

ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLES IN PAUL'S COVENANT THEOLOGY: PAULINE LITERATURE AND THE PEOPLES

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 chapter 11 of the title *The Concept of Ethnicity in the Bible: A Theological Analysis*
 which has been reviewed in this issue at "[Review & Preview](#)" section.

Introduction: Romans 4

The Lord God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many peoples (Gn 17:4-5). Paul correctly interprets this to mean that he would be the father of all, both the Jews and gentile peoples, including all clans and ethnicities. In other words, Paul states that Abraham is father of believers who are from both "uncircumcised" and "circumcised" ethno-religious groups (Rom 4:11-12). Paul further explains this to mean that Abraham would be the "heir of the world" (Rom 4:13). The "world" in the context does not mean merely a social system outside of the institutional church. Instead in the context, Paul explains the meaning of "world" [κόσμος] to be "many nations" [πολλῶν ἐθνῶν]. Here he is explicitly alluding to Genesis 17:4-5 [πατήρ πλήθους ἐθνῶν, LXX]. The promise to all the seed of Abraham, then, is that Abraham would become the father of "us all" [πατήρ πάντων ἡμῶν]. "All" includes equal access to a free gift of righteousness for both Jews and "Greeks," that is non-Jewish, idolatrous ethnicities (see also Gal 3:1-17). This is a key theme throughout Romans (Schirrmacher 1993).

Romans 11

Romans 9-11 discusses the relationship of ethnic Israel and the idolatrous peoples. In summary, Paul's basic theme is whether God's promise to ethnic Israel has failed (Rom 9:6a) because Israel is now cursed and hardened as a whole people (excluding a believing minority) (Rom 11:3) (see Dunn 1991; Piper 1993b; Moo 1996; Schreiner 1998). Paul further states that God has temporarily cut ethnic Israel out of the covenantal blessing (excepting the remnant) so that the non-Hebrew peoples can be engrafted into an enlarged Commonwealth of Israel, which is Abraham's believing seed. Only then, out of jealousy, will all ethnic Israel be saved (except, by analogy, a remnant of unbelievers). They will by faith be re-grafted back into the root of their own covenant promises. When that occurs, they will find the Christians from the ethnies are now, by faith, co-heirs with them of Abrahamic promises. In this Paul is consistent with the OT prophecies of the conversion of the peoples, some of which he mentions (e.g., Rom 15:5-12, 16:25-27).

Context and Background Issues

Comparing Romans 1:1-17 and 15:15-25, Paul sandwiches his doctrine of righteousness by faith for all peoples between his expressed missionary desire to come to Rome and from there to go to Spain. Note how mission to the idolatrous ethnies of the world [τὰ ἔθνη] receives a prominent place in the introduction, conclusion, and yet again in the final doxology [Rom 16:25-27], especially the phrase thrice repeated in similar words "has been made known to all the nations" [εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος]. The two passages thus form a sort of inclusio. These passages order the construction of the Epistle, giving each theological development the "proper place in Paul's conception of mission" (Legrand 1990, 114).

“Israel” in Romans 11

Also sandwiched between this mission vision, Paul shows the relationship of his mission to the ethnies to God’s promises to ethnic Israel. Paul thus “vindicate[s] God’s faithfulness to his declared purposes for this people” (Howell 1998, 110). The major question in Romans 11 is whether “Israel” in the context means ethnic Israel (“Israel according to the flesh” [τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα; 1 Cor 10:18]). Or does it mean the new community in Christ, “the *true* circumcision” [ἡ περιτομή] (Phil 3:3; Rom 9:6; Gal 6:16).

To answer the question, observe first of all the “single basic theme” (Moo 1996, 671) throughout chapter 11. That theme starts with Rom 11:2: “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew,” and ends with Rom 11:28, forming an *inclusio*.

From the standpoint of the gospel they [the Israelites] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Rom 11:28)

God loves his ancient people and has not rejected them. The “fathers” referred to here, whom God has “called” and “not rejected,” must be at least Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom Yahweh originally gave his covenant of love (Rom 9:5-13, 15:7; Is 41:8-9, 51:2).

Second, the context of Romans 11 is, as Douglas Moo also states, a “salvation-historical drama” in which Israel and then the ethnies “take turns on center stage” (Moo 1996, 712; see diagram in Appendix 2). The gentile peoples are both individually and in their ethnic solidarities taking the center stage at the present time in redemptive history. Because of ethnic Israel’s “transgression” (Rom 11:11b,12a), salvation has come to the ethnies [τοῖς ἔθνεσιν] (Rom 11:11).

Third, notice how many times Paul uses “Israel” (or synonyms, e.g., “Jacob”), “Israelite(s),” “his people” and pronouns referring to Israel in chapters 10-11 (Rom 10:19,21;

11:1[2x],2[2x],7, 8,9,11,25,27,28,30,31). All of these refer to ethnic Israel (see Rom 11:1; see Moo 1996, 720-721). The only real disputed exception is Rom 11:26. However, comparing Romans 11:25 with the following three verses (Rom 11:26-28) can help solve the meaning of this reference. Romans 11:26-28 is a composite passage referring to the patriarchal covenant with ethnic Israel (citing Is 59:20-21, 27:9; Jer 31:33).¹ Concerning this promise, F. F. Bruce correctly writes: “It is impossible to entertain an exegesis which takes ‘Israel’ here in a different sense from ‘Israel’ in verse 25” (Bruce 1963, 221-222). It is certainly reading into the text an alien Greek dualist concept of Israel as a non-ethnic third race of Christians, that is “spiritual” Israel stripped of ethnic and cultural background (see Lee 1987). Paul clearly contrasts the converts from τὰ ἔθνη with those from ethnic Israel in the immediately preceding verses (11:17-24).² Paul wants to solve the dilemma of why God in the last days has now turned primarily to the Gentiles and is not immediately saving His people, ethnic Israel whom He foreknew and promised many times—in new covenant contexts—to indeed save as a people (see e.g., Is 49:5-6, 54:1-55:6; Jer 31:31-40, 32:36-44; Eze 34:22-31, 37:21-28; Hos 2:7-23; Zec 6:12-15; Mt 1:21; Lk 1:49:54-55; 67-79, 2:29-32; Heb 2:9-16)

¹Most likely the Abrahamic Covenant: (1) Abraham: Gn 12:1-3, 17:5, 18:18, 22:18; (2) Isaac: Gn 26:4; and (3) Jacob: Gn 28:14.

²See Hodge 1886; J. Murray 1984; see also I. Murray 1971; Moo 1996; Schreiner 1998; *contra* e.g., Calvin 1996; Hoekema 1979; Robertson 2000; Schnabel 2002.

Πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ has five potential meanings (see Michel 1963; Cranfield 1979): (1) All the chosen individuals from the Jews and Gentiles (Calvin, Barth). (2) All the chosen from ethnic Israel alone, referring to Rom 9:6 (Calov, Bengel). (3) Every individual of the whole nation Israel. (4) Spiritual Israel referring to Gal 6:16 (Augustine, Theodoret, Luther). (5) “The nation Israel as a whole, but not necessarily including every individual member,” (Cranfield 1979, 2:576; Weiß, Zahn, Lagrange, Barrett, Käsemann, Schlier). The best interpretation is the fifth (Cranfield 1979, 2:577). “‘Ganz Israel’ ist nichts anders als Israel als Ganzes, Israel in seiner eschatologischen Fülle” (Michel 1963, 281). See similar use of “all Israel” in the LXX in 1Sa 7:5; 25:1; 1Ki 12:1; 2Ch 12:1; Da 9:11 (see Sanday and Headlam 1896, 335; Bruce 1963; Stott 1994, 303).

The emphatic καὶ οὕτως is best translated “and thus,” but it makes no difference to the meaning of “all Israel” (*contra* Robertson 2000). It merely means “it will be in this way, and only in this way, that is, in the circumstances which are indicated. The οὕτως indicates an inversion of the order in which salvation is actually offered to men according to 1.16” (Cranfield 1979, 2:576; see also Moo 1996; Schreiner 1998). Michel (1963, 280-281); and Dunn (1991, 2:681) probably correctly maintain the priority of the circumstantial but also see some temporal meaning to the term.

Τὰ ἔθνη [The Peoples] in Romans 11

Now, if “Israel” throughout the whole of chapter 11 means Israel in ethno-national solidarity (ethnic Israel), the next question comes to fore. What do the opposing terms τὰ ἔθνη and ἔθνη mean (Rom 11:11,12,13, 25)? Clearly ἔθνη can be used in an individual sense of non-Jewish foreigners, as in “to you who are ἔθνη” (Rom 11:13). As shown in chapter four, however, the individualistic meaning never excludes membership in a specific ethno-linguistic group (Kreitzer 2009). The “Gentiles” were Greeks, Scythians in what is now southern Ukraine, Barbarians³ (e.g., Goths of Northern Europe, or Berbers of North Africa), and so forth (see Rom 1:14; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 14:11).

Now what about the use of the term with the article as in Rom 11:11,12,25? Is this merely speaking about an elect collection of representative individuals from the ethnies? These individuals could thus be people extracted out of their ethnic solidarities to enter the body of Christ and hence gain a completely new ethnic identity—a third race of humanity, neither Jew nor Gentile.⁴ This, however, does not seem to be the case in this context. Instead, Paul seems clearly to be stating that all the idolatrous peoples will come to salvation by faith (see Rom 11:20) and hence fulfill the prophesied Abramic blessing.

Contextual Course of the Argument

To further substantiate these conclusions, look at the course of the argument from verses 11:11-15. Paul quotes Psalm 69:22-23 to show that God has darkened the eyes of ethnic Israel and humbled them with slavery (“and bend their backs”). Paul then asks whether all of ethnic Israel

³A term used by Greeks of those foreigners with unintelligible languages (see 1 Cor 14:11; Acts 28:2,4; cf. Ps 114:1 MT with Ps 113:1 LXX [לַעֲרָבִים = ἐκ λαοῦ βαρβάρου]), with the added connotation of uncivilized (see Thayer 1889).

⁴Schreiner lists Delling, Murray, Cranfield, Fitzmyer, Stuhlmacher, and Moo as those holding to πλήρωμα as referring “to the ‘full number’ of Gentiles that enter into the church” (Schreiner 1998, 598).

stumbles so as to fall away from God forever. “Not at all,” he claims first. He then adds that he himself is an Israelite, part of a preserved remnant of ethnic Israel.⁵

Notice next his parallels and opposites. In verse 11, Israel transgresses as a people. That transgression, is also called a “failure” [τὸ ἥττημα] and leads to “their [temporary] rejection [by God]” in Romans 11:15. Israel’s failure brought blindness and resulted in only a remnant being saved, by God’s gracious choice, “at the [then] present time” (Rom 11:5,7-10).

This failure and rejection, however, have a world-redemptive purpose. Clearly, in the parallelism of verse 12, the “world” means the world of gentile peoples [τὰ ἔθνη] (cf. Rom 4:13, 17; see e.g., Lk 12:30). The purpose and result [ἵνα = understood from previous phrase] of Israel’s transgression and fall is that riches and salvation come to the heathen peoples [τοῖς ἔθνεσιν]. Second, note the “how much greater” clause. Since the Israelites’ blindness brought the riches of salvation to the world of peoples, how much more would Israel’s future “fulfillment” [τὸ πλήρωμα ἀποδόν; fullness] and “acceptance” bring even greater benefit. Israel’s “acceptance,” clearly their conversion as a people, will bring a greater state of blessing to the ethno-world, analogous to “life from the dead.” It is irrelevant at this point to decide whether this means the final resurrection as taught by premillennialism and amillennialism, is a metaphor for a golden age upon the earth as taught by classic postmillennialism, or another alternative. With any interpretation—I take a mediating position—Paul expresses great missional optimism before Christ returns.

Difficult Metaphors

At this point, Paul introduces difficult metaphors concerning “holy first fruit” [ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία] and “holy root” [ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία]. Most commentators see these terms referring to Abraham and the patriarchal covenant-promise (see Hodge 1886; Murray 1965; Dunn 1988; Moo 1996;⁶

⁵The Israelites are Paul’s “flesh” (μου τὴν σάρκα; Rom 11:14), that is “my brothers, kinsmen according to the flesh . . . Israelites” (Rom 9:3,4). Paul does not reject his ethnic background, though he is in the New Covenant-Abrahamic community of faith (Gal 3). Note, he calls the Israelites “his [God’s] people. . . I too am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham” (Rom 11:1). In Philippians Paul carefully lists his ethnic qualifications in correct balance. There is no denying who he is, but there is no “gain” in that background. “[I am] of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews” [ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων] (Phil 3:5).

⁶Moo cites Chrysostom, Godet, Cranfield, and Fitzmyer as also taking this position. “Abraham and the patriarchs are called a root” in “*1 Enoch* 93:5,8; Philo *Heir* 279 (Abraham); *Jub.* 21:24 (Isaac)” (Moo 1996, 699, and 699, n. 13).

Schreiner 1998). This is born out by the context. Paul clearly thought in the covenantal context of the Abramic blessing (Gen 12:3) and the Abrahamic covenant (see Rom 4; Gal 3). Clearly, in this context, the Israelite nation as a whole that is not the holy root and first fruits. Most ethnic Israelites were always internally unholy unbelievers, as Paul argues in chapters 9-10, a fact which remains true to this day. However, the believing patriarchs and their covenant promises were holy first fruits of a promised greater harvest to come. This fits the Hebrew way of thinking. The root (and first part) was the patriarchal ancestor (see e.g., Is 11:1,10; per implication Jer 23:5-6).

This also fits Paul's covenantal theology begun in the opening of the excursus in Romans 9:4: "To whom belong . . . the covenants . . . and the promises" [ὧν . . . αἱ διαθήκαι . . . καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι]. In addition, this is Paul's own explanation in the summary of his own argument in 11:28. God loves the Israelites because of "the fathers." Lastly, only this view can be carried through to the end of the section. The converted Israelites, as the natural branches, are joined with the anti-natural branches, the idolatrous peoples [τὰ ἔθνη], in the root, that is the Israelite's own covenant-believing, physical forefathers (see Hodge 1889; Schreiner 1998). When the fullness of the gentile peoples are grafted into the Abrahamic covenant, as Yahweh promised, thus—in this manner—all all ethnic Israel will be saved.⁷

Further support of this meaning of τὰ ἔθνη in Romans 11 is Paul's statement that Abraham inherits "the world," meaning that Abraham inherits all the peoples of earth as I have noted earlier. In Christ, the Seed of Abraham, the Father fulfills the covenant's promise that

⁷Jesus's kingdom is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic-Davidic promises. The Israel of the Spirit is an enlargement of the Abrahamic-Davidic "Israel." The dead, unbelieving branches have been cut out (Jn 15:6; Is 27:11). Now believing individuals and families from the ethnies are being grafted in. This process proceeds until the whole ethnie (excluding the unbelieving minority) is included. This ingrafting must occur in every ethnie of the world because the "root" is the original Abrahamic promise of blessing to all peoples (τὸ πλήρωμα of peoples). Only then will "all [ethnic] Israel" be re-grafted into their own patriarchal root-family and root-promise.

Abraham would become father of all the ethno-nations, the “many peoples” [πολλῶν ἔθνῶν] (Rom 4:17), which is either a paraphrase of the LXX’s πλήθους ἔθνῶν or Paul’s own alternative translation of the Hebrew (Gn 17:4-5). Both variations mean “all” peoples and clans of earth.⁸ The “fullness of the idolatrous peoples” [τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἔθνῶν] is thus most likely the phrase “father of all peoples” [πατὴρ πλήθους ἔθνῶν].

Furthermore, the twin parallels between “the ethnies” and “the world,” and between the root, branches, first fruits (i.e., the patriarchs of Israel) and the rest of the harvest (the ethnies) are significant because it reminds us of Paul’s argument in chapters 1-3 and 4. In chapter 3, “the world” clearly equals both Jews and gentile peoples, under sin (Rom 3:9, 19). It is generally agreed that in chapter 1, Paul condemns the sins of the idolatrous peoples. Chapter 2 establishes God’s impartiality. If he judges, he judges and saves both Jews and those of the heathen peoples without favoritism. Both groups possess a single moral standard from the one God though in differing forms.

God is judge of the world of mankind [τῶν ἀνθρώπων] in Romans 3. All Jews and all from the heathen peoples are slaves under sin’s authority [γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλλήνας πάντας ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι] (Rom 3:9). Later Paul equates both Jews and the heathen peoples of verse 3:9 with the Jews “in the law” [ἐν τῷ νόμῳ] and the rest of the world of heathen peoples (3:19). This equals the whole “world” of peoples having their “mouths” [πᾶν στόμα] stopped from any justifying excuse. “Every mouth” [Πᾶν στόμα] thus equals “the world” [ὁ κόσμος]. Clearly, then, “the world” is all individuals and peoples in ethno-national and ethno-religious solidarity (Rom 3:6, 2:16, 3:9,19-20,23). They all, Jews and the idolatrous ethnies, have only one

⁸ That this is true can also be seen (1) in the other instances of Yahweh’s covenant to Abraham (Isaac and Jacob), all of which mention either all the clans or all the ethno-nations are to be blessed in Abraham; and (2) possibly in Paul’s own reckoning concerning Abraham “who is the father of us all,” a term he expands from mere individuals from the ethnies to include ethnic solidarities as well (Ἀβραάμ, ὅς ἐστιν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν, καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Πατέρα πολλῶν ἔθνῶν: Rom 4:16c,17a).

solution to their bondage that is trust in Christ because there is no difference between the two groups in their mutual state of slavery to sin (Rom 3:22-23).

Vindication of Divine Impartiality

“For just as you [idolatrous peoples] once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their [Israel’s] disobedience, so these [Israel] also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may . . .⁹ be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all” (Rom 11:30-32). Paul concludes his whole argument with this vindication of God’s impartial purpose, which Dunn calls “a fitting summing up and climax to the whole of the preceding argument” (Dunn 1988, 2:677).

Israel’s present blindness and hardness to the gospel may “suggest an imbalance in God’s treatment of ethnic groups, as if he preferred Gentiles to Jews” (Moo 1996, 713). But this is rectified in the end. God imprisoned all, that is all peoples and all individuals in those peoples, under disobedience. His purpose was, and the end result will be, that he will shed his compassion upon all. In this context Paul means by “all” both ethnic Israel and all the ethnies as peoples. In this case, however, “all” cannot mean every individual but all types of ethnic groups, Jews included. This is an ethno-universalism following the Abrahamic covenant, like that of Romans 5:18,¹⁰ but not an individual-universalism.

⁹Note that I have dropped the “now” because it is absent from the vast majority of extant texts, is alien to the contextual argument, and is easily explained by a copiest’s slip of the eye.

¹⁰“Αρα οὖν ὡς δι’ ἐνὸς παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάκριμα, οὕτως καὶ δι’ ἐνὸς δικαιώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς”(Rom 5:18). The phrase εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους probably means all peoples, Jew and gentile in both instances. The first includes every individual, but the second cannot do so, because this would deny Paul’s argument in chapter 2.

Conclusion

Therefore, the present rejection of the majority of ethnic Israel means reconciliation of the “world.” By this we have seen that Paul means “τὰ ἔθνη,” the peoples (die Völker)¹¹ in ethnic solidarity, not every individual throughout the earth (see Lk 12:30; Eph 2:12; TDNT 1972 2:371; *contra* Hoekendijk 1948; DeRidder 1975; Verkuyl 1978; Bosch 1983, note 10). The future thus holds out a time when God would again be faithful to the ethnic seed of Abraham, and save them by bringing them to faith. This would not just be a tiny remnant as was then the case, but the “fullness,” that is “all Israel” (Rom 11:25-27).

However, if he is going to save all Israel according to the covenant promise, he must also save all “fullness of τὰ ἔθνη” meaning all the clans and peoples¹² according to that same Abrahamic root promise. This implies again, therefore, that τὰ ἔθνη equals ὁ κόσμος [the world].¹³ Paul’s discussion of the salvation for the world in Romans 11, as we have seen is based on the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant through Moses and David. Only a “partial hardening” has happened with respect to ethnic Israel at present. God will remove this hardness when [implied by ἄχρις οὗ] the fullness of the ethnies [τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν] come into the

¹¹O Michel seems to contradict himself. At vs. 11:12, he writes: “Welt (= die Völker)” [“world (= the peoples)” and “κόσμος entspricht den ἔθνη” [“κόσμος corresponds to the ἔθνη”] (Michel 1963, 272), but at vs. 11:15 he writes about the “Vollzahl der heiden” [“the full number of the heathen”] (Michel 1963, 280). To be consistent, he should have written “Vollzahl der Heidenvölker” [“full number of the heathen peoples”].

¹²Paul’s desired goal was the “offering up of the τὰ ἔθνη” and sought the “obedience of the τὰ ἔθνη” (Rom 15:16,18; see Rom 1:5, 16:26), which F. F. Bruce rightly sees as “practically synonymous” (Bruce 1963, 221) with the “fullness of the Gentiles.” Cranfield is moving in the right direction when he states that it is not “wise to rule out as altogether impossible another explanation, namely, that Paul means by τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν something like ‘the Gentile world as a whole’ (compare πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ in v. 26)” (Cranfield 1979, 2:575-576; see Sanday and Headlam 1896, 355). The best explanation is that the phrase means the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant that all clans and peoples as ethno-covenantal solidarities will eventually be blessed with the gifts of the Spirit and of justification (Gal 3:14).

¹³The concept of ὁ κόσμος equaling the world of the peoples is not found in the LXX but a similar concept is. The ὁ οἰκουμένη [יְהוּדָא, תְּבֵלַת] and οἱ λαοὶ ἢ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη are parallel (e.g., Pss 9:9 [9:8 NASB], 95:13 [96:13 NASB], 98:9; Is 34:1).

kingdom (see Murray 1968).¹⁴ This fulfills God’s covenant to the fathers and promises based on that covenant (e.g., Ps 2; 22:27; 86:9; Is 2:1-4, 11:10, etc.). God intends thus to save all the peoples and clans he created (Rom 4; Jn 3:16-17) including Israel, within the covenant promises given to Abraham’s people.

The salvation of the fullness of Israel was the mass of ethnic Israelites but not every individual, and the fullness of the ethnies must be, in the epistle’s entire context, τὰ πολλὰ ἔθνη, τὰ πλήθῃ ἔθνη, the many/multitudes of non-Jewish ethnies, that is “all” the clans and peoples of the Abrahamic covenant (see also Rom 16:25: εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).¹⁵

Ephesians 2

Contrasting “Then” and “Now”

Paul takes up this theme of the uniting of both ethnic Israel and gentile peoples within the promises and structure given to ethnic Israel in letter to the house congregations governed by the Ephesian elders (see e.g., Acts 20:17). Chapter 2:11-21 is structured around a contrast between what the gentile peoples, represented by the Ephesian believers were “then,”

¹⁴“The verb, of which ‘the fulness of the Gentiles’ is the subject, namely, ‘Be come in’, is the standard term in the New Testament for entering into the kingdom of God and life (cf. Matt. 5:20; 7:13; 18:3; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 13:34; John 3:5; Acts 14:22).” The Gentiles thus enter the kingdom of God (Murray 1968, 2:93; see Cranfield 1979, 2:576; Sanday and Headlam 1896, 335).

¹⁵“Reconciling the world” equals “reconciling all peoples of earth, including the Jews.” This helps in understanding several passages in Paul’s epistles. E.g., in 2 Cor 5:17-21 “reconciling the world” equals “all peoples,” not every individual (see 1 Cor 14:10; Col 1:6). 1 Thes 2:15-16 parallels “τὰ ἔθνη” with πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. The Jews are hostile to “all mankind,” which Paul explains in the following: “κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσι λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν”. Hostility to all mankind means hindering all the ethnies (individuals and peoples) from hearing the gospel and being saved. Most likely, this signals Paul’s expectation that all the peoples would be saved later in time (Rom 4, 11).

An ethnic explanation of “the world” explains several passages in the Johannine literature: e.g., Jn 1:29, 3:16-17, 4:42, 6:51, 8:12; 1 Jn 2:1-2. Christ is the Lamb to take away the sins of the world and the Bread to be given for it. “World” means both the Israelite and gentile peoples. The Father’s love was for the whole world of peoples. God sent his Son, not to condemn the “world” of peoples but to save it. Jesus as the Light and Savior of the world is a polemic against Jewish ethnocentrism, which refused grace for the *gōyīm*. Jesus did not die to be the propitiation merely for the Jews or a Jewish church with a Gentile element. He satisfied God’s wrath for the “whole world”—Jews and all the ethnies. This implies that in the end, all peoples will be saved but not the minority of non-elect and hardened.

“formerly,” and “at that time” [ποτὲ, τῷ καιρῷ ἐκεῖνω], and what they are “now” [νυν] in Messiah Jesus (Lincoln 1990, 125). Paul’s goal then is to discuss common “privileges of the community which is made up of Christians of different racial [ethno-religious] origin” (Mitton 1981, 100).

The turning point between the redemptive-historical “then” and the redemptive-historical “now” is Jesus, the Jew’s Anointed King [Χριστός]. Within union with Himself, he creates a second humanity in which both believing Jews and believing ethnies are unified within one body [τὰ ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐν]. Since ἐν is neuter, Paul most likely here is speaking about one body [ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι; neuter], not one undifferentiated humanity that unites all human’s irrespective of faith in the Father through Christ [εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον; masculine] of verse 15. “He himself,” therefore, “is our peace” (Eph 2:14a), which reconciles both ethno-religious groups in one body. God does this not by destroying ethno-linguistic diversity but by expanding ethnic Israel to include the gentile peoples without them being required to become ethnic Jews by adopting the whole Mosaic code as was the norm in OT proselyte model. God makes both parts of the ethnic division of humanity, the Jewish people and the Gentile peoples, one new humanity by breaking down the barrier of the dividing wall, which is a condemning and hostile law (2 Cor 3).

Figure 26. “Then.” Comparison of Jews and ethnies before Messiah.

<i>Jews Before Messiah</i>	<i>Ethnies Before Messiah</i>
The fleshly Circumcision, operated on by human hands	People from the ethnies uncircumcised in the flesh [τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί].
(Inside Commonwealth)	Outside of the Messianic-Davidic Commonwealth of Israel [χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ].

(Citizens possessing the covenants, hope, and knowledge of God).	“In the world” [ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ] of idolatrous demonic dominated peoples, separated from the covenants of promise, without hope of the resurrection [Acts 23:6, 24:14, 28:20], without the true God [ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν, τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες, καὶ ἄθεοι].
(Citizens with covenant privileges and rights).	Aliens and foreigners [ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι] without rights of citizens.
(Near)	Far off [μακρὰν]

Figure 27. “Now.” Comparison of Jews and ethnies in Messiah.

<i>Jews in Messiah</i>	<i>Ethnies in Messiah</i>
(No longer far off in heart)	His blood brings “the far off now near” [μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς]. ¹⁶
(Citizens internally)	No longer aliens and foreigners but you are fellow citizens with the saints [συμπολιταὶ τῶν ἁγίων]
(Internal members of God’s paternal household)	Fellow-members of God’s paternal “household,” as sons like Israel (Eph 2:19; Ex 4:22; Dt 14:1; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1, etc.) [οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ].

Background Issues

Not a gnostic hymn fragment

The background to this section is thus not a dualist, proto-Gnostic hymn fragment as some suggest (see Schnackenburg 1991, 113; Best 1998, 247-256).¹⁷ In other words, Ephesians

¹⁶See Is 57:19-21 LXX, esp. 17 [εἰρήνην ἐπ’ εἰρήνην τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ τοῖς ἐγγύς οὖσιν; Is 57:19] (*Contra* Lincoln 1990, 127).

¹⁷The reason for this is both exegetical and biblical-philosophical (see chapter 3). First, as R. Schnackenburg points out this Gnostic perspective does not fit the non-dualist worldview of the Ephesian letter nor the author’s dependence upon the OT Scriptures. “A connection with the metaphor of the cosmic partition cannot be established” (Schnackenburg 1991, 116).

does not proclaim the breakdown of the wall of hostility between heaven's unifying spirit-world and the human-material world of division and disunity. According to this perspective, Christ would then become a cosmic reconciler, breaking down these boundaries between divisive matter and unifying spirit. This would include borders between peoples because they divide humankind instead of reconciling divided humanity (*contra* Lincoln 1990; Roetzel 1983).¹⁸

Isaiah in LXX as background

On the contrary, the section from Ephesians 2:13-18 teaches just the opposite. It draws upon several metaphors taken from OT symbolic-ceremonial laws, including a probable reference to the breaking down of the temple wall, which prohibited the ethnies from drawing near to God on the throne, represented by "mercy seat." These metaphors symbolize the Jewish law as being an ethno-religious barrier (see Schnackenburg 1991, 113; Best 1998, 253-256).

Second, a most likely background is "a christological exegesis" of several passages in Isaiah from the Septuagint (Stuhlmacher 1974, 1986; Schnackenburg 1991; Best 1998, 251).¹⁹

The author has his deepest roots in the Christian interpretation of the OT Bible. The Prince of Peace of Is. 9:5 who brings God's final peace to Israel (cf. Is. 52:7) he interprets as Christ, the Messiah; but this Messiah also includes the "far off" (cf. Is. 57:19), now applied to the Gentiles, in his work of peace. (Schnackenburg 1991, 112)

Second, Herman Dooyeweerd shows that the categories of biblical thought are governed by two *grondmotiewe*. First is the biblical Creator-creature distinction versus the Greek presupposition of a dualist dialectic between (1) undivided unity (e.g., spirit), that is being or existence, and (2) total chaotic diversity (e.g., matter), that is, non-being or non-existence. Dooyeweerd also showed that history does not develop as all things move from diversity (the many) towards undivided unity (the one), but in a lineal historical development from Creation to Fall to Redemption, then Consummation (Dooyeweerd 1953-1958, 1979; Rushdoony 1978b, 1971).

Further, R. J. Rushdoony, based on insights from C. A. Van Til and Dooyeweerd, discusses how all philosophy must swing between emphasizing an undivided oneness or totally divided manyness. Only the prior biblical presupposition of the equal ultimacy of the one and the many solves the problem (see chapter 3). With a Hebrew worldview, Paul did indeed have this presupposition. Paul was not a Platonic, proto-Gnostic.

¹⁸C. J. Roetzel approaches correct conclusion on false grounds of a Cosmic myth. He believes that the author wants "Jewish Christians *qua* Jewish Christian [to be accepted] in a predominately gentile church" (Roetzel 1983, 88).

¹⁹Is 9:5-6, 52:7, 57:19. Notice also: "He will be their peace" (Mic 5:5).

Paul's thought world is that of the Hebrew Bible. Peace [שָׁלוֹם] comes through justly regulated and restored harmony between creational design norms, providentially established boundaries, and moral norms (see e.g., Dt 20:10-11; Pss 72:3-4, 85:10, 119:165, 120:6-7, 147:14; Is 53:5-12). Conflict comes when these boundaries are overstepped (see, e.g., Jas 4:1-5) or when symbolic and hence temporary boundaries are pridefully prioritized and made permanent. Scripture, especially in the Prophets, constantly prioritizes compassion and justice above the ceremonial laws (see e.g., Ps 51:16-17; Is 1:11-16; Mi 6:6-8; Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13, 12:7). Peace comes by ceasing conflict and then by instituting compassion and justice within created boundaries.²⁰

Peace in Messiah thus overcomes sinful, ethnic hostility and enmity, putting away sinful differences, and brings together "separated groups" (Schnackenburg 1991, 113; see references there). To reconcile Jew and ethnic, God does not erase the creation-providential design-norm of ethnic distinction in the church, Christ's body (see Kreitzer 1998). Instead, he creates love, fellowship, understanding, a listening spirit, and so forth between peoples and sub-ethnic groups. Jim Crow racism, South Africa apartheid, and any ethno-centricism, including Euro-American and African-American varieties, reject these fruits of the Spirit of peace.

²⁰Philip Nel writes: "Peace and righteousness flow from observance of Yahweh's commands and can be seen as his blessing. [Peace and tranquillity] are thus portrayed as the ultimate expressions of a sound and fulfilled existence in accordance with the intended order of Yahweh, expressed as the maintenance of [righteousness, justice: צְדָקָה]" (VanGemeren 1997d, 4:132).

The Decalogue teaches boundaries between God and creation (1,2,3); truth and falsehood (3,9); rest and work days (4); personally owned property (8,10); marital sexual bounds (7); respect for life and freedom (5,8); and parents and children (5); etc. Creation design and creational providence teaches normative bounds between male and female (Mt 19:4), between ethno-linguistic groups (Ps 86:9), etc.

Meaning of the Dividing Wall

The meaning of the “dividing wall” further substantiates this point. Many believe this most likely refers to the fence or middle wall in the temple. It was a barrier to the *gôyîm* entering the place of worship (see Grosheide 1960; Stott 1979; Mitton 1981; Lincoln 1990; Schnackenburg 1991; O’Brien 1999; see, Josephus [1957] *Wars of the Jews*, V.5.2, *Antiquities*, XV.11.5). Jewish fundamentalist radicals accused Paul of violating this barrier by bringing “Trophimus the Ephesian” into the inner court (Acts 21:29).²¹

The physical wall represented the ideas of the law as a fence dividing the Jews by law-observance from all other peoples, symbolizing “hostility and the feelings of contempt and superiority which Jews had towards Gentiles” (Mitton 1981, 105). This applies especially to the ceremonial laws (Grosheide 1960; Stott 1979) but not exclusively to it. All of the laws serve as a barrier between peoples (Jew and ethnies).

All believers from the Jews and the ethnies, being joined to Christ, are released from the obligation to obey all of the law for righteousness (Rom 7:1-6, 10:5). He took it out of the way [καὶ αὐτὸ ἦρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου] (Col 2:14) as the “middle wall of partition.”²² Christians are now obligated only to the Spirit not the law (Rom 7:6). As they walk in the Spirit, he mandatorily fulfills in them the “righteous requirement of the law” (Rom 8:4) and does not allow them to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16-18). Grace is not antinomian.

Therefore, for a specific missiological purpose, all Christians—Jew, Greek, Barbarian, and Scythian—are also free from the dietary laws, festival and ceremonial Sabbath statutes,

²¹ Some would argue that this could not be Paul’s reference because at the time when he wrote Ephesians, the wall still stood. It was only to be destroyed physically in 70 AD. However, this is Paul’s point. Spiritually, the wall was removed at Christ’s death (circa 30 AD; Stott 1979, 99).

²²Note the verbal similarities between Col 2:14: ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν, ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν· καὶ αὐτὸ ἦρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου, προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ· and Eph 2:14b-15a: καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασι, καταργήσας.

circumcision commands, and so forth (Gal 4:1-10; Col 2:14-23; Rom 14-15:7). That purpose is freedom to serve a target ethnic or sub-ethnic group (1 Cor 9:19-23) so as to win some of them to Christ. Jews may live like religiously faithful ethnic Jews in order to win their ethnic kinsmen, though they are not obligated to do so, especially in gentile contexts. In other contexts, then, gospel love mandates that the dietary and other ethnic demarcation laws be ignored (see esp. Gal 2:11-21; Stern 1988).

Love causes no one to stumble over insignificant things (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8, 10:14-33). The goal of this service, Paul reminds us, is for both the Jews and τὰ ἔθνη to glorify the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” with “one voice” (Rom 15:6-7). The result is that the Scripture, based on the Abrahamic covenant, would be fulfilled. All τὰ ἔθνη would praise, rejoice, and hope in Messiah together with God’s ancient people [ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ] (Rom 14:9-13).

Does Ethnicity Cease in Christ?

The main questions many ask concerning this new relationship in Christ between Jews and people(s) from the ethnies, are as follows: (1) Is the relationship between Jews and the ethnies corporate or individualistic; and (2) does ethnic identity cease in the corporate body of Christ? Therefore, does “breaking down the dividing wall” mean that the body of Messiah begins a third humanity, made up of believing individuals neither Jew nor Gentile?²³ Or does God re-establish corporate, ethnic solidarity by giving a new relationship to God and Christ, to his covenant promises, and to his ancient people in a new corporate humanity?

²³That is non-racial/racist, non-ethnic/ethnicist and many others add, non-sexist, non-classist, and non-ageist. The latest non- is neither hetero- or homo- but one in Christ.

Several important modern scholars and commentators agree that Ephesians 2 teaches that Christ does indeed break down ethnic and other social divisions (see e.g., Rooy 1983;²⁴ Bosch 1982, 1983,²⁵ 1988, 1992; Mitton 1981, 108²⁶); Lincoln 1990;²⁷ Martin 1991). In doing so, he creates a *triton genos*, a third race (see Best 1955, 153,154; Best 1998, 261-263).

Many others disagree. Jew-Gentile categories are not removed in an individualizing process (Stott 1979).²⁸ The “new man” is a collective or corporate man in Christ, the Second Man (O’Brien 1999, 200; *contra* Best 1998). This can clearly be seen in the parallel passage, Col 3:10-11, where Christ and those in union with him are that new man (Bock 1994; see Eph 2; Hoch 1992).²⁹ In him the former barriers of ceremonial religion and prejudice are broken down.

²⁴“In Christ the barriers of race, social class, and nationalism have been removed (Eph 2:14-16; Gal 3:28)” (Rooy 1983, 203).

²⁵“The new fellowship transcends every limit imposed by family, class, or culture. We are not winning people like ourselves to ourselves but sharing the good news that in Christ God has shattered the barriers that divide the human race and has created a new community. The new people of God has no analogy; it is a ‘sociological impossibility’ (Hoekendijk 1948:237) that has nevertheless become possible.

“The early church gave expression to this by calling the Christians the *triton genos*, the third race next to the existing two races of Jews and Gentiles. . . .

“Exclusive groupings of believers . . . around homogeneous cultural units, are unacceptable in the Christian church” (Bosch 1983, 240)

²⁶“Instead of being Jew and Gentile, two different kinds of ‘men,’ there is now one new man, the Christian. Many Christians felt just this—that what had happened to them was so new and decisive that they had ceased to be nationals of any one country and were now simply “Christians”. . . . When differences of race and class had been deprived of their power to provoke rivalry, hate, and hostility, then the result was peace, the social harmony which emerges when causes of discord have been removed” (Mitton 1981, 108).

²⁷“Christ has created a totally new entity, the one new man. Thereby the reversal of the pre-Christian situation which is set out is no longer only a simple direct reversal, but a reversal which transcends the old categories and introduces a new element. . . . Jew-Gentile categories have largely faded from view in the depiction of the new community in vv 20-22” (Lincoln 1990, 126).

²⁸Stott comes dangerously close to stating that ethnic distinctions are removed, but backs off: “Men still build walls of partition and division. . . . or construct barriers of race, colour, caste, tribe or class. Divisiveness is a constant characteristic of every community without Christ” (Stott 1979, 56). “The creation of a single new humanity What Paul is referring to, in fact, is not a ‘new man’ but a ‘new human race’, united by Jesus Christ in himself. . . .

This new unity . . . does more than span the Jew-Gentile divide. . . . Paul says that it also does away with sexual and social distinctions [citing Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28]. . . . Not that the facts of human differentiation are removed. Men remain men and women women, Jews remain Jews and Gentiles Gentiles. But inequality before God is abolished. There is a new unity in Christ” (Stott 1979, 101). However, see his application in “Conclusion” (Stott 1979, 110-111). In Christ, malice, false prejudice, and hatred of others of different race, tribe, nation is removed. There should be constant fellowship and communication between these groups, but not the teaching that the distinctions have been removed or should be removed.

²⁹“What this means is that the ‘new man,’ made up of peoples, refers to a social structure or community. . . .

“The new humanity is not achieved by transforming Gentiles into Jews, or vice versa” (O’Brien 1999, 200).

Both Jews and persons in the ethnies,³⁰ thus, have equal access to the Father through the one Abrahamic Seed. In Messiah Jesus, by the Spirit (Eph 2:18), they all together form one diverse, multi-cultural “temple” (Eph 2:12-22). All the peoples and ethno-nations stream to the heavenly Jerusalem and its palace-temple (Is 2:1-3; Mic 4:1-4).

This palace-temple, the dwelling place of God manifest, following other indications in Second Isaiah and beyond, is not “a material building, nor a national shrine, nor has it a localized site” (Stott 1979, 109). It is a Spirit-created community-family (God’s household). It is multi-ethnic, embracing eventually all the ethnies and the Jews, and is to be spread throughout the whole earth. Therefore, it is not an ecclesial, earthly institution like the Church of Rome or possibly the WCC, but the bride coming from heaven, the heavenly Zion above, who is our mother.

The one “new man/humanity,” created from the two previous religious-ethnic distinctions, is not something totally new. Instead, it is a renewal of the brokenness of the first Adam in the Second Man, Christ (1 Cor 15; Col 3:10-11). “In Christ,” thus, is a group inclusive term. It includes both Jewish and gentile peoples, both remaining in their own customs and hence their own ethnic solidarity, yet also in true unity in Christ by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:10). Both groups now have equal privileges, they must eat and fellowship together at suitable times including the Lord’s Table (Gal 2:11-14; 1 Cor 11:16-17, 11:29), and they share life as “brothers

“So the new man is related to Christ and consists of peoples. . . . It is Christ conceived of as a corporate entity, that is, Christ’s body. . . . The new man refers to the new community in Christ that he forms by joining people to himself” (Bock 1994, 159).

The “new man” is the extended people of God, a covenantal community in Abraham’s seed, Christ (Gal 3), including eventually both Jew and all the ethnies.

³⁰Including females and males in gender distinction, and slave and freemen in their social classes.

and sisters” in the household of God (see also 2 Cor 6:18). The closest analogy is pre-monarchical Israel. All were “brothers” in one family, but the one family included ethno-tribal divisions as well.

This is born out in the context by Ephesians 2:11-19. Those who are ethnies by birth or “in the flesh” [τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί] who “formerly” were “separate from Christ [Messiah], excluded from the commonwealth of Israel [τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ], and strangers [ξένοι: foreigners] to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:11-13) have now in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, become no longer foreigners and aliens [ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι] but fellow citizens with the holy people [of Israel by faith] and [fellow-]members of God’s household [i.e., the Hebrew father’s house] [συμπολιταὶ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ Θεοῦ] (Eph 2:19). What has happened in Paul’s thinking is that the converts to Jesus Messiah from non-Jewish ethnies are now *full proselytes* with full privileges of the Abrahamic covenant. In the context, these privileges flow from the indwelling Spirit of Christ and do not in any way necessitate that the gentile converts must be compelled to become ethnic Jews (e.g., Gal 2:3,14). Such compulsion comes when the gentile converts are coerced into adopting the Jewish legal customs, ethnic boundary markers (e.g., circumcision, dietary laws, and sabbath-festival observances [Acts 6:14, 15:1, 21:21, 28:17]), and submitting to the yoke of all of the rest of the law (see also Gal 2-3; Col 2). All, both Jew and ethnie, who are in Messiah are part of the new creation (2 Cor 5:18; Col 3:10), which in the family-household of God, the seed of Abraham (Gal 3) and the holy people of God.

Clearly, then, Christ does not destroy the first creation but renews it (see Dooyeweerd 1979; Wolters 1985; Schuurman 1991; Spykman 1992; Kreitzer 1998). The new man does not transform Gentiles into Jews or vice versa, nor make both something totally new (O’Brien 1999,

200; Hoch 1992). Jews remain ethnic Jews until the end, even if many individuals from the Jews are assimilating into other ethno-cultural groups. So do the ethnies maintain their cultural and linguistic identities, within the plan of God for ethno-genesis, ethno-judgment and thanatos, ethno-movement, and assimilating processes between groups (see Sowell 1994, 1998). Therefore, “while there is no longer *salvific* advantage, there is still an *ethnic* distinction between Jews and Gentiles” (Hoch 1992, 118).

Indeed, ironically, Jesus, the peacemaker in his one body, is still a Jewish “lion from the tribe of Judah,” “the root of David” (Rv 5:5, 22:16; Gn 49:9-10; Is 11:1,10). He himself is not a non-ethnic, but the Israelite’s Anointed King, whose commonwealth has been expanded to include the ethnies who swear covenant fealty to him as Lord. Therefore, peace between Jew and ethnie actually comes by removing the hostility of the law,³¹ as the passage states, not by removing ethno-linguistic and ethno-cultural identity.

Both One and Many: Gal 3:28; Col 3:10; 1 Cor 13:12

True unity in Christ therefore cannot mean that all ESOL (nor age, class, or gender) distinctions are broken down in the local congregations of Christ’s universal church. The conceptual universe behind Paul’s statements in Gal 3:28; Col 3:10; 1 Cor 13:12 is the same as that of Ephesians 2. In all of these passages Paul teaches both the unifying equality of Jew and ethnie, and the fact that both groups remain in distinct ethnic solidarity. Paul, like Jesus in John 17, seems quite aware that humanity in Christ reflects both God’s unity and diversity (see e.g., 1 Cor 12; Eph 5:22ff).

³¹Previous to Christ, humanity was symbolically divided by ceremonial-external laws into Jews with circumcision and the idolatrous ethnies who do not have the ceremonies, though they have the moral law inscribed in their conscience (Rom 1:18-2:13). This ceremonial division was a “shadow” of the coming non-symbolic, fulfillment division between those outside of Christ, in Adam, including the Jews, and the Jews and ethnies in Messiah, the seed of Abraham. The law was thus only a picture, not the fulfillment τέλος of the picture (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1-2).

Furthermore, Paul always interprets himself when Pauline Scripture is compared to his other scriptural writings (see WCF 1:9). The exegete must compare all his various similar sayings on the subject of unity in Christ to come to a true account of what the individual statements mean. If this were not so, then we should interpret, for example, “no distinction” (Rom 3:22, 10:12-14; see Acts 15:9; Gal 3:28; Col 3:10; 1 Cor 13:12) in such a way that would result in a sort of monistic or holistic principle. Such monism, lacking the concept of the equal ultimacy of the one and the many that Paul taught (see e.g., Rushdoony 1971, 1978a; Capper 1985), inevitably results in pantheism.

The reason for this is simple. For example, if we interpret the words in Colossians 3:11, “no Jew or Greek,” to mean that all ethnic group identity is broken down in the gospel, heretical theological and chaotic social consequences would occur.³² The reason is that the following words, “but Christ is all and is in all,” must then mean, “all are Christ.” The logical consequence is that “I am Christ.” The resulting doctrine is more similar to a New Age monism or Gnosticism than to biblical Christianity (see Lee 1987; Jones 1992, 1997).³³ Many radicals would then have a basis for total social communalism (see Cohn 1970; Shafarevich 1980).

Markus Barth sees this clearly in *The Broken Wall*. The words “neither Jew nor Greek,” etc. (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13),

do by no means wipe out or deny distinctions between nations, sexes, classes, and occupation. Otherwise Paul would not have included in his letters special exhortations for Jew and Greeks. . . , husbands and wives . . . , slaves and masters . . . , etc. But faith in Christ . . .

³²The same is true of “no male and female” in Galatians 3:28.

³³Furthermore, there are “no slave and free,” must mean, by this interpretation, that all involuntary servitude of any kind must be abolished for Christians. This would result in all lawfully bound prisoners, who are indeed slaves engaging in an involuntary internment, must be released. The US Constitution’s Thirteenth Amendment, in banning chattel slavery, specifically excludes duly convicted prisoners.

means that the two—whatever their distinctions are—can and do live together. (Barth 1959, 44)³⁴

Furthermore, the context of Romans (3:22-25) clearly says that “no distinction” means all, both Jew and Greek, are sinners, slaves of sin and under divine judgment (Rom 2:6-13, 3:9-20,23). Therefore, all, both Jew and ethnic, who believe are justified freely, without merit of their own, by the merits of Jesus Christ reckoned to their account (Rom 3:24ff). It cannot mean there that a Jew stops being an ethnic Hebrew; otherwise Paul’s argument in chapter 4 falls to the ground (see also 3:9,19). Abraham is father of us all, the circumcised and uncircumcised. In addition, the first letter to the Corinthians states that all are baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — because now all receive one Spirit and thus all drink from him (1 Cor 12:13). The Spirit, joining to Christ, now brings the twin opposing groups into unity without erasing their ethno-linguistic distinctions.

Certainly a salvation-historical study of the flow of Paul’s argument from Galatians 2:15 through the end of chapter 4 answers radical equalitarian assertions. Paul begins with the one Abrahamic covenant and the many heirs of that covenant in Christ, the one Abrahamic seed. The relationship of the one to the many, as a hermeneutical key (Potgieter 1990),³⁵ is again important here, as discussed in chapter 3. In the flow of the total argument, Paul is not concerned so much

³⁴H. Strathmann’s perspective (TDNT 1967 [4:55]), cited extensively in chapter 4, note 18, is very similar.

³⁵Several Afrikaner scholars, all of whom support an exegesis of Babel and ethnicity similar to my thesis, support this contention. Their huge and culpable sin was too closely equating race with ESOL, and rejecting the insight of the stranger laws to judge apartheid praxis (see Kreitzer 1988, 1992, 1997, 1998). With that in mind, A. W. G. Raath (1990), S. A. Strauss (1987), N. J. Smith (1988), and F. J. M. Potgieter (1990) still correctly agree that the doctrine of the Trinity is the “central truth” of Christianity. It is the foundational philosophical presupposition “of all true theological reflection,” which must “determine . . . the believer’s whole life, especially also his thought” (Potgieter 1990, 21). Trinitarianism, they agree, together with the “enlightenment of the Spirit,” is the “hermeneutical key” to unlock Scripture (Potgieter 1990, 21, 51). This means that within the Godhead, “both unity and diversity are absolute and perfect.” Neither “may be relativized,” both are in “perfect harmony without any opposition” (Potgieter 1990, 21). This means further that the unity and diversity of creation and providence is “founded upon the one being of God” (Potgieter 1990, 22). The immanence of God Triune is “analogously revealed” in both the diversities and unities of the creation-providential *and* re-creational orders (Potgieter 1991, 58). Because these writers place both a just

with how the many relate to one another or behave in the church or home. His main emphasis was that the many, because of their tie to the one (to Christ), are now heirs of the blessings promised to Abraham. All individuals, regardless of their tribal or family connection, financial condition, or sex, are heirs of the promise. (Hove 1999, 117)

Thus Paul concludes, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” As stated earlier, this must mean that every mentioned group has equal access to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit (Eph 2:18) (see e.g., Hurley 1981).³⁶ Each of the couplets are different in nature, yet each is grounded in the creation and have similar social implications in the New Covenant era as the true justice of Messiah is instituted (*contra* Thompson 1996; Fung 1987).³⁷

political and an ecclesial order in the sphere of creation-providence, each must reveal unity and multiform diversity simultaneously.

These South African scholars are well within biblical bounds when they speak about the “Trinitarian presupposition,” and the necessity of a “Trinitarian substrate” in social theology and ecclesiology (Potgieter 1990).

³⁶Though New Testament scholar Jim Hurley may not agree with my conclusion with respect to ethno-linguistic identity, still the following is correct: “The central issue at stake in Galatians 3 and 4 is the role of the law in relation to faith. A strong secondary theme is that Jew and Gentile both come to God on the basis of faith. It is within this frame that our text must be read. Verse 22 prepares the way by establishing that the law is not a special avenue of approach to God, open only to Jews, but a statement from which God condemns both Jews and Gentiles. Because all kinds of men are thus under judgment and can be saved only by faith, Paul insists, all men come before God on the equal footing, their race [i.e., ethnic group], state of bondage, and sex (Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female) having no effect whatsoever on their right to stand before God. Thus, says Paul, ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . . . you are Abraham’s seed.’ Within its context, Galatians 3:28 addresses the question, ‘Who may become a son of God, and on what basis?’ It answers that any person, regardless of race [ethnicity], sex or civil status, may do so by faith in Christ. Here we have the apostolic equivalent of Jesus’ welcoming of the outcasts and the Samaritans and Canaanite women. The gospel is for all persons. . . .

“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. This means that it is an error to say that ‘all one’ in Christ means that there are no distinctions within the body” (Hurley 1981, 126-127).

³⁷Raymond Fung writes: “It appears that the three categories differ in nature, and that accordingly the social implementations for them are not the same. Whereas slavery, as a social institution created by sinful men, can and should be abolished, and the Jew/Gentile distinction, which retains its validity as a purely ethnic reality, has been transcended through the reconciliation accomplished by Christ (Eph. 2:24-26), the male/female distinction, unlike the other two, has its roots in creation itself and continues to have significance in the realm of redemption” (Fung 1987, 184).

For example, many present-day social class distinctions, but not all,³⁸ are built upon created talents, varying levels of diligence, and obedience. Thus all class distinctions are not unjust and hence done away with in Yahweh's Servant's justice (Is 42:1-4; Mt 12:18-21). This principle applies to male and female distinctions as well. They were made so in the beginning (Mt 19:4). All ceremonial distinctions between male and female are now removed because circumcision, for males only, has been replaced with baptism (Col 2:11-13). Both genders are united in Christ *coram Deo* yet remain distinct in gender and role now (see e.g., Foh 1979; Hurley 1981; Piper and Grudem 1991; Hove 1999). This mirrors both the eternal unity and yet also eternal role distinction within the Godhead (Kreitzer 1998). Likewise, I would maintain that religious-ceremonial distinctions between Jews and the gentile ethnies cease in the body of Messiah but ethno-linguistic distinctiveness, which God created, do not. Redemption destroys sin and all injustice, not created distinction, which is good.

The Pauline statements concerning unity in Christ must then mean that all external, ceremonial distinctions and rules separating social groups, all of which have some grounding in the creation, are destroyed (Phil 3:7-8). No remaining ceremonial rules in which people take pride can create ritual exclusivity (Acts 10:28, 34ff). There never was any merit from physical birth (Phil 3:1-11; Lk 3:8). Paul believes thus the opposite of that which some Jewish males are reputed to have prayed in morning prayers: "Thank God I am not a Gentile or a woman or a

³⁸For example, all humans were created to be God's "slaves" as the incarnation hymn of Philippians 2 implies. Christ, the Second Adam, took upon himself the form of humanity, which in the parallel was that of a slave (Phil 2:7). Second Adam and Pre-Fall Adam were freemen before the rest of creation, both human and animal, but slaves to God. This means certainly that the category slave is not evil as such and thus something redemption must destroy. Neither is voluntary servitude such as forms of indentured servitude if exercised within the framework of biblical justice. Further, after the Fall, involuntary imprisonment, a form of servitude for criminal conviction for theft and the resulting debt of restitution due the victim, is not unjust. Such a debtor's labor is sold to someone to pay off the outstanding debt. That form of slavery is certainly not done away with in Christ and such a system could again be justly instituted in modern legal systems.

slave!” There are parallels to this thinking in Greek literature as well (see literature in Bruce 1981; Snodgrass 1986, 168; Johnson 1991).

Therefore, for Paul’s context in Galatians, all three groups have equal status before God. All groups are heirs of the Abrahamic covenant promise without any distinction placed upon them based upon the ceremonial rites originating from the minor status of God’s people before Christ (Gal 3:1-4:7). In the church of Messiah, ethno-covenantal distinctions remain and should be built so as to stress true multi-cultural diversity in Christ. This resonates with the *Zeitgeist* of post-modernism. At the same time, however, to stress real unity in Christ, believers must make strong and concerted efforts to maintain structural unity and fellowship that are open and visible. Both true visible-structural unity and real ethnic diversity are equally ultimate in Christ. Provision must be made for newly emerging ethnicities and for large, ethnically conglomerate churches in major urban centers. Into these congregations come many immigrants to be assimilated into the dominant ethno-culture and lingua franca (e.g., congregations in Los Angeles, London, Nairobi, and Johannesburg). This resonates with the spirit of modernity. Both multicultural diversity, and visible, inclusive unity are maintained as equally ultimate in Christ.

Lastly, all groups, whether slave, free, Greek, Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, male or female, can be “fellow citizens” in the City of God, the New Jerusalem above (Eph 2:11ff; Gal 4:26f; Heb 12:22ff; Rv 20:1ff). Into that city, all peoples and their rulers (kings) shall come (Rv 21:22f; Is 2:2-4; Mi 4:1-3; Is 60-66). All in that city are equally sons of God and sons of Abraham. At the same time, all maintain their own unique and beautiful ethno solidarity (Johnson 1977).

ETHNIC SOLIDARITY AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

New Covenant and Creation Design

Many theologies of mission and allied theologies seem to accept the subtle presupposition that every creation group distinction, including the family group, does not partake of the maturity that Christ brought to redemptive history. Hence all such groups are imperfect or, in a sense, “evil.” According to this perspective, Christ brought a historical movement from a group religion to a religion of individual faith. The implication is that all group-dividing barriers must eventually be broken down as redemptive history progresses (see e.g., Thompson 1996). These theologies either imply or explicitly state that each person ideally comes to Christ as an individual alone and out of his group. It seems to define the church as being made up of the whole lot of those individuals who believe and experience Jesus Christ. These individuals have been extracted out of the peoples and groups to form a new unity or a new humanity of individuals in which language and culture bonds (gender or class) are being relativized (see Kreitzer 1997, 1998).

It appears that these theologies give excessive, perhaps exclusive emphasis to the personal faith of an individual whose ethno-religious group background is forgotten within the body of the church throughout the earth. According to this individual-based, “extractionist” type of missiology and theology, the church becomes a totally new, “third-race” society. In other words, it is a totally new humanity, which eventually is to become non-ethnic, non-gender, non-classist and non-ageist in orientation. The new humanity is made up of individuals taken out of their previous *created* identity. Therefore, they are removed or extracted, in Christ, from real and substantial ethno-linguistic—as well as age, gender, or class—group-diversity.³⁹

³⁹This standpoint is very similar to radical Humanism’s groupless individualism.

Therefore, these missiologies and theologies must *a priori* reject as non-orthodox any attempt to theologically describe the church as an entity made up of both spiritual unity and the renewed and regenerated “divided parts” of the first creation’s design.⁴⁰ Part of their critique is, of course, biblically accurate. The body of Christ must strive for visible and structural unity, as well as true diversity. Federal or confederal structures would seem to be the best solution to this dilemma.

Covenant Exegesis and Creation Particularities

Furthermore, theologians and missiologists with such tendencies to prioritize visible structural unity above creational diversity teach that a creation-oriented family or extended family relationship is totally relativized in the New Testament. The result is that individualistic faith remains alone and has absolute priority over the physical family and cultural-lingual relationships. However, this understanding of the relationship of faith to creation is not based on sound exegesis. Neither is it founded upon a correct understanding of biblical Trinitarianism.

Covenantal Trinitarianism, or Trinitarian creationist philosophy as chapter three terms it, sees equal validity to one’s creational identity and one’s identity in Christ. Christ came to restore creational design-norms in mature form, not create something absolutely new. There is thus no dialectical tension between creation and redemption, nor any upper story/lower story dualism between them. Redemptive history is not a movement from the dividedness of the physical or carnal (ethnicity, gender) to the spiritual realm of undivided unity, as postulated by platonic influenced Christianity. Nor does redemptive history move from the collective that is from ethnic solidarity of the Israelite people to an individual application of NT truths. Such radical individualizing of Christian teaching shows a neo-platonic and gnosticizing tendency (Kreitzer 1998).

⁴⁰E.g., the deeply flawed attempt made by the NGK of South Africa during the apartheid era I resolutely reject this and any race-based missiology and ecclesiology because it violates neighbor love, the equity of the stranger laws, and the true visible unity of the church.

Instead, history moves from ceremony, symbol, and picture to fulfillment, or from shadow to body/image casting the shadow [ὁ σῶμα; ὁ εἰκὼν] (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5, 9:9, 10:1). Therefore, *both* covenant faith bringing unity with all believers, and family descent, which sees the covenant family as a part of true created diversity, are of *equal* importance. Neither is to be rejected, nor *normally* prioritized (see note 43), nor relativized.

It is certainly true that faith in Christ alone is the basis for membership in the universal, invisible body of Christ, the New Jerusalem. Confessional faith is one of the several expressions of real unity (see Eph 4:3ff; 1 Cor 8:6). However, faith-unity does not mean that true creational diversity is destroyed. In other words, a self-propagating, self-governing, self-theologizing fellowship of congregations within a specific ethnic solidarity is an expression of real created diversity. At the same time, this fellowship can visibly manifest true faith-unity with the universal body of Christ. Since there is no dialectical contradiction between such diversity and unity, one can hold to both.

Both Family Descent and Covenant Faith

The old covenant's legal assembly (קְהֵל־יְהוָה) and the new covenant's legal gathering of God's people (ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ) are thus analogous. The new covenant church has the same balance between faith and family solidarity as Paul claimed the old covenant church possessed (Rom 3-4; Gal 3). This implies, then, that the covenantal relationship of both Testaments involves more than mere individualistic, absolutely equalitarian "faith." In other words, covenant faith in the new covenant for a non-ethnic Israelite results in being adopted into a believing descent group, that of believing Abraham. Believers become adopted sons of Abraham, sons of God and members by faith of his assembly (Jn 1:11-12; Rom 4; Gal 3-4).

The result is that the redemptive blessings originally promised to the *believing* physical seed of Abraham can be passed on to the newly adopted believer's faith-filled children (e.g., Ruth 1:16). With all the symbolic-ceremonial laws fulfilled in Christ (Col 2:14,16-17), the "Israel of God" now includes believing individuals, families, clans, and peoples from the former heathen ethnies (Gal 6:16). Abraham becomes heir of the whole world of peoples (Rom 4) and of the whole earth physically. The "Israel of God" or "the seed of Abraham" is indeed one people but is also multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic.

Therefore, the promises of a converted people, and that of the specific piece of land, still belongs to the Israel according to the flesh (ethnic Israel), to be received in permanent possession when through their faith, the Savior saves "all Israel" (Rom 11:18-32) (Schlissel and Brown 1990). The promises given to the other believing ethnic lines, grafted into Abraham's greater family, includes inheriting their lands, which belong to them (see Is 19; Zep 2:11). Some may choose to share a confederal or cantonal federal union with other similar peoples in one land (e.g., Switzerland). This land inheriting process will only be finished at the Second Coming. In Africa, because of the confusion of colonialism, the inheritance process for the peoples seems to have only begun.

Lastly, the only people that has a specific promise of a definite piece of earth is Israel. All other peoples may be permanently driven off the land they now inhabit and the place occupied by others before the end. The standard determining occupation or exile is faith-filled, ethno-collective obedience or disobedience.

Both New Ancestors and Own People

The New Testament thus continues the Old Testament's emphasis that covenant family involves both multi-generational blood/descent and covenant faith. In both testaments, non-

Israelites are indeed adopted into Abraham's family. The result is a look back and look forward. First, the new believer and his family truly reckon the Hebrew ancestors of faith as their own ancestors (1 Cor 10:1). Also the redemptive promises given to Abraham's family are now the possession of the new believer and his children into multitudes of coming generations. Notice how Paul presupposes this in the sacramental argumentation in First Corinthians. "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:1-2).⁴¹ The things of the wilderness experience happened, then, "for our [mutual] instruction" (1 Cor 10:1,11; see Rom 15:4-12), that is, for both Jew and for those from the heathen peoples.

What is unique in the New Testament's teaching is that, while persons and families from the heathen peoples are indeed adopted into the one Abrahamic people of God (Gal 3), they maintain at the same time a strong identification with their own people, language, and culture (see 1 Cor 9).

Support this both/and conclusion comes from several lines of biblical evidence. First, Paul rebukes people who rejected honoring and providing for their blood family. This includes the extended family of parents and grandparents. Those who do neglect them, he says, have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers (1Ti 5:3ff). This principle apparently includes even unbelieving parents and grandparents (see Prv 1:8ff; 13:1, 15:5; Eph. 6:1ff citing the fifth commandment).⁴² Christ himself criticizes the Pharisees for not caring for their aged parents

⁴¹The Abrahamic covenant promises predicted a new multi-ethnic solidarity (Gn 12:3, 17:5, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14-15, 49:10; Pss 22:27ff, 72:12; Is 19:23-25). Pentecost fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant as a foreshadowing of a greater harvest to come.

⁴²Almost all groups identifying with the Radical Reformation preach total separation (Williams 1992). This meant turning away from all that is of this old, divided, and passing-away world, including the OT law, war, unbelieving parents and their inheritance, and money. When thus separated, the proselyte must be united into a new super church of individual believers that swallows up all created divisions of the old age. This involves neo-Platonic assumptions.

because that would somehow invalidate a faith-oath they made to the temple (Mt 15:1ff). This violates the command to honor one's parents.

It is true that the Pharisees wrongly prioritized blood descent from Abraham (e.g., Mt 3:8; Lk 3:9) and drastically de-emphasized faith. The modern parallel is the racist Identity, British-Israelite, and Afrikaner *Israelvisie* movements. To combat this sort of imbalance, John the Baptist said that God could create sons of Abraham out of the stones of the earth. The Pharisees' pride in their "blood," without the fruit of faith-repentance, was worthless (Lk 3:7-9; see Jn 1:11-13).

Second, Paul said that circumcision with faith was of great benefit. "Circumcision" is certainly a symbol of faith-righteousness and regeneration (Rom 4:11; Col 2:11), but it is also a symbol of birth into genealogical derivation from Abraham's family, even for those who, like Caleb, were most likely adopted into it (cf. Gn 15:2, 17:10-14). That symbol, without regeneration ("new creation") resulting in obedience to the Lord's commands (i.e., faith working out in love), was worth nothing (Rom 2:25-3:2; see Phil 3:2ff; Col 2:20ff; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6, 6:15). This principle of the continuity of covenantal faith along multi-generational family lines certainly applies to both Testaments (see Rom 3-4; Gal 3). Therefore, circumcision, and now baptism, is a seal of imputed righteousness by faith. The seal is given to family groups with promises attached reaching to a thousand generations of children's children in the future (Is 59:21; Acts 2:38).

Third, Christ said that his true brothers and sisters were those who do the will of his Father. He cannot mean by this a radical individualizing of faith, as the Radical Reformers believed. He was a Jew who did not come to destroy but to fill up the full meaning of the covenant law in his life and teaching (Mt 5:17ff; Ridderbos 1982). He would not reject the

covenantal presupposition of his own people because that principle was derived from their revelatory experience of election (Gn 12:1-3) and the revelation of the covenant cutting process itself (Gn 15, 17). Jesus would then have held to both covenant faith and covenant descent.

Jesus must mean then that those who exercise true faith among the Jewish people and among every people other group are part of the family of God, which is the family of Abraham's seed, who is Messiah Jesus (Mt 12:50; Lk 8:21, Acts 10:34; 1Jn 2:17; see Gal 3:16). Christ subtly predicted that his flock of faithful hearers would include other sheep from other pastures. Those who trust and obey would be his one covenant-bound family. He would gather the ethnies also into that one, multi-cultural, covenant faith fold (see Rom 11; Eph 2; Mt 28:18-20; Jn 11:52). The Jews had no corner on the sheep market and they needed to be reminded of that.

The consequence of this covenantal both/and teaching was that the Pharisees and other Judeans who depended on the fleshly circumcision and external descent *alone* (Phil 3:2ff) were to be excommunicated out of the covenant. They were to be covenantally divorced, as Israel was (Rom 11:7ff; Jer 3:1ff; Is 50:1; cf. Hos 2:2). Furthermore, their city was to be burnt with fire (Mt 22:7) and the kingdom given to a new people (Mt 21:43), which at first included only a remnant of believing Jews as Jews. Only later would the reunited tribes of the North and South (Israel and Judah) be grafted back into their own kingdom (Jer 31:31-34; Ez 34:23-25, 37:21-28; Hos 3:5; Acts 1:6; Rom 11:16ff).

The meaning of this covenantal doctrine is clear. The renewed and enlarged Israel of the new covenant is no longer to be mono-ethnic and exclusive but multi-ethnic and inclusive. The OT people adopted individuals, families, and clans, attaching them "'in name and in blood' to the tribe" (De Vaux 1965, 6; see chapter 4). The new members promised to practice endogamy and to raise the family in the bounds of the new people. So do those adopted into the Abrahamic

people of faith today. Then, the adopted became ethnically Israelite with circumcision and other legal boundary markers. Today the Israel of faith is ethnically diverse, made up of all believing individuals, families, and peoples who yet remain in their ethno-covenantal solidarity.⁴³ If this is true of the ethnies, certainly it is true of Jews (Rom 11; see Stern 1988).

Fourth, as mentioned earlier, Paul speaks about a covenantal-sacramental unity of the multi-generational people of God (1 Cor 10). He states that all the believers (including their children, it seems) were baptized into the visible institutional church of Christ just as the Hebrews were all joined to the visible leadership of (i.e., baptized into) Moses in the cloud when they passed through the Red Sea.

Therefore, the church of both testaments is a covenantal unity of families in intergenerational solidarity. This means that both the family of faith and the putative family of blood-descent are equally ultimate in the new creation. In other words, the everlasting covenant of Abraham includes both an oath of faith-loyalty, stressing unity in one multi-ethnic body, and promises for the created, physical, blood-seed of those believers.⁴⁴

⁴³Jesus did not come to change the law, but to be in continuity with it and to correctly interpret it (Mt 5:17ff). Of necessity, Christ revealed that he must change the form of the ceremonies and pictures. But the essential meaning of those forms and pictures remains forever the same (see e.g., *Belgic Confession*, art. 25). Therefore, there is *normally* no need to choose between blood family (i.e., descent) and the family of faith. Peter says that the new covenant promise of the Spirit was “for you and your [blood] children” (Acts 2:39, echoing Is 59:21).

⁴⁴Some covenantal theologians who are not responding to racism or Apartheid see the concept of ethno-covenantal solidarities or people groups distinctly. For example, G. W. Bromiley, in *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants*, writes: “It is no fancy, however, to find the witness of circumcision to be wholly of a piece with that of the two New Testament types of baptism, the ark and the Red Sea passage [1Pe 3:20-21; 1 Cor 10:1ff]. For again children are included with their parents in the separation as a covenant people and therefore in the covenant sign. God does not deal with the individual in isolation, but with the individual in a family or people” (Bromiley 1979, 19).

“We have seen further that the two Old Testament types of baptism stand in a particular relationship to the divine covenant which is not with the individual in isolation but with the individual in a family or people” (Bromiley 1979, 23).

“It is because the covenant has been fulfilled, not ended, that the prophetic or anticipatory sign is no longer applicable [i.e., circumcision]. Its place has been taken by the new sign of the fulfilled covenant, Christian baptism. The covenant itself remains — filled out, extended [i.e., to all the peoples, as promised in the Abrahamic covenant], yet unaltered in essential character and certainly not discarded. The promise is still “unto you, and to your children” [Acts 2:39]. . . . There is no reason whatever to suppose that when these believers from the nations are added God

Second Adam Doctrine and Racism

Second Adam and the Division of Humankind

The doctrines of the first and the second Adam (e.g., 1 Cor 15:45ff; Rom 5:12ff) stress the fundamental covenantal and spiritual division of humanity. The doctrine of the first Adam gives a central biblical truth that leads to the rejection of all ethnocentric and racist doctrines as shown in chapter 5. Flowing as it does out of the biblical teaching about the Fall, the doctrine of the second Adam teaches the fundamental unity and value of every human individual, family, and people in Christ.

Without the covenantal division the Second Adam brings into humanity, there is no redemption for collective humankind in Christ (Rom 5:18). The Second Adam doctrine thus teaches that there are two federal or covenantal heads of mankind: Adam and Christ. All in Adam, including individuals and the mosaic of peoples on earth, are dead on account of sin (Rom 5:12-22). All in Christ, including individuals (but not all of them) and all the peoples, will be made alive because of his free gift of righteousness (Rom 5:17ff; see Ps 22:27-28; 86:9).⁴⁵

changes course and begins to deal only with individuals in isolation [i.e., groupless individuals]" (Bromiley 1979, 24).

"In the events which prefigure baptism and in the sign which it replaces, the purpose and work of God are not with solitary individuals but with families and groups and the individuals within them" (Bromiley 1979, 25).

"From the very beginning the covenant carried with it the creation of a redeemed and renewed people, at first restricted in the main to a single nation [i.e., mono-ethnic] but then broadened to embrace all nations [pan or multi-ethnic, not non-ethnic]" (Bromiley 1979, 25).

⁴⁵Christ did not teach a holistic, individual based unity of humanity. He did not come to bring human unity but to create a faith-based division (Lk 12:51-53). Out of that division comes the new unity of renewed mankind-in-Messiah.

Our Lord said that he came to bring a sword of division into mankind (Lk 12:49ff; Mt 10:34ff), not peace, non-confrontation and holistic reconciliation with anti-Christian people in Adam. This division will last until the end of the age as the Parable of the Weeds in the Field teaches (Mt. 13:24ff). Therefore, total humanity is forever divided.

Second Adam not a Unitary, Renewed Humanity

The doctrine of the Second Adam does not teach that renewed humanity is a unitary, equalitarian aggregate of individuals, united in one institutional congregation or super-denomination (Kuyper 1870; Rushdoony 1978c,d; Kreitzer 1997, 1998). It does not teach that in the church or state, there must be no recognition of the right of each ethno-linguistic group to have congregations and larger ecclesial (and civil) structures founded upon their own language and culture (see e.g., Rooy 1983; Ortiz 1996; Barrs 2002).⁴⁶ Instead, this doctrine teaches the principle of a renewal of the original creation design for Adam’s kind, in Messiah Jesus (Eph 1:10). All mankind, in all its beautiful diversity—ethnic, gender, class, and age—is now to be redeemed and transformed in the New Creation brought by Christ according to the promise of the Abrahamic covenant (see Eph 1:10ff; Col 1:15ff; Rom 3:29-4:18, 11:11f, 15:9-12; Gal 3:6ff). Babel created the ethno-linguistic diversity. Pentecost substantiates it.

Two Adams Doctrine Rejects Racism

As shown in chapter 5, mankind-in-Adam is a genetic unity, a single race (Gn 10-11; Acts 17:26). Therefore, there are no genetically superior or inferior races or peoples. However, in

⁴⁶“Christ’s desire is not Asian-Americans here and Latinos there, Afro-Americans here and Anglo-Americans somewhere else, but rather that we may be brought to complete unity” (Barrs 2002, 18;). Jerram Barrs’ intention is quite noble but it is based on a discourse of modernity, which always sees the advantage of unity over diversity (see Toulmin 1990). It also is founded upon the idea that ethnic diversity is caused by “an act of retribution” for sin at Babel (Barrs 2002, 17).

In the next paragraph he correctly attacks the HUP but concludes that there must be “one temple—not a white temple and a black temple, not a poor temple and a rich temple—but one temple. That is Christ’s design” (Barrs 2002, 18). He then believes Paul rejects “his own identity culturally. He calls it ‘the flesh,’ that is, all that we have as human persons that comes from our history and heritage [Phil 3:4]” (Barrs 2002, 19).

Besides being implicitly neo-platonic (Lee 1987; Jones 1992), this is not based on exegesis. Paul does not deny his ethnicity as “flesh.” He rejects the idolization and trust in it, as Barr also correctly does. Paul is thankful for his ethnic background (e.g., Rom 9:1-6, 10:1, 11:1-2; 1 Cor 9). Color or class has indeed nothing to do with planting churches, but ethno-linguistic “identity” must not be tarred with the same brush of modernity. Diverse ethnic churches must be planted while the unifying laws of love and inter-ethnic fellowship must also be followed. Messianic Jews are taking a lead in this, though they are too much influenced by dispensational theology (see e.g., Goble 1974; Stern 1988).

rightly rejecting group racism, which puts one race above another, one must not relativize ethno-covenantal group solidarity (ESOL) both in the first and in the Second Adam. Granted, some in their relativizing process do not absolutely reject ESOL, in the organizing of local congregations, at least initially (see e.g., C&S, 110-114; Barclay 1996). Scripture, however, does not relativize ESOL either pragmatically or as a matter of principle, by placing unity as logically and doctrinally prior to ethnic diversity.

Before Christ human unity was a unity-in-rebellion of diverse families and peoples, not a unity of mere individuals. In Christ, the unity is a unity-of-faith for individuals and peoples, preserving both true unity and real diversity of humanity. This doctrine then gives room for contextualized ethno-linguistic based cell-groups in multi-ethnic congregations, if they so wish. It allows for ethnic congregations, classes/presbyteries, regional synods and ethnic national synods in multi-ethnic countries, if these groups so wish. All, however, need to aim to develop a true visible unity of a (con)federal trans-ethnic and transnational Universal Synod of churches.

CONCLUSION

Ralph Martin⁴⁷ and Andrew Lincoln are therefore incorrect concerning the new humanity in Christ, the Second Adam:

⁴⁷Martin sees three lessons. (1) The enmity between Jew and Gentile is “overcome and pacified.” This is accurate. (2) “The divided first-century world” is called into a “harmonious amity within the fellowship of the Christian church.” This too is correct. (3) Jew and Gentiles lose “ethnic and racial claims” but gain “a place in Christ’s body, thereby forming a new race of humanity.” (Martin 1991, 31). The third race dogma is dangerously infected with dualist conceptions.

The church takes the place of national groups in verse 15 [Eph 2:15] (“one new person in place of two”) instead of merely existing alongside the ethnic divisions that persist (as in I Cor. 10:32). (Martin 1991, 31)

Through Christ’s work both Jews and Gentiles have been able to become part of the new person which has replaced the old entities. . . . Given that old divisions were overcome in order to achieve the new situation, an obvious implication would be that any present divisions between the two groups are totally incongruous. (Lincoln 1990, 133)

No Breakdown of Ethno-Creational Distinctions

I conclude that the Pauline literature and biblical covenantal theology does not teach that God breaks down ethno-linguistic creational distinctions in Christ. Instead, he transforms the rough edges caused by Adam’s Fall and establishes ethnic solidarity in his justice and peace.⁴⁸ Certainly ethnic identity remains outside of Christ as Paul states.

Give no offense either to [unbelieving] Jews or to Greeks [i.e., all non-Jewish ethnies] or to the church of God; just as I also please all men [all ethno-humanity] in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:31-32).

Certainly also individual ethno-linguistic identity is not destroyed in Christ in the Messianic community built on the foundation of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants (e.g., Is 19; Ps 22; Pss 47, 87, 96; etc.).

⁴⁸This is also true of bi-gender identity and class identity as long as it is based on differing gifts, talents and levels of obedience.

Converts to Messiah Jesus are no longer proselytes,⁴⁹ who must be extracted from their own people, abandoning their own ethnic heritage, to become part of the ethnic Jewish “circumcision.”⁵⁰ Gentile believers are now free from the law, not to be lawless but to be living lawfully with respect to Christ [μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἐννομος Χριστοῦ], in the Spirit who fulfills the essential righteousness of the law (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 5:13-18; Rom 8:1-7, 13:8-10). Hence, as equal heirs and equal citizens in an enlarged Abrahamic community of true Israel (Eph 2:19; Rom 8:17, see 2:26-29; Phil 3:3), they still maintain their own ethnic identity as the Old Testament testifies.⁵¹ Therefore, it is our responsibility as disciples of King Jesus, who gained sovereign dominion over all peoples, ethno-nations, and languages (Ps 2:8; Dan 7:14; Mt 28:18), to disciple all the fullness of the peoples of earth. All are welcome to be adopted, still in ethnic solidarity, into his Davidic commonwealth of the sons of Abraham and Israel by faith. He will remain with us to accomplish this task until the end of the Age when he gathers all the peoples together and then judges each person individually (Mt 25:32-33).

⁴⁹Paul refers to himself prior to his Damascus Road experience as a “preacher of circumcision” (Gal 5:11). Some believe this might refer to a prior interest in making full, circumcised proselytes from the ethnies (see Donaldson 1993, 98 [citing E. Barnikol, R. Bultmann and F. F. Bruce]; see Gal 1:10; Mt 23:15; *contra*, Fung 1988, 71-72). Now, however, for Paul the experience of Christ and his cross precludes this prior interest for if any righteousness comes by the law, surely Messiah died in vain (Gal 5:11, 2:21-3:5; see 1 Cor 1-2).

⁵⁰The two-fold reference to “pleasing men” in Gal 1:10 could echo the charges of the Judaizers who claimed that he was preaching cheap grace. Specifically, they seemed to claim that “jettisoning the demand for circumcision and other legal requirements . . . [made] conversion easy for Gentiles” (Fung 1988, 48). On the other hand, they also charged Paul with preaching circumcision pragmatically when it served his interests (see Gal 5:11). Thus as the ultimate church growth pragmatist, they seemed to argue, Paul would do anything to win converts at whatever cost necessary.

As I have contemporized the charges, the parallels are clear for today. I do not agree with the excessive pragmatism of many church growth practitioners, but certainly the vision to incarnate the gospel in non-alienating cultural forms without compromising the core of the Good News, breathes of the Pauline missional vision (1 Cor 9).

⁵¹As Terence Donaldson states, the Jewish proselyte mission, which partially fulfilled Old Testament predictions, may have been a driving force behind, but did not provide the message for, Paul’s mission to the peoples. For Paul, the message is no longer bringing people into a full Torah observance (“if I still preach circumcision,” Gal 5:11). The message, instead, is Christ (see Rom 15:50; 1 Cor 1:23; Eph 3:8). He, not the ceremonies (e.g., circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws), is the “boundary marker of the community destined for salvation” (Donaldson 1993, 98). The Abrahamic covenant’s form of mission, providing the task for “Israel to be a channel of salvation for all nations” remains the same (Donaldson 1993, 98). So is the Jewish mission. People from the ethnies are welcome on equal terms with the Israelites. Yet now again, faith and its outworking in love, not fleshly external boundary markers marking total ethnic assimilation, is the driving force (Gal 5:6-16; see Donaldson 1993). The ethnies as ethnies are welcome in Christ’s heavenly commonwealth of Israel.

ESOL and the Trinitarian Principle

Critics of this position that the missional imperative seeks to disciple ethnic solidarities and not just foreign individuals, violate the “hermeneutical key” of true unity and real diversity (Potgieter 1990, 21, 51; see chapters 1 and 3; note 34). The ethno-peoples exist now and they should continue to exist in the new heavens and earth, in the coming City, which is the one people of the God of Abraham (Ps 47:6-9), the father of many nations (see Is 60, 61, 66:19-21; Rv 21:22-27).⁵²

Christianity not Platonic-Gnostic

Biblical Christianity is therefore not platonic-gnostic with a de-particularized non-ethnic, androgynous person as the ideal (*contra* e.g., Meeks 1974; Boyarin 1994; see Jones 1992, 1997; Gundry-Volf and Volf 1997). Just as the physical resurrection of the male person of Jesus, the Galilean Jew, guarantees the renewal of the first creation’s gender particularity, so it also secures ethno-linguistic diversity of a people in ethnic solidarity. Redemptive history does not move away from so-called divisive social identities of the first creation, but rather establishes them in mature and restored form (Dooyeweerd 1979; Wolters 1985; Kreitzer 1998).

Biblical Christianity is not like unitarian Islam with its mono-cultural ideal of all people of earth as Arabic individuals, dressed uniformly in white, circling the Kaabah shrine. Instead all peoples, tongues, tribes and nations, dressed probably in diverse ethnically identifiable white robes,⁵³ surround the throne of the Lamb, as Abraham Kuyper foresaw.⁵⁴

⁵²Presupposing the equal ultimacy of true unity and real diversity, there exists no reason why the references to ethno-leaders and peoples being in the heavenly Jerusalem should not be taken literally.

⁵³How else could John have identified them as ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν?

⁵⁴“Even though the dividing wall is broken down through Christ, yet all distinction is not taken away. In the future the glorious song before the throne of the Lamb will be sung—not through a uniform human mass, but a singular humanity distinguishable as peoples, clans, nations, and languages” [“Al is de muur der afscheiding door den Christus gesloopt, die der onderscheiding is door Hem niet opgeheven, en voor den troon des Lams zal eenmaal, niet

The Creator thus designed the Adamic family—in its unity and diversity—to be the People of God. In Christ, the Second Adam, all that was lost in the Fall has been restored with super-abounding grace (Rom 5:12ff). As preceding chapters demonstrate, the Creator intended diverse ethno-linguistic groups to develop. Logically, then, God intends that each of these peoples worship him in their own, diverse, faith-inducing, heart-language (Rom 10:17), with unique liturgy and music in that language and culture (Eph 5:18ff; Col 3:16). The triune God, then, originally intended the one people of God, τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor 10:32), to be a plural-unity (see Gottwald 1964) in Christ.

Clearly, as we have seen, Israel, the church in its immaturity, was such. It was a (con)federal unity with real sub-ethnic diversity that even early included dialectical distinction as the shibboleth/sibboleth story demonstrates (Jdg 12:6). As the Spirit enlarges Israel, and when the body of Christ reaches its maturity, that body is also a true plural-unity.

Trinitarian Key and Ethno-Churches

The trinitarian principle along with the specific exegesis of many passages in Old and New Testaments would then serve as justification for planting a multitude of self-governing, self-theologizing, indigenous churches within a larger international, (con)federal-synodical unifying structure. Furthermore, since the glory of the triune Godhead is to be reflected on earth, both true unity and real diversity should be reflected in just human civil governments as well. Just government must take into account self-governing ethno-national solidarities in larger state, regional, and international structures. Both can be legitimately deduced (*bona consequentia*) from biblical-theological principles.

door een eenvormige meschenmassa, maar door een menschheid, in volkeren en geslachten, in natiën en tongen verscheiden, Hem die overwon, het lied der eere worden toegezongen”] (Kuyper 1970, 24; my translation).

Kuyper, Uniformity, and the Bias of Modernity

Abraham Kuyper, especially in his tract, *Eenvormigheid, de vloek van het moderne leven* [Uniformity, the curse of modern life] (Kuyper 1870) used a similar concept about the false and sinful aspirations towards unity at Babel (Gn 11). Afrikaner theologian Bobby Loubser, no friend of Kuyperian theology, sums up his reasoning. True human unity was never uniformity but a “unity . . . out of the diversity of peoples and generations” (Loubser 1987, 41). Since Babel, the false external uniformity of rebellious man always fails because of the God-created diversity of the cultures of the nations. Kuyper claimed that French revolutionary humanism, bound as it is to Enlightenment modernity, uses the slogan “Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood” ultimately to destroy ethno-national diversities. The slogan actually stripped “nations of their peculiarities and made [them] uniform one with another, [thus] the cause was won for false imperial unity. The slogan thus became ““By un[i]formity [*sic*] to unity, by uniformity to unification, by centralisation to Caesarism”” (Loubser 1987, 41).

Kuyper’s insight concerning the holistic bias of modernity has proved to be well founded, especially in the last century with its ideologies of mass humanity such as Social Democracy, Marxist-Leninism, and Secular Humanism (Von Kuenehlt-Leddihn 1991). Kuyper’s insight applies to missiology and ecclesiology as well as to political science. Post-modernity’s emphasis upon fragmented diversity, multiple self-created identities, and multiculturalist ideologies is merely the opposite end of the pendulum swing. Only a faith-dependent, creationist, Trinitarian Christianity provides the balance between the two.

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