In his careful study of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29), David Catchpole began by setting out briefly the “theological presuppositions of the Decree”.\(^1\) According to Catchpole, “the theology underlying the Decree is one which sees the Christian gospel as doing nothing about the Jew/Gentile distinction. That is, Jews remain Jews, and Gentiles remain Gentiles.” This theology “would have been repugnant to Paul... For Paul, the Christian gospel does a very great deal to the Jew/Gentile distinction. Such a categorization... belongs to the first and obsolete era of human existence. In the second era now present, Christians are controlled by corporate participation ‘in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. iii. 28)...”\(^2\) Richard Bauckham has recently suggested that “Catchpole’s claim” that the theology expressed in the Decree does nothing about the Jew/Gentile division “is mistaken”: “The theology underlying the decree holds (as Paul does) that uncircumcised Gentiles belong fully to the eschatological people of God. The requirements of the decree are not understood as those which Jews in general held to apply to Gentiles, but as those which the Law of Moses prescribed for Gentile members of the eschatological people of God.”\(^3\)

However, leaving aside the questions concerning the theology of the Apostolic Decree and of Paul’s attitude to it, questions which I shall not take up in this essay, it seems to me that Bauckham has perhaps failed to do justice to the difference between the position Catchpole presents as Paul’s and that which Bauckham sees as shared by Paul and the Apostolic Decree. For Bauckham, it seems, Paul’s view (like that of the Decree) is that both Jews and Gentiles may equally be saved through Christ and may both thus be members of God’s eschatological people, but in terms of their identity and conduct, Jews remain Jews and Gentiles remain Gentiles: Gentiles must obey those precepts “which the Law of Moses

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\(^1\) D.R. Catchpole, “Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree”, _NTS_ 23 (1977) 428-44; here p. 429.

\(^2\) Catchpole, “Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree”, 430.

prescribed for Gentile members of the eschatological people of God”. Catchpole, on the other hand, suggests that for Paul, what God has done in Christ is to create a people among whom the distinction between Jew and Gentile has been rendered obsolete, a distinction belonging to a former era and now transcended by a new identity in Christ. While there is no disagreement about the fact that Paul’s gospel announces a route by which Gentiles (as Gentiles) can be welcomed into the eschatological people of God, there is an important difference in terms of the extent to which incorporation into Christ is seen as redefining the identity and practice of both Jews and Gentiles. On this matter, contemporary scholarship is divided, and it is a point which has a significant impact on the way we understand Paul’s attitude to Christian identity, to the Law, to ethics, and so on, not to mention his attitude to James, Jerusalem, and the Apostolic Decree.

On the one hand, then, there are authors who in recent work maintain — albeit in varied ways — that Paul has established groups comprising both Jews and Gentiles who now share a distinct new identity and for whom obedience to the Jewish Law is not fully and literally required. Philip Esler, for example, argues that “Paul unambiguously asserts that the Christ-followers constituted a third group set over against the Judaic and gentile worlds”. Paul therefore discards the Law and regards it as irrelevant to the Christian congregations: it has “passed its use-by date”, “had its day”, and is now replaced by the Spirit.⁴ Daniel Boyarin emphasises Paul’s desire to create a unified humanity which is one in Christ. Thus he regards Paul as having “given up his specific Jewish identity in order to merge his essence into the essence of the gentile Christians and create the new spiritual People of God”.⁵ John Barclay, while rejecting Boyarin’s notion that Jewish and Gentile identities are wholly erased or annulled by Paul, preferring to speak of a relativising of former identities, sees Paul as an “anomalous” Diaspora Jew, associating intimately with Gentiles and creating distinct

communities of Jews and Gentiles in which observance of the Law was relativised and in some respects abandoned altogether.\(^6\)

On the other hand there are those who argue that, for all his insistence that salvation is through Christ alone, Paul clearly continues to view Jewish and Gentile believers as people with distinct identities and distinct obligations. Peter Tomson, for example, argues that Paul’s view was that “Jews and gentiles should each stick to their respective ways of life” wherein “gentiles kept their minimum set of ‘commandments of God’ while Jewish Christians kept ‘the whole law’”.\(^7\) Paul himself thus possessed a “double membership: of the group of those ‘respecting the law’, the Jews, and of the body of Christ”.\(^8\) Markus Bockmuehl presents a similar argument: “Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 7:17ff makes clear that his ‘rule for all the churches’ is for Jews to keep the Torah (indeed Gal. 5:3, too, may mean they are obliged to do so) and for Gentiles to keep what pertains to them.”\(^9\) Bockmuehl quotes Michael Wyschogrod with approval: “The distinction that needs to be made, therefore, is not between the law before Christ and after Christ, but the law for Jews and for Gentiles.”\(^10\) Karin Finsterbusch has likewise recently argued, “daß in Paulus’ Augen die Thora universaler Maßstab für gerechtes Handeln ist, daß sie aber für Juden und Heiden nicht in gleichem Umfang gültig ist... Die Rechtfertigung aus Glauben setzt die ethische Funktion der Thora also nicht außer Kraft.”\(^11\)


\(^7\) P.J. Tomson, “Paul’s Jewish Background in View of His Law Teaching in 1 Corinthians 7”, in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. Dunn), 251-70; here pp. 267, 269.


The debate is not so much about whether Paul sees Christ as the defining centre of the believer’s identity — that much is clear — but rather about the significance and the effect of this (re)definition. Is it essentially a soteriological affirmation or does it significantly affect social practice and interaction? In this essay I aim to approach this debate through an examination, informed by the social sciences, of Paul’s corporate Christology and of the way in which this Christology constructs a community which is “one in Christ”. I shall assess from Paul’s own statements what concrete implications this has for the identity and practice of both Jewish and Gentile members of the Christian community.

**PAUL’S CORPORATE CHRISTOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY**

Paul’s very frequent use of the phrase ﹁ (and near equivalents, such as ﹁) has long been noted.\(^{12}\) Albert Schweitzer famously saw this “being-in-Christ” as the key to Paul’s theology, understanding it as a form of mysticism — Christ mysticism — in which the elect are united in one corporeity with Christ, having died and risen with him.\(^{13}\) Schweitzer’s basic emphasis, though differently nuanced and expressed, remains important to more recent attempts to capture the heart of Pauline thought, such as E.P. Sanders’ “participationist eschatology” or Morna Hooker’s “interchange”.\(^{14}\) Nevertheless, James Dunn considers that the theme of participation “in Christ” has been somewhat neglected in recent studies of Paul, compared with “the amazingly vigorous contemporary debate on justification by faith”.\(^{15}\)

It has proved difficult to express exactly what kind of “reality” Paul has in mind with the idea of Christians being “in Christ”, together comprising the “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27). Adolf Deissmann famously found it nonsensical to speak of being “in” another person, and concluded that “Paul must have thought of Christ as a kind of an impersonal

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\(^{13}\) A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (2nd edn; London: A. & C. Black, 1953) 10, 19, etc.


continuum, like the atmosphere”.\(^\text{16}\) Subsequent interpreters have rejected Deissmann’s implausible suggestion, but have remained sympathetic to his perplexity concerning the meaning of the idiom.\(^\text{17}\) But in terms of Paul’s Christology this much at least is indisputable: Paul describes Jesus not solely in terms of what he as an individual is or has become — Messiah, Lord, Son of God, etc. — but as someone in and through whom believers live, both individually and corporately.\(^\text{18}\)

More fruitful perhaps than a focus on what ontological status Paul implies with his “in Christ” language is an attempt to see what this corporate Christology-language does in terms of the construction of Christian identity, and here insights from the social sciences may be of considerable help. The sociology of knowledge approach known most widely through the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann explores the ways in which everything that passes for “knowledge” — expressed in language, symbols, ideas, etc. — forms a “symbolic universe”, a body of tradition which shapes and orders human behaviour and relationships.\(^\text{19}\) From this perspective, the separation all too evident in Pauline studies, between “doctrinal” subjects such as Paul’s Christology or soteriology on the one hand, and his ethics and exhortations on the other, breaks down. Paul’s statements about God, Christ, Spirit and so on,


\(^{17}\) See Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, 47-96. On the various ways in which the phrases \(\text{\Large M}\) - \(\text{\Large F}\) and \(\text{\Large \&}\) \(\text{\Large A}\) \(\text{\Large D}\) \(\text{\Large \&}\) \(\text{\Large \&}\) \(\text{\Large \&}\) \(\text{\Large \&}\) may be understood grammatically, see Wedderburn, “Some Observations”, who stresses that Paul’s varied uses cannot be fitted into a single category, such as “locative”, “instrumental” etc.

\(^{18}\) It is not my concern here to investigate the background or origin of Paul’s corporate Christology. Cautions have rightly been raised against too easily invoking a “Hebrew” idea of “corporate personality” (cf. J.W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination”, *JTS* 21 [1970] 1-16). Nevertheless, since a spatial or locative sense seems to be implied in at least some instances (Gal 3:27-28) — though this does not exclude an instrumental sense too (so Wedderburn, “Some Observations”, 95-6 n. 37) — and since Paul unambiguously refers to Christians as the body of Christ, the description “corporate Christology” seems entirely and quite literally appropriate.

all serve to structure the identity and interaction of the Christian community. Recent studies informed by this perspective have examined the ways in which even such thoroughly theological symbols as Jesus’ death on the cross serve to construct and shape the social praxis of the early Christian communities. In one such study, for example, Raymond Pickett, describing his project as an exercise in “sociological exegesis” and using Berger and Luckmann’s work as a theoretical resource, emphasises that his concern is to move beyond social and historical description to an analysis of the “social impact” that “a text, or symbol within the text, was designed to have in the realm of social interaction”.20

Also important is the recent focus on the theme of identity, most developed from a social-scientific point of view in Philip Esler’s use of social identity theory in a study of Galatians. Esler uses the work of social psychologist Henri Tajfel to shed light on the ways in which Paul seeks to construct and maintain “the distinctive identity of his congregations in relation to the Israelite and gentile outgroups”.21 In a situation of inter-group conflict, Paul is concerned to sustain the boundaries between the Christian community and both Israel on the one hand and the Gentiles on the other, and does so by creating a positive social identity for his converts. One of the benefits of Esler’s focus on identity is that it links together both “theological” and “ethical” sections of Paul’s letter(s) and highlights their “group-oriented” character: both serve “to maintain and enhance group identity”.22

We may then valuably focus on Paul’s corporate Christology, not out of a concern with his doctrine of Christ per se, nor with the category of “reality” which he has in mind in speaking of believers being in Christ, but rather with a focus on the ways in which this Christology serves to construct Christian identity and community, to shape and pattern relationships. This will hopefully enable us to consider

20 R. Pickett, The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus (JSNTSup 143; Sheffield: SAP, 1997) 34-5. A similar concern — but including more critical questions about the ideology and interests that a text reflects — underlies my approach in The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1996); see pp. 33-59.


22 See Esler, Galatians, 45, 229; also idem, “Group Boundaries”, 215-40.
afresh the question as to how, if at all, the identity and conduct of Jew and Gentile are redefined as a consequence of their being “in Christ”.

In what must necessarily be a selective consideration, those texts which refer to baptism, the Christian ritual of initiation and entry for both Jews and Gentiles, are an obvious place at which to start. Baptism and Lord’s Supper, the two most significant Christian rituals, serve not only to dramatise and recall the central doctrines of the early Christian groups, but also to construct their sense of identity and to structure their patterns of social interaction.23 The most important Pauline baptismal tradition in this regard is that which appears in Gal 3:26-29, 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:9-11, where a connection with baptism is explicit in the first two passages and implicit in the third (cf. Col 2:12).24 While the form of the teaching varies considerably in these three epistolar contexts, the multiple appearance of a similar tradition shows its basic importance for Paul and for the Pauline churches. Common to all three passages is an emphasis on oneness or unity in Christ and an affirmation that this includes both Jew and Gentile, slave and free (1 Cor 12:12-13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). In both Galatians and Colossians the declaration is that now “there is no longer Jew and Greek”

Commenting on the meaning of the other major Christian ritual, the Lord’s Supper, Paul similarly stresses that this is a celebration of the unity and oneness of the body of believers who share in the blood and body of Christ: “because there is one bread, we many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). The fact that Paul presents this assertion concisely as an apparently uncontroversial basis for his argument that the Corinthians should avoid with demons (1 Cor 10:20-21) may indicate, as Paul Gardner suggests, that this understanding of the Lord’s Supper was


24 On the similarities between the three passages see e.g. R. Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Woman”, JAAR 40 (1972) 283-303; here p.292. Colossians may well not be by Paul himself, but nevertheless shows the influence of this baptismal teaching within the Pauline tradition.
widely shared, at least between Paul and the Corinthians.\textsuperscript{25} Paul’s conviction that the Lord’s Supper should demonstrate the oneness of the body of Christians also explains why he is so disturbed by the divisions that currently appear when the Corinthians gather for this meal (1 Cor 11:17-34), and why he considers that such a divided celebration is no longer really the Lord’s Supper at all (1 Cor 11:20).\textsuperscript{26}

This oneness in Christ, which baptism initiates and the Lord’s Supper celebrates, is most vividly and profoundly expressed in Paul’s notion of the community as the body of Christ. The functioning human body perfectly illustrates the idea that a group of “members” can be diverse and different, with different functions to perform, yet also be essentially one (1 Cor 12:12-27). Paul, of course, goes beyond simply using the human body as an illustration of how a community of diverse people can be united, and actually describes the Christian congregation as “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:12, 27; cf. Rom 12:5). In terms of identity then, while a whole series of terms are used by Paul to describe the members of the Christian communities, a very basic description is that they are those who are \textsuperscript{26}... (2 Cor 12:2), where it seems to me to make most sense to see as primarily a formulaic identity designation (though it may also serve to emphasise that it was in Christ’s power that the visions and revelations Paul describes took place\textsuperscript{27}).

From a social-scientific perspective, then, we would expect Paul’s corporate Christology — the declaration that all converts are one body in Christ — both to function as a fundamental designation of distinctive group-identity and to structure social interaction within the congregations. However, that leaves open the question as to how, and in what ways, this defining identity affects other aspects of the believers’ identity (social, cultural, religious, etc.) and social conduct. The answer to that question cannot be deduced from social-scientific theory but must be drawn from the evidence of Paul’s letters. In what ways,


we may ask, does this corporate Christology, and the fundamental “Christian” identity which it encapsulates, undergird a redefinition and restructuring of existing identities and practices? To what extent does Paul see his own and others’ identities fundamentally redefined by their being in Christ, and is there any evidence that Paul’s corporate Christology was controversial — perhaps precisely because of its implications for the social interaction and identity of the Christian congregations? I turn first to the question of controversy.

**HOW CONTROVERSIAL WAS PAUL’S CORPORATE CHRISTOLOGY?**

The phrase \(\text{ἐκκλησία} \) is unique to the Pauline letters in the New Testament, apart from three occurrences in 1 Peter (3:16; 5:10; 5:14; and cf. 1 John 5:20), which probably reflect the influence of Pauline language on the author of 1 Peter.\(^ {28} \) The notion of the congregation as the body of Christ is also unique to the Pauline tradition in the New Testament.\(^ {29} \) In view of the conflicts Paul faced in Antioch, Galatia and elsewhere, it may not be insignificant to note that the letter of James (connected with James, whether authentic or not) shows no trace of this corporate Christology. James and Paul evidently share the early Christian conviction that Jesus is Lord and Messiah/Christ (James 1:1; 2:1) — to this extent Paul’s Christology is uncontroversial — but there is no evidence (though an argument from silence is always precarious) that they share the corporate christological notion of being (one) “in Christ”. So “in Christ” language, and the corporate Christology which it reflects, is certainly distinctive to Paul, at least insofar as our literary evidence allows us to conclude; but is there any evidence to suggest that it was controversial?

First we may briefly consider the dispute at Antioch, reported by Paul in Gal 2:11-14, to which we shall have to refer later. Despite much continuing debate about the incident and its causes, certain things are clear: before the arrival of the people from James, both Jewish and Gentile Christians ate together (presumably in the common meals of the community, i.e. the Lord’s Supper). This practice was regarded as unacceptable, at least in its current form, by the people from James, who convinced the Jewish Christians to separate themselves from this inclusive table-fellowship. What might have undergirded and legitimated this eating together which the people from James sought to bring to an end, or at least to suspend until further

\(^ {28} \) Though this does not imply that 1 Peter should be judged a “Pauline” letter. See, e.g., P.J. Achtemeier, *I Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 18-19; O. Knoch *Der erste und zweite Petrusbrief. Der Judasbrief* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1990) 17-18.

\(^ {29} \) Though cf. also the corporate images found in John 15:1-4 and 17:20-23.
requirements had been met? The most obvious and plausible answer is: exactly the kind of corporate Christology which is expressed in the baptismal declaration Paul cites later in the letter (Gal 3:26-28) and which he sees embodied in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 10:17), “you are all one in Christ, in whom there is no longer Jew and Greek”. The baptismal declaration of Gal 3:26-28 is often thought to represent a pre-Pauline tradition, originally from the Antioch community. Certainly there are firm indications that it is at least a pre-Galatians tradition, clearly distinct within its epistolary context, and if not strictly pre-Pauline then at least a product of the congregation’s shared convictions rather than exclusively of Paul’s.30

If the Antiochene/Pauline baptismal tradition did serve to underpin theologically the community’s practice in which Jews and Gentiles ate together without distinction — and it is much more plausible to assume that there was such a connection between theological declaration and community practice than that the declaration “one in Christ... no longer Jew or Gentile” had no direct meaning for social interaction within the congregations — then it seems reasonable to suggest that this corporate Christology itself, as well as the unification which it expressed and legitimated, was controversial. The “people from James” did not agree that “in Christ there is no longer Jew or Gentile”, since they sought to reestablish the separation of the two groups, on the grounds either that the Gentile believers were failing to observe a minimum of Torah-observance regarding their food and drink, or that the Jewish believers could not be sure in such a context that they were not sinning in partaking of food and wine shared in common with Gentiles.31 While the most obviously apparent issue of dispute in both Antioch and Galatia is that of the extent of Torah-observance required of

30 See further H.D. Betz, Galatians (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 181-5; Horrell, Social Ethos, 84-5.

Gentile converts, it seems highly likely that different christological convictions underpinned the conflicting positions taken by Paul and his Jewish Christian opponents.\textsuperscript{32}

Further hints — though no more than hints — of Paul’s distinctive and controversial Christology may be found in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Cor 11:4, in a strongly defensive and polemical context, Paul speaks of those who preach “another Jesus”, and of the Corinthians receiving another Spirit, or another gospel. As Jerome Murphy-O’Connor has observed: “In 11:4 Paul makes a very clear distinction between his role and that of the Corinthians. He ‘preached’ Jesus, they ‘received or accepted’ the Spirit and the Gospel... The key element in 11:4, therefore, is ‘Jesus’; the other two are dependent on it.”\textsuperscript{33} Although we can deduce very little from this reference about the contrasts between Paul’s Christology and that of his opponents, who were connected (if not identical) with the so-called “super-apostles” (2 Cor 11:5) and stressed their Jewish (Jerusalem?) connections (2 Cor 11:22), it is at least a hint that their presentations of “Jesus” were different.

In what I judge to be a later section of 2 Corinthians,\textsuperscript{34} certainly a less overtly polemical section, Paul refers to his changed perspective on “Christ” (2 Cor 5:16), in the context of a passage which expresses a thoroughly incorporative or participationist Christology (see vv. 14, 17, 21). Paul’s conviction that Christ died and rose for all, and that all have therefore died and are summoned to live for Christ (5:14-15), leads him to two conclusions.\textsuperscript{35} The first, a negative conclusion, is that no-one is any longer to be regarded

\textsuperscript{32} See further Holmberg, “Jewish Versus Christian Identity”, who sees the Antioch incident as one where Paul demanded from Christian Jews the giving up of the marking of their Jewish identity for the sake of the church’s unity: “Jewish identity must cede to the common Christian identity” (p. 414). I am in substantial agreement with the argument of Holmberg’s essay, though unfortunately Holmberg does not consider Paul’s corporate Christology when he considers the basis from which Paul derives this sense of Christian identity (see pp. 416-25).

\textsuperscript{33} J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Another Jesus (2 Cor 11:4)”, \textit{RB} 97 (1990) 238-51; here pp. 239-40.

\textsuperscript{34} See Horrell, \textit{Social Ethos}, 296-312.

\textsuperscript{35} The two statements each introduced with \textit{σὺς...νῦν} in vv. 16 and 17 are best taken as two conclusions each drawn from vv. 14-15 rather than as one conclusion (v. 16) from which another is then drawn; cf. C.K. Barrett, \textit{The Second Epistle to the Corinthians} (BNTC;
from a worldly point of view (ἐξ οἰκουμενικοῦ στοιχείου, ἐκκυβαλλόμενος). Even though Paul once knew Christ from a perspective ἐξ οἰκουμενικοῦ στοιχείου, he does so no longer (v. 16). The second conclusion, positively stated, is that “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things are gone, behold they have become new” (v. 17). In stating that he no longer regards Christ ἐξ οἰκουμενικοῦ στοιχείου, Paul may be expressing a veiled polemic against his opponents, though the immediacy and intensity of the conflict is less than in 2 Cor 10–13 (cf. 2 Cor 2:17–3:1; 4:2). Is it possible that here again we glimpse a significant difference in Christology between Paul and his Jewish-Christian opponents? They proclaim “another Jesus”, a Jesus who, from Paul’s point of view, is a Christ regarded ἐξ οἰκουμενικοῦ στοιχείου, (note Rom 9:5). It is difficult to be sure exactly what Paul means by that — it seems unlikely that he is primarily meaning to disavow any interest in the historical Jesus — but it certainly stands in contrast with the perspective on Christ which Paul himself now holds and which is spelt out in the surrounding context. For Paul, as the context of 2 Cor 5:16 makes clear, the event of Christ’s death and resurrection marks the disjunction between the old age and the new, between an old way of knowing and a new epistemology, one which is “thoroughly and without remainder christological”. As Graham Stanton concludes: “The main point of 2 Cor. 5:16 is clear: as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians have a new perspective on all things and all people and no longer ‘know’ ἐξ οἰκουμενικοῦ στοιχείου, . Any attempt to evaluate others, even Christ,


36 This verse is notoriously difficult and its interpretation much discussed. The various opinions are reviewed in M.E. Thrall, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (vol. 1; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1994) 412-20.


as though the death and resurrection of Jesus had not brought about a totally new situation is to be rejected most firmly.” Christ is the one in whose death all have participated, the one “in” whom all believers are no longer to be regarded; no longer, we may suggest, regarded as Jew and Gentile, but as together.

There is some evidence, then, to support the hypothesis that Paul’s corporate Christology was not only distinctive but also to some degree controversial. It appears to represent one point of contrast between Paul (together with the Antioch community, at least prior to the “incident” there) and the varied forms of Jewish Christianity associated with James and the Jerusalem church. Specifically, Paul’s corporate Christology seems likely to have underpinned his controversial conviction that, because Jews and Gentiles are together one body in Christ, a new creation, they can and must share unbounded fellowship at the Lord’s table.

“NO LONGER JEW OR GREEK”: BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

It is explicit in the baptismal declarations examined above that Paul regards the Christian community as a body of people which is one in Christ, in whom “there is no longer Jew or Greek”. But what exactly does that phrase mean? To what extent does it imply a redefinition of former identities and a restructuring of former practices? That is not immediately apparent and a range of interpretations are possible. It might be taken as essentially a soteriological declaration: that Jews and Gentiles are equally and without distinction saved in Christ, but that their identities and accompanying ethical imperatives remain distinct. Or, at the other end of the spectrum, it might be taken to mean that the identity distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians has essentially been dissolved, that a new identity “in Christ” has displaced the former labels (or rather that the identity labels of Israel now apply without distinction to all who are — see below) and that whatever ethical obligations there are apply to the whole people of God in Christ. From a perspective informed by the sociology of knowledge, one would expect both the positive declaration (“you are one in Christ”) and its negative counterpart (“there is no longer Jew and Gentile”) to reflect not merely some theoretical standpoint “in the sight of God” (can any statement “merely” do

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that?) but to define the identity of the Christian congregations and to structure their social interaction. In what ways does this appear to be evident?

We may first consider some of the statements Paul makes about himself. His continuing sense of his Jewish identity is clear from Rom 9:3 and 2 Cor 11:22, though in the first case it is notable that he specifies that the Jews are his kindred

\[ \text{precisely the perspective from which he no longer views those who are in Christ, according to 2 Cor 5:16} \]

and in the second his statements are presented as a piece of foolish boasting, necessitated by the Corinthians’ acceptance of rival missionaries who make much of their Jewish credentials. As in 2 Cor 11:22, in Phil 3:4-8 Paul lists his Jewish credentials in a polemical context, describing them as a basis for confidence

\[ \text{but as “loss” and “rubbish” compared with knowing Christ, though whom Paul, according to his own testimony, has indeed lost everything} \]

\[ (\text{omitted only in F, G*, 6*, 326, 1729 pc}) \]

Christ has become the all-defining centre of Paul’s identity. Further relevant evidence is found in 1 Corinthians, where Paul strikingly states that he became to the Jews

\[ \text{and that he himself is not} \]

\[ (1 \text{ Cor 9:20; cf. Rom 7:6; Gal 4:12}) \]

In Galatians Paul speaks of his “former life in Judaism” (Gal 1:13-14) and describes himself and Peter as

\[ \text{but as now living in a way that is not Jewish (2:15; see further below). In Gal 2:18-20, in a passage to which we shall return, Paul describes himself as having died to the Law, as having “torn down” his previous basis for righteousness, as someone who has been crucified with Christ and now lives only insofar as Christ lives in him. It would seem accurate to conclude that Paul remains conscious of his identity as Jew but that this identity is no longer defining} \]

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41 These statements do not fit with Peter Tomson’s view of Paul as a law-abiding Jew whose letters represent halakah for Gentiles and who urges law-observance for Jewish Christians, so he accepts the rather weak textual evidence for omitting the \[ \text{as original (see G.D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 422 nn.2-3; B.M. Metzger, TCGNT [2nd edn] 493).} \]
— or at least is radically redefined — in the light of his new identity as ournaments

But if Paul sees his own identity transformed in Christ, what is his view of other Jewish Christians? Crucial here is the much discussed and difficult passage in Gal 2:14-21. Paul reports that his challenge to Peter began with the words:

But distinguishing here the different identities of Gentile and Jewish believers (v. 14).\(^{42}\) Distinguishing here the different identities of Gentile and Jewish believers is an essential starting point for addressing the issue of conflict at Antioch and Galatia: who or what should change when these two groups are integrated as...

\(^{42}\) This statement is again difficult for Tomson to fit into his picture of Paul, and he accepts the less than compelling textual evidence for the omission of the words (following \(P^{46}\)) and paraphrases the sentence thus: “Before, you agreed to live and eat as a Jew together with the gentiles, and although some call that ‘living like a gentile’, why do you now separate and wish to eat with them only if they become Jews?” (Tomson, \(Paul and the Jewish Law,\) 229-30). This seems to me quite clearly to alter the sense of what Paul actually writes.

\(^{43}\) Burton, \(Galatians,\) 112

\(^{44}\) So Dunn, \(The Epistle to the Galatians\) (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1993) 128; Tomson, \(Paul and the Jewish Law,\) 230.
alter that policy and compel the Gentiles to judaize — which is what the Jewish Christians’ separation implies as the requirement for restored unity. Despite the fact the Peter and Paul are “by nature Jews and not Gentile sinners” (Paul’s use of a Jewish stereotypical distinction between Jews and Gentiles) they have believed in Christ for righteousness rather than seek that righteousness (vv. 15-16). In other words, the basis of their membership of God’s covenant people comes not on the basis of being Jewish and living by the Law (which would distinguish them from “Gentile sinners”) but an identical basis for both Jew and Gentile. 

Verse 17 seems to acknowledge that by finding the basis of their righteousness, their covenant belonging, Paul, Peter and other Jewish Christians (“we…”)

45 “[T]o adopt Jewish customs or live like a Jew” (Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 36 n. 1; cf. BAGD, 379; Dunn, Jesus, Paul and the Law, 149-50). Richard Longenecker’s “to become a Jew” is too strong (R.N. Longenecker, Galatians [WBC 41; Waco: Word Books, 1990] 78). That the verb itself does not necessarily imply full conversion to Judaism is implied by Josephus’ report of Metilius’ promise (J.W. 2.454; cf. 2.463).

Cf. also Esth 8:17 (LXX):

46 “...stereotypical depictions of insiders and outsiders to the covenant — stereotypes common in much of Jewish literature of the time but soon to be disqualified by Paul.” B.W.


47 See further Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character”; idem, The Triumph of Abraham’s God, 89-115. By leaving untranslated, I am of course avoiding the debate over its interpretation, but that is not strictly relevant to my argument.
like the Gentile “sinners” from whom their Jewish identity previously distinguished them (v. 15) — are themselves found to be “sinners”

\[ \text{ןָּֽלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּקְעֹּנְּלֶּk}.

Paul does not by this mean that they are actually guilty of sin before God, but rather that from the perspective of Torah-observance, by their unbounded fellowship with Gentile believers, they have become “sinners”, stepping outside the boundaries of covenant-loyalty centred on Torah.\(^48\) Hence the need for a response to the question, “Is Christ then a minister of sin?”, an understandable and logical objection to which Paul had more than once to respond (cf. Rom 3:8; 6:1; Acts 21:21) and which here as elsewhere receives his characteristic and emphatic negation:  \[ \text{יְּהַֽיֹּנְּוֹנְּוֹנְּוֹנְּוֹנְּוֹנְּוֹנְּוֹn} \] (cf. Rom 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13 etc.). The real sin would be for Paul to rebuild what he had already torn down (namely a righteous identity based on Torah); in that case he would show himself to be a “transgressor”.\(^49\) He has died to the Law and lives to God, and to return to the Law would be to annul the significance of Christ’s death (v. 21). It is therefore highly unlikely that Gal 5:3 means that Paul regards every Jewish Christian as obligated to obey the whole Torah, as Bockmuehl tentatively suggests.\(^50\) In context it serves as a reason why the Gentile Christians should not submit themselves to circumcision (5:1-6). Jewish Christians, if they follow Paul’s interpretation of the gospel, have died to the Law (2:19; cf. Rom 7:1-6) and now are righteoused in Christ and not by the Law (2:16; cf. 5:4). Thus, for both groups, circumcision and uncircumcision now achieve nothing (5:6). As Paul makes clear later in the letter (5:13-25), however, living

\[ \text{יְּֽנַּֽנַּֽנַּֽנַּֽn} \] does not mean living

\[ \text{יְּֽנַּֽn} \] and not \[ \text{יְּֽנַּֽn} \]. This latter view probably makes better sense of the verse, and of v.19 which follows (esp. its contrast between dying to the Law and living to God); cf. J. Lambrecht, “Paul’s Reasoning in Galatians 2:11-21”, in Paul and the Mosaic Law (ed. Dunn), 53-74; here pp.65-6; idem, “Transgressor by Nullifying God’s Grace: A Study of Gal 2,18-21”, Bib 72 (1991) 217-36; Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character”, 84.


\(^49\) Either of the Law, based on his current practice, or (rather more attractive, in my view) of the will of God, which now summons people to live \[ \text{יְּֽn} \] and not \[ \text{יְּֽn} \]. This latter view probably makes better sense of the verse, and of v.19 which follows (esp. its contrast between dying to the Law and living to God); cf. J. Lambrecht, “Paul’s Reasoning in Galatians 2:11-21”, in Paul and the Mosaic Law (ed. Dunn), 53-74; here pp.65-6; idem, “Transgressor by Nullifying God’s Grace: A Study of Gal 2,18-21”, Bib 72 (1991) 217-36; Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character”, 84.

\(^50\) Bockmuehl, “The Noachide Commandments”, 98, quoted above.
lawlessly; it involves living in the Spirit’s power and thus fulfilling the Law — though precisely what this means is yet another conundrum in Pauline interpretation.\(^51\)

Paul’s understanding of the implications of the Antioch incident may therefore be summarised. For Jews and Gentiles to share unbounded table-fellowship requires one of two things: for Jews to live \(\text{M} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} \) or for Gentiles \(\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \). Since the former has already taken place, on the theological grounds that being righteoused comes through Christ and not Torah, it makes no sense now to require the latter; indeed, to do so would be to deny the heart of the gospel as Paul sees it, namely that no one, Jew or Gentile, is righteoused other than in Christ. In this case it is clear that identity is redefined and social relationships restructured by a new defining identity \(\text{M} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} \). This shared identity — and this identity alone — defines the boundary between insider and outsider, and establishes the basis for intimacy and commensality.\(^52\)

Another important passage is found in 1 Cor 7:18-20:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\text{K} \diamond \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{L} \& \text{E} & \quad \text{K} \& \text{K} \& \text{C} \& \text{E} \\
\end{align*}
\]

According to Markus Bockmuehl (quoted above) Paul here “makes clear that his ‘rule for all the churches’ is for Jews to keep the Torah… and for Gentiles to keep what pertains to them”.\(^53\) Similarly, Peter Tomson maintains that this passage reveals that “the observance of

\(^{51}\) See e.g. S. Westerholm, “On Fulfilling the Whole Law (Gal. 5:14)”, SEÅ 51-52 (1986-87) 229-37.

\(^{52}\) Cf. Holmberg, “Jewish Versus Christian Identity”, 416: “when it happens, as it did in the Antioch incident, that Jewish identity conflicts with Christian identity, the former must be abandoned” (see also p. 414).

\(^{53}\) Bockmuehl, “The Noachide Commandments”, 98.
distinct sets of commandments by Jewish and gentile Christians was the basic principle of Paul’s missionary work”.

However, it may be questioned whether this makes the best sense of what Paul writes here, and in the strikingly similar formulations in Gal 5:6 and 6:15. This section of 1 Corinthians 7 (vv.17-24) is widely agreed to provide illustrations of the wider principle Paul invokes during his answers to the Corinthians’ questions about marriage and sexual relationships (7:1-40): on the whole, though with exceptions countenanced throughout, people should remain as they are. In this connection Paul thus states that Jewish Christians should not seek to remove () the marks of their circumcision (i.e. of their Jewish identity),\(^{55}\) nor should Gentile Christians become circumcised. The reason given, however, is that circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing (). Paul follows this with the assertion that what does count is “keeping the commandments of God” (v.19). His Jewish-Christian opponents in Galatia would no doubt have perceived a sharp oxymoron in Paul’s juxtaposition of the statements “circumcision is nothing” and “but keeping the commandments of God”, since Gen 17:9-14 clearly states that circumcision is a permanent obligation for all who would be descendants of Abraham (as all “in Christ” clearly are, in Paul’s view: Gal 3:6–4:6).\(^{56}\) However, as the distinction between dying (¶) and living () shows (Gal 2:19), keeping the commandments of God does not necessarily mean for Paul upholding literally “the whole Law”. (It is also noteworthy that the commands, instructions, and advice Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 7 are based explicitly either on the teaching of Jesus or on his own instruction [vv. 10, 17, 25; cf. 1 Cor 14:37].) Paul does not wish his converts to alter or eradicate the marks of their identity as Jew or Gentile, but insists that these distinctions are now “nothing”. A similar insistence appears twice in Galatians, where Paul specifies what matters as “faith working through love” (5:6) and as “a new creation” (6:15). In all three cases, the marks of identity and practice which previously distinguished Jew and Gentile (circumcision/uncircumcision) are

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54 P.J. Tomson, “Paul’s Jewish Background”, 268, emphasis his.

55 On the reasons why this might have been done, see B.W. Winter, Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 147-52.

56 Cf. Boyarin, A Radical Jew, 96: “keeping the Law while being uncircumcised is simply an oxymoron from the perspective of rabbinic Judaism, because being circumcised is part of the Law!”
transcended by an exhortation or declaration which applies to all “in Christ” without
distinction: “keeping the commandments of God”; “faith working through love”; “a new
creation”. This would appear then to support an interpretation which took Paul’s meaning in 1
Corinthians 7 to be that the Christian communities of Jews and Gentiles, now united as a new
creation, obey God’s commands as they together live in holiness and love, but that the
identity-distinction between them has now become $\Box \diamond \Theta \Sigma \Pi \alpha \mu \iota \pi \alpha \iota \varepsilon \rho$, “nothing”. Paul’s
commentary on the Antioch incident shows that for him this may entail an abandonment of
customs which are part of what it means to live $\Psi \Phi \Box \diamond \Theta \Sigma \Pi \alpha \mu \iota \varepsilon \rho \& \psi \varsigma \varepsilon \tau \rho$, when the unity
and identity of the Christian congregation is at stake. $\Box$ Phil 3:8 expresses a similar
conviction: it is not merely that Paul considers his Jewish identity and righteousness as loss,
compared with Christ (3:7), but that Christ is the one

One final passage remains to be considered, where Paul is clearly writing to a mixed
congregation, or group of congregations: Romans 14:1–15:13. $\Box$ It is interesting to contrast
Paul’s strategy here with that which he adopted in Antioch and Galatia, and to consider how
the different contexts determine that strategy. Moreover, in view of tendency to make Romans
the dominant lens through which Paul’s theology is viewed, the particularity of the letter
should be remembered: Paul is writing to a church (or churches) he has neither founded nor
previously visited, writing to commend (or defend) himself and his gospel (Rom 1:16; 3:8
etc.). In Antioch and Galatia the danger, as Paul saw it, was that “Judaisers” were insisting
that for the community to be united it was necessary for Gentile converts to judaise. In such a
case of conflict between Jewish practice and identity and the unity of the new creation “in
Christ” Paul is clear: rather than effectively compel Gentiles to judaise, Jewish practice and
identity must be compromised. $\Box$ However, in Rome the situation is different: those believers
who do not observe Jewish Law with regard to food regulations, sabbath observance etc., are

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inclined to despise the sensibilities of their Law-observant Christian. The two groups are apparently in a situation where there is some antagonism and division between them, and Paul’s aim is to unite them (15:7). Yet in this very different context — where the pressures seem to emanate more from Gentile-Christian arrogance (cf. 11:13-24) than from judaising pressure — he does so not by insisting that Jewish demands be ignored, but by seeking to establish a situation in which the different customs and practices of Jewish and Gentile believers are accepted side-by-side, as long as they do not prevent the unity and fellowship of both groups within the community which is one body in Christ. However, Paul makes it clear that he, a Jew, stands firmly on the “Gentile” side of the division here, insofar as his own ethical convictions “in the Lord Jesus” are concerned: “nothing is unclean” (Rom 14:14a; cf. 15:1). His view of food is that (14:20). In view of the extensive instructions as to what is unclean in the Torah, Paul’s convictions seem hardly to be those of a Torah-observant Jew, nor of one who urged that “Jews and gentiles should each stick to their respective ways

60 It is not necessarily the case that the “strong” and the “weak” are exclusively Gentiles and Jews respectively (after all, Paul counts himself among “the strong”: 15:1). But it does seem most compelling to regard the distinction as between those who follow Jewish customs regarding foods etc., and those who do not; so Barclay, “Do We Undermine the Law?”, 289-93. In his recent monograph, Mark Reasoner attempts to show that the issues dividing the strong and the weak are not exclusively those of Jewish custom: the abstinence of the weak may be motivated by a range of influences. However, the evidence he adduces to connect the situation Paul addresses with Jewish concerns is much stronger than that by which he attempts to connect the practice of the weak with other traditions of vegetarianism and asceticism in Rome. See M. Reasoner, The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1–15.13 in Context (SNTSMS 103; Cambridge: CUP, 1999).


62 John Barclay puts the point more forcefully: “This constitutes nothing less than a fundamental rejection of the Jewish law in one of its most sensitive dimensions” (“Do We Undermine the Law?”, 300). Cf. e.g. Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-21; m. Hul. esp. 7–10. Contrast Tomson, Paul and the Jewish Law, 247-54. On as unclean, cf. Matt 15:11-20; Mark 7:15-23; Acts 10:14-15, 28; 11:8-9.
Nevertheless, in this situation, Paul’s concern is to defend the position of the “weak”, and, as in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, he urges that the strong accommodate their practice to that of the weak (Rom 14:15, 21; 15:2-3). Here then we see a context in which the maintenance of Jewish identity is defended (though not urged, or “ruled”) within the overall context of a unity in Christ: it is because all are servants of the same &□◆□◆ that judgment of one another is inappropriate (Rom 14:4-13). Yet, as Boyarin and Barclay argue, this reduction of Jewish legal observance to what Boyarin terms “a matter of taste”, a purely personal decision, ultimately undermines the cultural and social integrity of Law-observant Jewish Christians:\textsuperscript{64} identity, social practice and community boundaries are no longer to be marked by a distinctive stance with regard to eating, drinking, and celebrating special days, but rather by common commitment to Christ (Rom 15:5-7).

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AS (REDEFINED) JEWISH IDENTITY

Having focused primarily on Paul’s corporate Christology as the foundation for the common identity which both Jewish and Gentile believers share, one might gain the impression that Paul perceived this body of people “in Christ” as a new entity, a “third race”, as some later writers would express it.\textsuperscript{65} Paul does indeed de facto seem to be involved in constructing the identity and social practice of a new social grouping, one in which there is “no longer Jew or Gentile” but which is something distinct called the ▲□◆□◆ (1 Cor 10:32).\textsuperscript{66} However, he did not himself see it in those terms. Rather, Paul claims for those in Christ the privileged identity descriptions which traditionally belong to what Paul calls ▲□◆□◆ (1 Cor 10:18; cf. Rom 9:3). Although he never explicitly formulates the parallel designation, ▲□◆□◆, to describe the Church, it may be

\textsuperscript{63} Tomson, “Paul’s Jewish Background”, 267.

\textsuperscript{64} See Boyarin, \textit{A Radical Jew}, 32, cf. 9-10, \textit{et passim}; Barclay, “Do We Undermine the Law?”, 305-8.


argued to be implicit in 1 Corinthians 10, and virtually explicit in Gal 4:29 (cf. also Rom 9:6-8).\(^67\) Most explicit of all of course is the unique and much disputed phrase in Gal 6:16 — 曾经 — which seems most likely to refer to the Christian community.\(^68\) All who are in Christ are equally and without distinction descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:6–4:6, 21-31; cf. Rom 9:8; 2 Cor 11:22), inheritors of God’s promise (Gal 3:29; 4:28), children of the Jerusalem above (Gal 4:26), 孩子 — (cf. e.g. Deut 15:2-3, 7, 12 etc.), and 父亲 — (Rom 8:14; Gal 3:26, etc.). They are the ‘people of God’ (cf. Rom 9:24-25; 2 Cor 6:16); the scriptures were written for their instruction (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11); the patriarchs are their fathers (1 Cor 10:1; cf. Rom 4:1). And despite Paul’s polemic against physical circumcision, he describes Christians as ‘the circumcision’ (Phil 3:3; cf. Rom 2:28-29). In view of all this, it must be said that Gentile converts who are “in Christ” are, for Paul, as much a part of (a redefined) Israel as are Christian Jews, and both belong by virtue of their being in Christ (and by this means alone!), who is the (singular) seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16). They are all equally part of the Israel of God, but an Israel whose identity and practice are redefined, reconfigured around Christ and not Torah.\(^69\)

In tension with all this, however, is Paul’s continuing awareness of ethnic Israel, to whom the promises of God still intrinsically belong and whose “failure” to believe is a cause of considerable anguish and theological wrestling for Paul (Rom 9–11). Unlike most later generations of Christians, Paul held onto this conviction in spite of its tension with his belief that God had recreated Israel as the body of people in Christ.\(^70\) Of course, Paul believed that in the providential purposes of God this tension would be resolved — and soon! — when Israel’s time of hardening was ended and she finally came to be saved (Rom 11:26).


\(^{68}\) For arguments in favour of this interpretation, see e.g. Dahl, “Zur Auslegung von Gal 6,16”; Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 98; Longenecker, Galatians, 298-9.

\(^{69}\) Cf. the argument of T.L. Donaldson, Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), who proposes that Paul conceived of Gentile admission on the model of Jewish proselytism, but that Paul’s Judaism was reconfigured around Christ and not Torah.

\(^{70}\) See further Donaldson, Paul and the Gentiles, 239-48, 297-9, 305-7.
CONCLUSIONS: IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY “IN CHRIST”
What then can we conclude about the implications of Paul’s corporate Christology for the construction of Christian community and for the redefinition and restructuring of converts’ identity and practice? The implications of the sociology of knowledge have been influential throughout this investigation, informing the conviction that (theological) symbols and ideas serve to construct identity and to shape social interaction, though the specific ways in which they do this can only be ascertained by exegesis of the relevant texts. This perspective, however, raises questions over the plausibility of a sharp separation between soteriology and ethics, as is required for the thesis that, while Paul’s soteriology was based solely on faith in Christ, his ethical teaching was for Jews and Gentiles to “stick to their respective ways of life”. 71 On the basis both of a sociological appreciation of the close relationship between “symbolic orders” and social practice, and of the exegesis of Pauline texts, this proposal appears mistaken.

Paul’s emphatic and repeated declaration that in Christ there is no longer Jew and Gentile reflects not just a soteriological conviction, but a profound statement about the identity and unity of the new community which God has created, a statement which shapes and structures social interaction in the congregations in real and sometimes controversial ways. Both the positive christological declaration — “you are all one in Christ” — and its negative corollary — “there is no longer Jew or Greek” — do indeed fundamentally (re)define identity and social practice, in ways which, at least in certain circumstances, compromise or even abrogate previous patterns of identity-forming conduct.

The evidence from Paul’s letters indicates that for Paul himself a new and defining identity \( \text{Christ} \neq \text{Jew} \) implies a radical transformation of his Jewish identity and practice (1 Cor 9:20; Gal 2:15-20; 4:12; Phil 3:8 etc.). Similarly, Paul is clear that the identity distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, is now “nothing” (\( \text{Christ} \neq \text{Jew} \)), since both are part of God’s new creation in Christ (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15) — on this point the writer to the Ephesians seems to me a good interpreter of Pauline theology (Eph 2:14-18). Jew and Gentile have become one in Christ,

71 Tomson, “Paul’s Jewish Background”, 267; cf. 266 (“the soteriological equality of Jewish and gentile Christians” bis); also Finsterbusch, Die Thora als Lebensweisung, 61, 63-4, 82-3; M.N.A. Bockmuehl, “Review of Finsterbusch, Die Thora als Lebensweisung”, JTS 49 (1998) 787.
equally and without distinction descendants of Abraham and members of the Israel of God. Hence what defines the “ingroup” as opposed to the “outgroup” is quite simply being 

\[\text{Jew} \leftrightarrow \text{Gentile}.\] The distinction to be drawn in terms of moral obligation and social interaction is not between Jew and Gentile but between those who are in Christ and those who are not. It is this latter distinction which determines the boundaries in such crucial spheres of social interaction as commensality (1 Cor 5:11) and marriage (1 Cor 7:39 —

\[\text{Jew} \leftrightarrow \text{Gentile}.\] 

 Indeed, the change in focus is epitomised in Paul’s insistence that he is not 

\[\text{Jew} \leftrightarrow \text{Gentile},\] but 

\[\text{Christian} \leftrightarrow \text{Christian} ; \text{“in-lawed”}\] in a way which is commensurate with his new identity 

\[\text{Christian} \leftrightarrow \text{Christian} \] (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2). While Paul’s understanding of (Christian!) identity and ethical responsibility remains profoundly Jewish — and this point should not be underemphasised — that understanding is reconfigured and recentred around Christ.

It seems to me, therefore, that David Catchpole was entirely correct to insist that for Paul, “the Christian gospel does a very great deal to the Jew/Gentile distinction”. Paul’s corporate Christology provides the basis for his conviction that all who are in Christ have died to the old era and now live (corporately) as “one”, a new creation, the body of Christ, in the power of the Spirit: former distinctions signify nothing. Paul’s corporate Christology thus underpins a (controversial) model of community in which Jew and Gentile enjoy unbounded table-fellowship, sharing one bread and one cup, demonstrating in concrete social interaction that they are “one body in Christ”.

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73 As E.P. Sanders points out, the phrase 

\[\text{Jew} \leftrightarrow \text{Gentile} \] is “virtually untranslatable” (Paul, the Law and the Jewish People, 100). The phrase in Gal 6:2, 

\[\text{Christian} \leftrightarrow \text{Christian} \] is of course more straightforward — in translation if not in interpretation.


75 Cf. Donaldson, Paul and the Gentiles.

76 I am extremely grateful to John Barclay, Bruce Longenecker and Christopher Tuckett for their comments on a draft of this essay. Needless to say, they should not be held in any way responsible for the opinions, or any errors, herein.