food scruples in order to assess how alternate social identities both persist and are relativized in Christ. This examination showed, in concert with David Horrell's study, *Solidarity and Difference*, that Paul promotes four key indices as governing their identity in Christ. Two items are foundational metanorms that guide their corporate ethos. They are a non-negotiable commitment to family-like solidarity among the believers and a Christ-like pattern of self-sacrificial love to support that solidarity. The other two items, more boundary markers than metanorms, are Christologically based bans on idolatry and sexual

immorality. As in Galatians, Paul rejects any other cultural norms becoming identified with the new community in Christ, whether it be celibacy or avoiding meat that has been offered to idols.

Paul navigates each of the points of conflict that do not involve the key indices of Christian identity according to his guiding commitments to preserving social solidarity and calling members to make loving sacrifices for the sake of that unity. Thus these values constitute metanorms for the community defined by Christ. It is in the context of adjudicating these ambiguous ethical issues, where each position is consistent with life in Christ, that Paul invokes the terms of the baptismal unity formula, highlighting how it expresses for him the reconciliation of differences in a new community, not the assimilation of those differences to one pre-Christian cultural norm or the other. His particular solutions are colored by local social conditions and are governed by this core ethos of solidarity through Christ-like other-regard. By comparing Paul's treatment of table fellowship in Gal 2:11-21 and 1 Cor 8-10, I highlighted the contingent implications of Paul's ethical reflection, even as his core metanorms and mythic vision are consistent.

Particular identities are relativized, not because difference is a problem *per se*, as Boyarin would have it, but only as a function of their call to pursue above all their new corporate identity in Christ and to reflect his self-sacrificial love in their life together. In 1 Corinthians we find clear affirmation of the continuing presence of members from each of the identities mentioned in the baptismal formula. Jewish Christians, for instance, would find Paul's emphasis on the exclusive worship of the God of Israel and the avoidance of sexual immorality to be amenable to preserving their Jewish identity. Furthermore, Paul endorses the on-going practice of cultural particularities such as circumcision, so long as it is not made normative for the church. His treatment of meat that has been offered to idols calls for the community to create space for those of more restrictive dietary scruples, even as he refuses identification of those restrictions as Christian norms. This self-sacrificial love of accommodating one another at meals is an

index of Christian identity. The crisis for Jewish Christians would primarily be the challenge of practicing familial solidarity with non-Jews, and to this extent, Jewish identity is attenuated. Similarly, enslaved, gender and married statuses continue in the Christian community, though each is attenuated in ways specifically relevant to those identities. We have seen that Paul presents a preference for freedom over slavery and for singleness over marriage because of the greater liberty they provide for pursuing the edification and growth of the church. Nevertheless, he affirms the full honor and membership of slaves and the married in the community, refusing to make freedom or singleness indices of life in Christ. This pragmatic calculus also attenuates pre-Christian ethnic identities to the extent that those loyalties would inhibit practicing ethnic solidarity and Christ-like other-regard with all church members of all backgrounds.

Col 3:11 in Epistolary Context

The citation of the baptismal unity formula in Col 3:11 anchors and epitomizes the parenetic vision toward which the entire letter aims. The lengthy cosmic and theological first two chapters of Colossians establish the mythic framework that underwrites Paul's social vision in Col 3-4. Thus, Colossians, more than Galatians and 1 Corinthians, explicitly elaborates the mythic framework that bears on understanding the baptismal unity formula. Despite Colossians' distinctive Christology, it nevertheless conforms to the ethnic myth we have discerned in Galatians and 1 Corinthians. The believers' new, united identity is patterned on Israel as reconfigured through the story of Christ. I argued that this apocalyptic mythic and social figuration of Israel in and through Christ is apparent in Paul's linking of a traditional Christian confession that trades in exodus imagery (1:12-14) with the cosmic, christological hymn in 1:15-20 that celebrates the one in whom they have received that deliverance. Paul's presentation of the church as the present microcosm of what God is ultimately doing in the whole cosmos through Christ makes the believers' reconciling community life in this age the sign of the new creation.

The echoes of the christological hymn from 1:15-20 surrounding Paul's citation of the baptismal unity formula in 3:11 coordinate the social vision of 3:10-17 with that cosmic mythic context.

It is also by means of the christological hymn that Paul introduces the concept of the church as Christ's body. However, here, unlike 1 Corinthians, the image reflects ancient traditions that imagined the entire cosmos as a body rather than the *topos* of the body for brotherly cooperation in the family. Yet Paul's parenetic use of the body image is the same, urging that participation in Christ's body, here his cosmic body, requires loving, cooperative and harmonious relations among the believers as reflecting God's ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ's body.

Paul's presentation of the believers in Colossians as family is ultimately rooted in their incorporation into Christ's identity as God's beloved son. This ethnic logic is identical to that in Galatians and 1 Corinthians. On this basis Paul again calls the believers siblings and urges upon them behaviors that reflect contemporary kinship norms. I argued that Paul's modulation of traditional concerns for household management in Col 3:18-4:1 demonstrate that this community has to reckon with their members' worldly identities and statuses as they work out their familial unity. This earthly realism and particularity conforms to what we've seen to be the continuity present in Paul's apocalyptic disruption. That continuity gains further mythic support from the Christ hymn's assertion that in Christ God is reconciling all things to himself. Thus participation in God's future for the cosmos does not entail denial of worldly identities or attachments but their reconfiguration and reconciliation in the new community inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection. The deferred consummation of this future restoration also evades any territorial aspect of the believers' ethnic identity, making Paul's social vision in Colossians correspond to the concept of a diaspora identity. The echoes of the exodus in 1:12-14 project not a future in the Promised Land but in God's future cosmic

reconciliation (1:15-20, 23). The mandate derived from their mythic foundations is entirely social and is epitomized by the baptismal formula in 3:11.

In Paul's treatment of cultural practices pertaining to social identity in the so-called polemical core of Col 2:8-23, he forcefully rejects the introduction of indices to their identity in Christ that do not derive from his foundational mythic vision of Christ's universal supremacy and reconciling work. These practices are not rejected for their own sake, as would be sexual immorality or idolatry, rather Paul opposes them because they are being imposed to judge and divide within the Christian community in violation of Paul's foundational commitment to Christian solidarity. Some of these alternate bases of identity do receive some backhanded affirmation from Paul in that he accepts them as "a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." This implies that at least some of these practices and the cultures they describe are among the "all things" Christ is reconciling to himself and bringing to fulness. To that extent, continuing their imperfect existence within the Christian community embodies and represents the eschatological reconciliation yet to be revealed. Paul's deep appreciation in 4:9-12 of the value of co-workers representing different social origins, including his own, highlights his affirmation of the continuity of previous identities within the new humanity in Christ. These conclusions conform to the pattern exhibited in Paul's use of the baptismal unity formula in Galatians and 1 Corinthians in that here, as before, Paul means by the formula that members of various social groups are reconciled into a new communal identity defined simply by participation in Christ and in Israel's story as reconfigured in him. He espouses a Christ-like loving ethos to nurture the solidarity between these members drawn from various cultural backgrounds. Again, this exhibits the amalgamation pattern of ethnogenesis (A+B→C) that helps clarify the status of alternate identities within Paul's ethnic vision. Paul provides a Christological mythic foundation for the incorporation of diversity into this new cosmic body and thereby endorses the preservation of cultural

particularity in Christ, so long as none of those alternate cultural norms become indices of the Christian community or are used to divide it.

Synthesis

This thesis has confirmed the instincts of Meeks, MacDonald, Gundry-Volf and others that the ancient myth of primal androgyny does not seem to animate Paul's usage of this baptismal unity formula. Its mythic context is, rather, Paul's apocalyptic refashioning of Israel's covenantal and ethnic identity through the transforming events of Christ's death and resurrection. Thus, for Paul, the unity formula finds its bearings in reference to the story of God fashioning a new people on the basis of the stories of Israel and of Christ. Furthermore, I have shown that in each instance Paul uses the baptismal formula to epitomize and support his social vision of a reconciling community that embraces as family people drawn from mutually alienated social groups. The baptismal formula asserts that these paired oppositional identities—Jew versus Greek, slave versus free, male versus female (or married versus unmarried)—become one new thing in Christ, and that thing is a new ethnic group in which members treat one another as siblings. In this arrangement, those who bring into the new community higher social status or greater means make the greater sacrifice by divesting some of that privilege in order to practice sibling-like affection and reciprocity with those of formerly marginalized identities. This social ethos embodies the character of the model son, Jesus Christ. In this way the symbol of the cross epitomizes the story of Christ and constitutes part of the mythic framework justifying this social arrangement. The boundaries of this community are a modification of Israelite identity. Paul endorses the strict monotheism, avoidance of idolatry and of sexual immortality that typified Jewish language of separation, as reflected in the stereotypical vice lists in each epistle. However, Paul stridently rejects the typical Jewish boundary concerns for circumcision, Sabbath and festival observance and dietary restrictions as valid for defining this new community that

derives its corporate identity from Israel's history and Scriptures. The logic of this reconfiguration appears to be Paul's reflection on how God has consummated the ethnic logic of Israel's covenants in Christ, incorporation into whom is the means of access to Israel's history and God's promises. Because Christ alone defines the new covenant people, indices of that identity that do not derive from Christ become adiaphorous. Paul's rejection of both idolatry and sexual immorality, while analogous to Israel's, both receive new christological foundations.³ Christ has revealed the God of Israel as the Father and has made the believers into fellow sons and heirs resulting in the mandate for exclusive worship of him through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the reclamation of creation in Christ emphasizes both discontinuity and continuity between creation and new creation. Thus, Paul embraces present worldly status, including bodily aspects, as participating in the new communal identity in Christ. "The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor 6:13c). On this basis he rejects sexual immorality as violating the boundary between Christ and cosmos and argues for typical ethnic endogamy among believers.

Beyond these conventional Jewish boundaries, what Paul primarily argues for in these epistles is a new community whose chief distinguishing characteristic is its social reconciliation of members from normally alienated social groups. Their embrace of members from conventional out-groups (Greek, slave, Scythian, barbarian, female) against whom privileged groups (Jew, free, male) defined themselves now constitutes their definitive familial characteristic. This identity and ethos reflects both Christ, the iconic Son in whom they gain their new identity as God's children, as well as the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham that "all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you" (Gal 3:8c, citing Gen 12:3). On the basis of this christologically forged genealogical

³ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 140-52.

identity, Paul can assert of his complex socially mixed congregations, “All of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28d).

In view of these results, we can now summarize the answers to Boyarin’s legitimate socio-ethical questions that I summarized above in Chapters One and Two (pp. 19-20, 75-77). First, in response to his critique that Paul envisioned an anthropological uniformity by emphasizing a disembodied human essence, I have demonstrated that Paul was above all concerned to cultivate concrete communities that embraced cultural diversity within a new ethnic solidarity. Second, Boyarin projected back onto Paul the later Christian history of assimilating minority cultures and identities to dominant cultural norms, thus marginalizing and dehumanizing those others. I have demonstrated that Paul strongly resisted such cultural hegemony within the church and found resources in his apocalyptic gospel to relativize all cultural norms, particularly those that would attempt to become normative within the Christian community. Paul vigorously advocates a very limited set of indices of identity in Christ that we have described as ethnic solidarity, self-sacrificial love for others in that community, and the typical Jewish boundaries against idolatry and sexual immorality, now revalidated through union with Christ. We have seen Paul defend this configuration of the Christian community in each of the epistles examined. This minimal set of indices allows for a great variety of alternate identities and cultural norms to persist within the church, so long as they are not used to violate familial solidarity within the church or established as dominant norms for the church. We have seen in each epistle that Paul’s most strenuous objections are provoked by attempts from certain cultural groupings to establish their norms as definitive of the community in Christ. He refuses any cultural hegemony in the church apart from those fundamental indices of identity in Christ he has promoted.

This Pauline social vision corresponds to the amalgamation pattern of ethnogenesis I borrowed from ethnic theorists ($A+B \rightarrow C$). In Galatians we saw Paul opposing the establishment of certain Jewish norms as indices of the new identity in Christ not because

they no longer had their own value but because they were being imposed on non-Jewish members in violation of new unity forged solely through participation in Christ and his apocalyptic relativization of all other norms. In 1 Corinthians, Paul exemplifies for the church the kind of Christologically grounded ethical reflection that will enable them to navigate the social conflicts that arise from combining members of various backgrounds into this new community. The more explicitly expressed Christology of Colossians grounds Paul's social vision for the incorporation of different social identities and roles into the one new Christian community. Colossians 2:8-23 is similar to what we saw in Galatians in that Paul strenuously opposes the imposition of alternate cultural norms upon the believers, though without rejecting the legitimacy of all those alternate practices for their own sakes. In the *Haustafel* of Col 3:18-4:1 we see Paul's acceptance of present cultural structures and norms as well as his relativization of them in view of Christ's supremacy and of Christ-like virtues. In each case we see Paul refusing any particular cultural dominance among the believers as he insists on the reconciliation of persistent alternate identities within this new ethnic solidarity that relativizes those other identities only to the extent that their dynamic social construction will continue changing within this new communal context. The precise contours of those changes will vary significantly due to local social contingencies and they will occur through mutual engagement governed by the metanorms of solidarity and loving regard for one another. But these changes are not oriented towards establishing a dominant Christian culture or anthropological and cultural uniformity; rather, in Paul's vision these dynamic social processes are constantly geared towards embracing members of yet other cultural backgrounds, even the ultimate outsider, signalled by the inclusion of the Scythian in the Colossians instantiation of the unity formula. In Paul's mythic vision, the baptismal unity formula denies the social exclusion expressed by the dichotomous pairs and insists on one new community comprised of members of many social backgrounds and statuses who become "one in

Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28d), “one body” (1 Cor 12:13a) who thereby reflect Christ who “is all and in all” (Col 3:11b).

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