

THERE IS ONE BODY: RECONCILIATION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN PAUL

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There has been a lot of discussion over the center or core of Paul's theology.¹ Martin Luther found the core in "justification by faith" (understood in his own particular manner),² while others have focused on "in Christ" or some other Pauline theme. A step forward was made in the work of the late Ralph P. Martin, the title of whose book, *Reconciliation*, gives the reader his thesis on the center of Paul's theology.³ That is, it was Prof. Martin's contention that, for Paul, the advent of Jesus, God's Anointed One,⁴ was at its core a divine initiative that focused on relationship, and in particular a reconciled relationship to God "in the Anointed One," which also produced a reconciled relationship to other human beings who entered that same reconciled relationship to God. In other words, while what Christians call "faith" may start with believing something *about* Jesus, this "believing something" is so that believers end up in a particular relationship with the living Jesus; namely, one in which they

- 1 See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 1–26, and particularly the bibliography on pages 1–2.
- 2 Ever since Krister Stendahl wrote the essays now included in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), particularly "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," it has been recognized that what Luther thought about Paul's concept of justification said as much or more about Luther than it did about Paul. This recognition paved the way for the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html).
- 3 Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology*, Marshall's Theological Library, vol. 9 (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1981).
- 4 The use "the Anointed One" rather than "Christ" is because the latter term is a transliteration of a translation into Greek of the Hebrew "Messiah," which means "Anointed One." The use of the meaning of *Christos* in this article rather than transliterating *Christos* as "Christ" is done because of a conviction that Paul and those he taught (as well as those taught by other leaders of the early Jesus movement) were very much aware that "Christ" was a royal designation for that "Anointed One" whom God had designated as ruler of Israel and, through Israel, as ruler of the world. When "Christ" becomes merely a surname for Jesus of Nazareth or, even worse, the designation of the resurrected Jesus as something of a "Christ spirit" that lives on, but not as fully human (glorified human in orthodox teaching, and in that sense more fully human than any living human being could hope to be, but still fully human), the Pauline meaning, including the political meaning, is lost.

are committed to him as their living Lord.⁵ Such a reconciliation necessarily entails the reconciliation of human beings to one another. This includes the concept of “in Christ” as well as a number of other concepts. While reconciliation may not be *the* center of Pauline theology, it is a step forward towards unpacking the implications of relationship with God through Jesus; namely, it is a step towards showing that there is no vertical reconciliation with God without being reconciled with others who are also reconciled with God. N. T. Wright takes this line of argument a step further in putting the reconciliation concept into a narrative framework that includes the grand narrative of the Hebrew Scriptures.⁶ That is, as Wright puts it, Paul is not just working on the basis of what Jesus has done in the (for Paul) recent past, but on the basis of how the narrative of Jesus continues and transforms the narrative of Israel.⁷ Thus a major implication of the fresh revelation of the one God of Israel in Jesus is the second step in Paul’s theological narrative, “the People of God, freshly reworked.” It is that step which leads to the third step of a new eschatology. Therefore a major implication of the latest developments in Pauline theology is that, to understand Paul, one must look at the issue of the unity of the Church in each of its aspects.

To be clear, Paul did not start off to write letters about theology at all. In fact, while one might in Paul’s day write a treatise on theology or philosophy, the letter form implies Paul is doing something much less abstract and much more practical. That is, all of Paul’s letters were problem-solving letters. Paul started with a concrete problem in a Christian community and brought in his theology (perhaps even developed his theology in the process of solving the problem) to show why the problem must be resolved and how the problem should be resolved. This problem-centered approach is one of the frustrating issues in Pauline studies, for it means that Paul never wrote a systematic theology, but rather explored theological answers as problems came up. The two major problems that Paul faced were those of Church unity and of Gentile assimilation (that is, what parts of their Gentile past could be legitimately

5 Rom. 10:9–10. This is the key place in which Paul refers to the good news that he proclaimed.

6 In contrast to the Qur’an and many other foundational documents of religious literature, the Hebrew Scriptures are embarrassingly (for some) narrative. They are the story of creation (and fall), election (of Abraham/Israel), redemption (Exodus), apostasy and exile, and restoration. There is a double eschatology in that post-Exodus it is the land that is the goal, while post-exile it is a transformed people living in the transformed land that is the goal. Psalms sing about this narrative; prophets speak into a part of the narrative on the basis of the whole narrative; Torah in the narrow sense is about how to live in the narrative.

7 N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) 609–1266. Wright sums up Paul’s theology in the chapter titles: “The One God of Israel, Freshly Revealed”; “The People of God, Freshly Reworked”; “God’s Future for the World, Freshly Imagined.”

expressed within the community of the followers of Jesus and what parts were incompatible with life “in the Anointed One”). These two issues are related in that Jewish followers of Jesus recoiled from some Gentile practices and Gentiles from some Jewish practices. This mutual recoiling tended to lead to the fracturing of the new Jesus community, rather than to maintaining the historical continuity of the one people of God (even if it was transformed by Jesus) that was Paul’s underlying narrative.

Furthermore, there was also a patron-client structure within the Gentile world, a social stratification that also tended to divide the nascent believing community along class and patronage lines.⁸ Thus, in his letters Paul deals with inner-Church division, on the one hand, and the tendency to split into Jewish and Gentile churches, on the other. Most of his letters revolve around one or the other of these two tendencies to division. This article will start with 1 Corinthians, but will finish with an overview of the Jewish-Gentile issue.

***1. Inner-Church Divisions in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1–3*⁹**

The clearest example of inner-Church division is found in 1 Corinthians 1–3. In the letter’s opening thanksgiving (1 Cor. 1:4–9), Paul indicates that the Corinthian community or church network¹⁰ was richly endowed by God with both wisdom and spiritual gifts. But then he adds that the Corinthian believers were “called to share in/with God’s son, Jesus, the Anointed One, our Imperial Ruler.”¹¹ This comes after Paul has already said that God’s favor

8 See David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

9 Two of the best commentaries on 1 Corinthians are Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

10 The Corinthian church was a network of house-churches spread over the greater Corinth area, including at least Corinth itself with its governmental functions and market, or agora, and the two ports of Cenchrea and Lechaum. It may have included the fortress and temple area, the *Acrocorinth*, as well. One cannot tell how many house-churches were in the network, for the number of people in the Corinthian church is unknown, as is the size of the houses of appropriate hosts. But given the distance between the population centers that made up Corinth, and given the fact that the community tended to meet at night, it is clear that there must have been at least a separate house-church in each center, and probably more than one.

11 “Imperial Ruler” is a better translation of *kyrios* than “Lord” because modern human beings have little experience of a “lord” and miss the fact that this term was used in Paul’s day as a title for the ruling emperor. Those with a Jewish background would also realize that “Lord” was the way that the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures translated the name of God, YHWH, the emperor of all emperors. Yet, even the newest Gentile convert without background in the Hebrew Scriptures could not miss the fact that Paul called Jesus an “imperial ruler” who was above and in contrast to the emperor. This is the translational choice of *The Voice Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), as the introduction to the various editions makes clear.

came “in the Anointed One, Jesus,”¹² that the witness or testimony to the Anointed One had been confirmed among them,¹³ that they were waiting for the revelation of “our Imperial Ruler, Jesus, the Anointed One,”¹⁴ and that God was producing as his goal that they would be “unable to be accused on the Day of our Imperial Ruler, Jesus.”¹⁵ It is very clear that the community that Paul is addressing revolves around one and only one person, his Imperial Majesty, Jesus, God’s Anointed One. They were called *to* him; they are called *for* him; and, when his present rule is revealed (that is, made public to everyone at his “return”),¹⁶ they will be *answerable to* him. In other words, their past, present, and future revolve around one leader—Jesus.¹⁷

At this point Paul shifts from the thanksgiving, which typically opens a Pauline letter (and in a much shorter form, a normal Greek letter), to the body opening of the letter that names the problem that he is addressing: Paul makes an appeal by this same Imperial Ruler, Jesus the Anointed One (that is, both the Greco-Roman and the Jewish titles of authority sandwich the personal name, Jesus), that there be no divisions among the Corinthian believers,¹⁸ but rather that they be united in one mind and purpose (or intention¹⁹ or mindset).

12 1 Cor. 1:4.

13 1 Cor. 1:6.

14 1 Cor. 1:7.

15 1 Cor. 1:8.

16 1 Pet. 1 also uses the idea of the revelation of Jesus. The point is that Jesus already rules, but most people are unaware of his rule. His “return” is his openly bringing his rule into the human dimension from the heavenly or spiritual dimension where he now lives and rules. So suddenly the rule that is presently happening and is well known in the spiritual dimension or spiritual world becomes fully and openly revealed to all human beings.

17 Tom Wright (*Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* [London/Louisville: S.P.C.K./Westminster John Knox, 2003], 3) says, with reference to one of these phrases, “‘calling on’ this name is the one and only sign of membership in this family, though people in Paul’s day and ever since have tried to introduce other signs of membership as well. And the idea of ‘calling on his name’ links this worldwide family back to the earlier story of Israel, the people who ‘called on the name of the Lord’ in the sense of the Lord YHWH, Israel’s God. Right from the start, Paul shows what’s going on: in Jesus, Israel’s true king, the world’s true Lord, Israel’s one God has become personally present in the world, summoning all people into his family.”

18 The term for “divisions” means a ripping or tearing, in this case a spiritual/emotional/intellectual tearing. It is the Greek term from which “schism” derives.

19 Essentially, “mind” and “purpose” are synonyms, as one can see in the alternative glosses of the second term; Paul uses redundancy to rhetorically underline his point. That is, the two terms *nous* (νοῦς) and *gnōmē* (γνώμη) are essentially synonyms. See the definitions in W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*, 3rd ed., rev. by F. W. Danker (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 680 (*nous* [νοῦς]); 202 (*gnōmē* [γνώμη]). The words are derived from two different verbs for knowing. The Greek phrase behind the translation “one mind and purpose” is a hendiadys used for emphasis.

The reason for this appeal is that such unity is precisely what does *not* exist in Corinth. Paul names the source of his information, which is a group of members of Chloe's household. Chloe was apparently a reasonably wealthy believing woman, probably of the merchant class, since her "people" or "household" had traveled to Ephesus, from where Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Slaves, of course, were members of one's household, so one suspects that it was household slaves who had made the business trip. If Chloe were married, it would be unlikely for her husband not to have been named (even if he were not a believer), so she, like Lydia in Philippi, was most likely single, either never married (perhaps the heir of her father's business) or else widowed. Most commentators assume that Chloe was the host, and therefore leader, of a house-church. For the purposes of this article, it is interesting that Paul names his source. There is no "triangling" (in which one of three parties is not included in the conversation), and there are no secrets, including no secret informants.²⁰

Chloe's people have informed Paul that there are divisions in the Corinthian church, divisions that named themselves by certain leaders: Peter (whom Paul always calls by his Aramaic nickname, Cephas, "Rock," rather than his Greek nickname Peter, *Petros*, "Rock"), Paul, Apollos, and even Jesus. There is endless speculation about what these names stood for, but Paul cites no concrete differences and certainly no theological differences. After this initial description of the sects in Corinth, Paul, in this discussion in 1 Corinthians, never again refers to any of those named as sect leaders—other than himself and Apollos (as he does, for example, in 1 Cor. 3:4). The one big exception is Jesus, to whom he will subordinate both himself and Apollos.²¹

All four of these leaders were Jews, even pious Jews,²² so these divisions are not a Jewish-Christian versus Gentile-Christian split. Peter, or Cephas,

20 The term "triangling" and the other concepts mentioned in this sentence are taken from family emotional systems theory, or Bowen theory, especially as applied to church and work systems. This was first done by Edwin H. Friedmann, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guidford Press, 1985). A condensed, more contemporary version of the application of this theory is found in Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Durham: The Alban Institute, 1993).

21 He does refer to Cephas again *outside* this discussion, in 1 Cor. 9:5. He refers to him as an example of one of Jesus' "apostles" or "official delegates" whose wife accompanied him in his travels. That probably indicates that the two of them had traveled through Corinth, although Paul's point is not that Cephas had been to Corinth, but that Cephas traveled with a wife, and so Paul surely had the right to be married and to have his wife with him on his travels, a right that Paul had refused to use.

22 Paul will say in 1 Cor. 9:20 that he could observe Torah regulations, a position that Acts 18:18, among other places in Acts, affirms, since Paul apparently takes on a Nazirite vow. Apollos is portrayed in Acts 18:24–25 as learned in the Hebrew Scriptures and a follower of John the Baptist, to which he added the conviction that Jesus was the promised

was the first leader of the Jesus movement and one of the Twelve, the core group of official delegates of Jesus the Anointed One. Paul was a former Pharisee and by then an experienced missionary, whose method in a given city was to start with the local synagogue and then, when rejected, to directly address the Gentiles. He was also the founder of the believing community in Corinth. Apollos was from Alexandria, so he may have represented not just the educated rhetoric of Alexandria,²³ but also some of the Jewish interpretive perspectives that we find in contemporary Jewish writers like Philo of Alexandria (and later in the Alexandrian school of interpretation in the Patristic period). When it comes to using his name as a sectarian label, Jesus is not named "Jesus," but rather "the Anointed One" or "Messiah," which could mean that some group was claiming direct revelation from him or that they were "Messianic Jewish-Christians," over against the rest of the Corinthian Christians.

However, whatever the distinctions were, they make no difference to Paul. Apparently no issue affecting the core of the good news was at stake. The issue for Paul is that these names exist as party labels within the Corinthian Christian community. This is not someone saying, "I go to the house-church that meets in x's home" or "to x's house-church," as a way of introducing themselves to another believer and discovering whether they lived near one another. This is someone saying, "I have significantly different beliefs or social status or a significantly different style of worship than you do." Paul does not name the different beliefs or worship styles because what they were does not matter. It does not matter whether the differences were related to

Anointed One, according to Acts 18:28. Peter is presented in Acts 10:9–16 as observant of the laws of kashrut (that is, the Jewish dietary rules as to what was allowed or forbidden to be eaten), although he learns in Acts 10:28 and 11:17 that people are not "taboo" and that God fully accepts Gentiles, who did not observe the laws of kashrut, and thus that they could be incorporated into the renewed people of God (via baptism) and were capable of receiving the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul's controversy with Peter was over how far to take this equality, not over whether Jews might be Torah-observant (Gal. 2:11–14). Jesus, of course, was Torah observant, even to the point of wearing a tassel on his garment, which not every Palestinian Jew observed, even though he interpreted the Torah differently than the Pharisees. See Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

- 23 Whereas Peter is described in Acts 4:13 as unlettered and uneducated. This fits with what Eusebius of Caesarea says in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39; that is, that Mark was Peter's "interpreter," which suggests that Peter, who surely spoke some Greek, was not skillful enough in Greek for an unaided public address. That data in turn fits with the fact that Mark, while rich in content, is rhetorically the weakest of the four gospels with a lot of short sentences joined by "and" (it is paratactic) rather than longer, more complex sentences (it is not syntactic). Paul's rhetoric is that of the secondary school, not what one today would call university level.

social status,²⁴ theological perspective,²⁵ or hermeneutical preferences.²⁶ For Paul, the church of Corinth was one church, although for practical purposes divided into numerous house-churches (one could only walk so far, especially at night, and only so many could fit into any one house). It was likewise practical purposes that divided, for instance, the church of Corinth from the church of Athens. At some point between the two cities people would stop going to Athens when they had business in the “big city” and start going to Corinth. And while all of Achaia was governed from Corinth,²⁷ except for major issues, Athens and Corinth formed separate jurisdictions. When Paul planted churches, he seems to have followed these natural and jurisdictional boundaries. For instance, in Macedonia he planted churches in the major centers of Philippi, Thessaloniki, and Beorea, and these were expected to spread their networks of house-churches not only within the core city, but out into their surrounding sphere of natural and jurisdictional influence. In other words, the later diocesan structure was rooted in Pauline missionary practice. But splits *within* these city-churches, that is, schisms or sectarian divisions, were unthinkable to Paul.

These divisions were unthinkable because the Anointed One is not divided.²⁸ Paul distances himself from personal involvement in the baptism of the Corinthians, not because baptism was not important, but because *who did it* was not important. It was all baptism into the *one* Jesus the Anointed One. Paul would not allow his name to be used as a sectarian label.

24 Corinth was a Roman colony with the usual Roman social hierarchy into which were mixed peoples of other ethnicities, who in some cases had their own social status markers. Furthermore, some leaders, such as Erastus, were of higher social status, while others were of lower social status.

25 Did one supposedly get a “purer” message from Peter than from Paul, who never knew the pre-Resurrection Jesus? Or was Peter just viewed as having a higher social status due to his closer relationship to Jesus?

26 Did Apollos have a more thoroughly allegorizing approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, which Scriptures he would have known in Greek?

27 Acts 18:12 refers to the proconsul Lucius Iunius Gallio, who ruled Achaia from June 51 to May 52. Achaia was a senatorial province, the other major Roman province in Greece being Macedonia.

28 The form of the question in 1 Cor. 1:13 suggests that dividing Jesus is precisely what the Corinthians were trying to do; so we could translate, “Is the Anointed One divided?” with the implied answer, “Well, yes, at least in practice.” A very few manuscripts add a *mē* (μή) before the question, implying a negative answer. But while Paul does this in the following questions, he does not do that with this one; for, while the idea of such division is horrifying to him, it is, in a sense, clearly the case; for, where the “body of Christ” (to use a metaphor Paul will later use) is divided, the Anointed One/Christ is divided. The following rhetorical questions imply that this was nonsense, that Jesus, not Paul or Peter or Apollos, was the one who was crucified for them and into whose name they were baptized.

From Paul's point of view, all sectarian thinking was based on a this-age way of thinking, whether Jewish this-age or Greek this-age. Such thinking started with the wrong assumptions about status and power; it proceeded via the wrong assumptions about rhetorical ability and sophistic argument. And it therefore ended with the wrong conclusions.

Paul argues that because God used a Jesus who was *crucified*, he therefore used a Jesus who had no social status (one could not get lower than being crucified, for crucifixion was a "total degradation ritual," in modern anthropological terminology),²⁹ who had no power (he did not even have his closest colleagues around him at the cross, let alone an army), and who had no wealth (he was even stripped naked). There was nothing about this Jesus that a this-age way of thinking would view as positive. But this Jesus was the one God used to destroy the whole this-age perspective that underlay both the Greco-Roman culture and the sectarian divisions.³⁰ It is not wisdom *per se*, or reasoning, or rhetoric³¹ that are evil or foolish in Paul's eyes, since Paul uses all three in 1 Corinthians.³² It is the wisdom of *this age*, the reasoning of *this age*, or the rhetoric supporting this-age perspectives.³³ That is the point

29 See Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

30 In other words the message about the crucified Anointed One is "an illocutionary speech act," since it not only comes with content, but also with a promise and liberating power. See the explanation in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 146.

31 That is, a kind of rhetorical sophistication that bypasses the very *unrhetorical* fact of the cross. Stephen Poglouff calls this kind of rhetoric "sophisticated speech." See Stephen M. Poglouff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 134 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 109.

32 See 1 Cor. 2:6, where Paul says he does use wisdom, but not that of this age. This is the difference between "wisdom" as instrumental reason, technique (*technē* [τέχνη]), and wisdom as (so Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 230), "ways of thinking and judging with wise insight (*phronēsis* [φρόνησις], often translated 'insight')." See also, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1985), 204–243, 264–278. The problem in Paul's writings is that he does not use these other terms for wisdom, but, under the influence of the Jewish wisdom tradition, subsumes it all under "wisdom" (*sophia*, σοφία). See W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. by F. W. Danker (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), σοφία (*sophia*), 934–935, and the range of meanings cited there.

33 It is this paragraph, 1 Cor. 1:18–31, that especially suggests to many commentators that the Greco-Roman social system was involved in the sectarian divisions: which patron was more honorable (the clients being the members of the various groups); who supported which position (the wealthy and high-born being those one wanted to emulate); and which arguments were more philosophically and rhetorically sophisticated judged by the philosophy and rhetoric of this age. Against this Paul stresses that not many in the believing community were in fact from the upper classes, but that the bulk of believers were from the lower classes, even from the slaves, as would become clear later in the letter.

of 1 Corinthians 1:18–31. Divine wisdom, reasoning, and rhetoric start with the upside down perspective of a crucified Jesus exalted as the Anointed One, the one Imperial Ruler (or Lord). This should lead to humility rather than hubris.³⁴ The only one to boast in is “the Lord.”

In the next chapter (1 Cor. 2), Paul applies the principles he has been discussing to his own practice of ministry. As in Colossians 2, Paul contrasts the rhetorical and argumentative skill of the Sophists (who were skilled at proving either *x* or not-*x*, depending on what the situation demanded) and the logical demonstrations of the philosophers (for example, Plato or Aristotle or the Stoics)—which started from this-age assumptions—with the power and revelation of the Holy Spirit. One does not read in Acts about the Spirit having worked a lot of miracles through Paul in Corinth, but given that he refers to miracles here³⁵ and that such demonstrations of power were consistent with his actions elsewhere, the reader is safe in assuming that he did indeed do such things. But miracles and divine revelations only demonstrate the presence of the Spirit and the authenticity of the message to those who approach them with humble openness to God. Jesus worked plenty of miracles. And his teaching was indeed a “direct line to God,” revelation incorporated. But the spiritual rulers of this age (and their proxies in the human rulers of this age) did not “get it.” They crucified Jesus, the glorious Imperial Ruler.³⁶ By doing this they destroyed themselves. These rulers were not destroyed immediately, but they were (and are) doomed, passing away, and along with them all the human rulers of this age are passing away. “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no help,” says the Psalm.³⁷ Paul’s point is that neither the spiritual rulers nor their human front-men “got it,” nor do those operating from a human point of view “get it” when they encounter those led by the Spirit.

So, implies Paul, stop judging others. First, the one who judges may not be perceiving spiritual reality at all if they are using human standards. Second, the one who judges is just parading their ignorance, given that God

These were the ones that God used, for the most part, in building his counter-society, which demonstrated the sham that was (and is) the majority society.

34 In the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the core virtue is humility, as chapter VII shows with its degrees of humility. Even the Abbot, if wisely chosen, will be humble. In fact, he should excel in humility. This turned the social status of St. Benedict’s day upside down, just as Paul turned that of his day upside down.

35 1 Cor. 2:4.

36 They did not “get it,” not in the sense of, at least with respect to the spiritual powers, not knowing Jesus’ rank, but in using this-age thinking and assuming they could do away with Jesus. As Wright (*First Corinthians*, 26) says, “Why not? Not simply because they would have respected Jesus and refused to kill him. Rather, because they would have realized that in doing so they were signing their own death warrants.”

37 Ps. 146:3.

alone is the judge.³⁸ Third, it is the spiritual person who “has the mind of the Anointed One,” and who is therefore seeing clearly. But, of course, such a person is also humble and will not be boasting about their knowledge. Is St. Peter better than St. Paul? Is St. Francis better than St. Dominic? How silly! Do not parade one’s ignorance! Each was a slave of their one and the same Imperial Ruler; each was filled with the wisdom of the same Spirit; and each had precisely the insights and spiritual wisdom needed for their particular apostolate (versus the apostolate of another).

Paul goes on to make precisely that point in 1 Corinthians 3. The Corinthians (or at least enough of them for Paul to make the generalization) were showing themselves to be “unspiritual” or “people of mere flesh” [this author’s translation] by their reasoning and thinking like “ordinary human beings.”³⁹ In other words, their thinking was starting at the same point as others in the world around them. They were wearing the lenses of their culture as to who was honorable and who was not, and they were coming to conclusions and behaviors just like others in their culture. This way of thinking showed up in their sectarian mentality: “I belong to Paul” versus “I belong to Apollos.”

The proper mentality starts with God or with Jesus:⁴⁰ *God* is the one who is giving the growth to the believing community; *Jesus* is the foundation of the new temple. Paul and Apollos? They are just slaves, just workmen (1 Cor. 3:5),⁴¹ each doing the job given to him by God, by Jesus. And the Corinthians are also workers in this endeavor, even fellow-workers of Paul and Apollos. They can build the temple, the believing community, or, in contemporary terms, the Church, well or poorly. They can build with lasting materials or, on the other hand, with materials that will not last past the final judgment. They can even end up destroying the community. How well they build and what materials they use will be revealed at the final judgment and will result in reward or lack thereof. They will have eternal honor or eternal lack of honor. As for actually destroying God’s community, that will result in the destruction of the individual. What does that mean? Is this eternal destruction or temporal destruction? Paul does not say, but neither is a tantalizing scenario.

38 See also James 4:11–12.

39 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 289.

40 While Paul does not “confuse the persons” in that he gives God the Father and Jesus somewhat different functions, he does parallel them, indicating that, while trinitarian language has yet to develop, he is thinking in essentially trinitarian terms.

41 The Greek term in 1 Cor. 3:5 is *diakonos*. See W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, διούκονος (*diakonos*), 230. “Workmen” or “servants” is a better gloss for the Greek word *diakonos* than “assistants (much less “deacons”), because “workmen” carries the idea of the *relative* unimportance of their contribution: they are simply members of the team under the guidance of the Lord.

What, then, does Paul conclude? If one thinks that one is somebody according to the standards of this age, then one is utterly deluded. One has to start with God. This means that one will not make people into party or sectarian leaders, but rather accept them for what they are, God's slaves who have served the various Christians on behalf of God. It is Christ—it is God—who is the owner of all. There is one Church, and it is God's Church run by God's values and viewing the world from God's perspective, which is the perspective of Jesus the Anointed One.

Paul's teaching is also the deathblow of sectarianism of any kind, both the Church-internal sectarianism and the Church-external types. Paul was not denying that one might be grateful to him for being the means through which they came to follow Jesus or that one might find Paul easier to understand than Apollos for temperamental or linguistic reasons. And there were organizational and practical reasons that might make one belong to this house-church and follow its leader, rather than to a house-church in another part of the Corinthian metroplex. But none of those involve "better than"-thinking, nor do they involve denigrating the other group. Nothing that one says or does should tear down another part of the believing community.

2. Paul and the Divisions between Jewish and Gentile Christians

As has been argued above, Paul rejects every form of church-internal sectarianism, even if it does not involve doctrinal differences. But there is also a second issue that Paul confronts, the more famous issue, that of the Jew-Gentile division in the early Church, which was a Church-internal sectarianism that did involve doctrinal differences. It also threatened to, and in some instances actually did, split the early Church into two churches. To put it another way, this conflict was the issue of one segment of the believing community viewing itself as the *only fully legitimate* expression of the faith, basing this assumption on something other than commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as God's Anointed One and Imperial Ruler.⁴²

For Paul, commitment to Jesus as God's Imperial Ruler is the only basis for being part of God's people. There is, for Paul, one people of God, chosen in Abraham to be part of the renewal of all humanity.⁴³ This people of God is embodied in the Jewish man Jesus of Nazareth, who is at the same time one

42 It is clear that the Pauline teaching on this subject will have to be summarized, since it forms a large part of Romans, Galatians, Colossians, Ephesians, and other Pauline works, the exact list depending on one's exegesis of certain passages and on one's definition of "Pauline." However, this summary treatment is necessary to complete the Pauline teaching on Church unity.

43 That is, in whom "all of the peoples of the world would be blessed" or "would bless themselves," either being a legitimate translation of Gen. 12:3c. In this reference to the renewal of all humanity, one sees Paul picking up themes from the Hebrew Scriptures and transforming them in the light of Jesus.

who existed “in the form of God.”⁴⁴ Jesus fulfills the role of Israel and, in so doing, makes a way for those who are not of Israel to be joined to Israel “in him,” thus breaking down the Jew-Gentile polarity.⁴⁵ This teaching on unity is the burden of Ephesians 1 and 2. Yet this teaching also cuts two ways, for, if ethnic Jews do not accept Jesus as God’s Anointed One, they lose their place in the “olive tree,”⁴⁶ since they are not “in him,” not part of the embodiment of Israel. There is continuity, for there is only one people of God, not two. But Paul reads the Hebrew Scriptures as pointing forward to the embodiment of the whole people in Jesus. Thus they receive their fulfillment, their fuller meaning, in Jesus. They anticipate the one who is coming. Now that he rules “at God’s right hand,” one’s inclusion in or exclusion from the people of God depends solely upon their submission to Jesus as Lord.⁴⁷

So what happens when people show up in a particular community and argue that historical Israel was primary and that becoming part of that ethnic group is necessary either for salvation itself or for the fullness of salvation?⁴⁸ This argument would be no problem for ethnic Jews who had committed themselves to Jesus as God’s Anointed One, for they had been circumcised as infants (a public ethnic marker in a world where business was often conducted in the public bath and athletic contests were held in the buff, the athlete being attired only in a well-oiled body).⁴⁹ They had also grown up eating kosher

44 Phil. 2:6.

45 See N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), especially 35–53, 67–73, 136–137, 174–185, which summarizes the role of Jesus very nicely.

46 The image is the one Paul uses in Rom. 11:16–24.

47 This submission to Jesus as Lord, of course, implies obedience to his rule, which is why both Paul and James indicate that commitment without deeds show that that commitment is no more than hot air and is absolutely worthless. There are over sixty references in the patristic writings to James 2, where James repeatedly says that (to use the traditional translation) “faith without works is dead being alone.” In all but one of these patristic references, James is added as a support to Paul. That is, the particular patristic writer says, “Paul says this, and, to give a second witness, so does James.” Only Augustine, and then only in one of several references to this passage (and only in one passage in the work in which he is answering difficulties others have brought up about Scripture), discusses the possibility that James and Paul might be read so as to be in conflict. He discusses this possibility only to argue against it. The James-Paul “debate” is, in effect, a Reformation invention created by reading Paul through particular lenses so that his references to the need to live in obedience to Jesus do not appear.

48 Both of these are possibilities found in the scholarly literature for interpreting the message of the so-called “Judaizers.” There are problems in determining exactly what they were arguing. The first problem is that scholars do not have their works, only Paul’s arguments against them. The second problem is that they may well not have been unified. There could have been some who argued that only those who were or became ethnic Jews would be saved in the final judgment, while others may have argued that ethnic Jews would be “first class” and Gentile believers “second class.”

49 Athletics were also part of higher education, which is why the word “gymnasium,” originally indicating the place of higher education, the integration of inner and outer

food, which cut them off from the meals of the Greco-Romans around them, meals that were very important social and political occasions.⁵⁰ They had also for the most part kept Jewish festivals, especially the Sabbath (which is why pagans viewed Jews as lazy, since every week they took this day off from work, although pagans had festival days of their own, on which Jews did not mind working). For such ethnic Jewish believers in Jesus the Judaizer's argument would be no problem. Life would go on as usual, except that they would view Jesus as God's Anointed One and follow his interpretation of the Torah. This would mean hostility from other Jews who disagreed with this assessment of Jesus, but this hostility was only somewhat different in degree from the hostility that already existed between various Jewish groups.⁵¹

This demand to become ethnically Jewish was a real problem for Gentile believers in Jesus. They were already being asked to give up their nationality. If Jesus is God's Imperial Ruler, then the emperor is not. If Jesus is the divine Son of God, then the emperor is not. If Jesus is Savior/deliverer, then the emperor is not.⁵² There was a strong political dimension to giving one's allegiance to Jesus, to becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God. That is a major reason why 1 Peter 1 speaks of those who were "born again"⁵³ as now being

"fitness," came to mean a place for physical exercise, although in German it still means college-preparatory education. "Gymnasium" comes from the Greek term for "naked," *gymnos*.

50 While some Jews were Roman citizens, often earning their citizenship by service as auxiliaries in the Roman army (as a number of scholars have suggested that Paul's father may have done), basically, Jews were viewed by Romans as non-citizens. Jews were "the nation of the Jews" that had its capital in Jerusalem. This "nation of the Jews" was a nation subject to Rome, but still a different nation than the various local Greco-Roman provinces. They were, in Roman eyes, a nation of atheists, for their deity that they claimed to worship had no image. Still, often, but by no means always, the general hostility towards the Jews stayed under the surface, since officially they were recognized by Rome.

51 There was hostility between Jewish groups such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, not to mention other groups that have not been preserved in the historical record. The inhabitants of Qumran, for instance, had a scroll (the commentary on Habakkuk, 1QpHab) that referred derogatorily to the Pharisees as the "teachers of smooth things" and to the high priest (a Sadducee) as "the wicked priest." Within the Pharisees there were also hostile groups, such as that between the followers of Hillel and those of Shammai, the latter being stricter in his interpretations than the former. These divisions were not just in Palestine, but certainly in Egypt and also in the rest of the Jewish Diaspora.

52 All of these titles, Imperial Ruler/Lord/*kyrios*, "son of God," and "savior" or "deliverer" (Greek *sōtēr*, σωτήρ), and more, were titles of the ruling emperor, so clash of claims could hardly be missed. For instance, the silver denarius that Jesus was shown in Mark 12:5–6 would in all likelihood have had the inscription, "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus, high priest" (that is a translation of the inscription around the head of Tiberius on coins of the period that have been found). One notes that at least two of those titles were used by Christians for Jesus. See further N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) for an accessible form of this argument.

53 1 Pet. 1:23.

“immigrants and resident aliens”⁵⁴ in the very provinces in which they had been born and bred, provinces in which Paul had worked and planted churches. These Gentile Christians were already being asked to give up going to meals in pagan temples or attending civic functions that included pagan worship (which meant giving up virtually all civic functions). There was a significant cut-off from former friends and associates and even an estrangement from husbands and, in the case of slaves, masters.⁵⁵ Now, it was argued that they should go all the way and become full-fledged Jewish proselytes, the males marked with the public-enough mark of circumcision (an operation that was not without its dangers and that clearly said that one belonged to another ethnic group), the women keeping a kosher kitchen, and everyone, even slaves, refusing to work on the Sabbath.⁵⁶ And where was Jesus in all of this? Was he the universal Imperial Ruler, or was he just the king of the Jews who would see to it that that nation would triumph but really had little concern with other nationalities, so long as the Jewish nation was “top dog”?

The practical outworking of such issues is seen in Galatians 2:11–13: “But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.”⁵⁷ That is, there was a church split. Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian relationships had not been as much of a problem in Jerusalem, where the vast majority of believers were Jews, and the Gentile believer, if uncomfortable for a while, would eventually be “going home.”⁵⁸ In Antioch both groups lived in the same

54 1 Pet. 1:1; see also 1 Pet. 2:11. The connection between the two terms was most clearly put by Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), which is a translation of *Der Erste Brief des Petrus*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, Bd. 15/1 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005).

55 It was usually the wife's job to tend the god-shelf in the house and to keep the fire burning that was sacred to Vesta. Wives also wanted to leave the house to attend Christian meetings. Slaves likewise attended these meetings and would refuse involvement in pagan worship, worship that was viewed as equivalent to political allegiance.

56 Exactly what qualified as a kosher kitchen and what qualified as work on the Sabbath probably differed, depending on the teacher. Eventually one particular group of Pharisees would win out and redefine Judaism in a relatively uniform way in the post-135 AD era. But in the first century, there were competing interpretations. This is similar to Shari'a in Islam today. One has various interpretations as to what it means depending on the strand of Islam one belongs to and the particular sect within that strand.

57 Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (elsewhere RSV).

58 One says “[not] as much of a problem,” not “no problem,” for Paul indicates in Gal. 2:1–5 that there had been an attempt to force Titus, Paul's Gentile colleague, to become a Jewish proselyte and that Paul had resisted this attempt. But, of course, it would be short-lived, since Paul and Titus would soon enough be on their way.

city, and then the Jewish group refused to eat with the non-Jewish believers. That does not sound too major until one asks what the common meal was. While surely there were informal mealtimes together, the major common meal was the Lord's Supper/Eucharist/Mass.⁵⁹ Suddenly one had the Jewish believers withdrawing from the "common meal" at which Gentile believers were present and not allowing Gentile believers at their "common meal." In other words, this was, in practice, "excommunication," a division into two churches. And major Church leaders were involved in this split, in particular Peter himself,⁶⁰ and even Paul's close colleague Barnabas. All church divisions are painful, but this was particularly painful for Paul. Gentile believers were faced with a choice: either become proselytes to Judaism if they wanted to remain in communion with Peter, or else leave the faith, looking on all the "Jesus stuff" as a sneaky way to eventually get them to become ethnic Jews. In the one case they remained in communion with Peter at a cost, and in the other case they agreed with Peter, but at the cost of rejecting the faith. Those following Paul's teaching were in the middle: their claim to be true followers of Jesus while remaining ethnically Gentile had been implicitly rejected by the James-Peter group, and yet their continuing commitment to Jesus had been rejected as compromise by those leaving the faith. No wonder Paul was upset and spoke out in such strong terms, especially when this type of teaching and church splitting started to infect the churches he had planted in Galatia and elsewhere.

Paul argues that there is only one divine story, starting with creation and culminating in the birth, Passion, Resurrection, and return of Jesus. There is, therefore, one allegiance, not to the nation of the Jews, but to Jesus as the embodiment and culmination of the people of God. There is one animating Spirit, which is the Spirit that Jesus granted to each follower of his at their initiation; that is, baptism. There is therefore one "body" of the Anointed One. Thus Abraham is "our father" (Jew or Gentile) and the Kingdom of God is "our" nation.

There were, to be sure, issues to work out. One sees this, for example, in Romans 14. Various believers had been formed by their previous interaction with the Hebrew Scriptures and how they were interpreted by their first teachers. Thus, some were sensitive to whether food was or was not kosher

59 See R. Alan Streett, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

60 Paul does not give Peter's side of this matter, so the reader never learns what motivated Peter's siding with "those from James" (just as the reader never learns whether James himself would have agreed with the actions of these emissaries, or whether they had been sent for some other purpose and used their having been sent by James as a pseudo-authority for their actions). Still, what is clear is that Peter (not yet in Rome, but with the authority given to him by Jesus), and in all likelihood James as well, were part of the problem, and perhaps instigators of the problem.

(this was, after all, the common meal). And some were sensitive to the keeping of Jewish festivals, especially the Sabbath, since the Hebrew Scriptures have strong things to say about keeping it. Paul has one guideline for the community: love. Love means “seeking the good of the other as other.”⁶¹ So the believer who was not an ethnic Jew should not try to force the Jewish believer to violate their conscience: it was fine for the Jewish believer to pass the plate of pork without taking any, and it was fine for him or her to keep the Sabbath. God would honor them for doing so if they did so out of respect for him. Likewise, the ethnic Jew should not disallow the believer who was not an ethnic Jew to eat pork or insist that he or she keep the Sabbath. God would also honor these believers who were not ethnic Jews if their behavior was out of respect for him and the freedom he had given them in Jesus. There should be no attempt to get the Gentile believers circumcised, nor to get the Jewish believers to reverse their mark of circumcision. And above all, these things should not be allowed to divide the unity of the one Body of the Anointed One, the one Church.⁶²

It is not that Paul wants to turn the Church into a mutual acceptance society: “Whatever turns your crank, go for it.” First Corinthians 5–7, among other places, makes it clear that allegiance to Jesus means just that, allegiance. And allegiance means obedience to Jesus’ teachings and their unfolding through the teaching of his official emissaries (that is, apostles). Jesus basically lived among Palestinian Jews, so he did not need to speak to issues that were mainly issues in the Greco-Roman culture. Thus, Jesus spoke to the issue of divorce rather forcibly, but not to the issue of having a mistress or a same-sexed lover. The latter behaviors would not have been accepted in the Jewish world Jesus lived in, but they were common and accepted in the Greco-Roman world. Likewise, the use of the courts of law to gain an advantage was common in the Greco-Roman world. Paul speaks to these behaviors in 1 Corinthians 6 on the basis of principles stemming from the teaching of Jesus.⁶³ These might not be forbidden in the Torah (“all things are lawful”),⁶⁴ but those following these practices “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” There is no toleration in Paul’s language for these behaviors, for such behaviors violate the basic principles behind the teaching of Jesus and thus are in contradiction to allegiance

61 This author is well aware that the definition itself comes from Thomas Aquinas (for example, see *Summa Theologica* I-II q.2 a.7 ad2; or Stephen J. Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas* [Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003] 290) over a thousand years after Paul. But Aquinas grasped the essence of the fact that for the New Testament (and usually the Hebrew Scriptures as well) love is not an emotion, but a choice; so the definition fits the New Testament period.

62 This summarizes Rom. 12, 14 and parts of 1 Cor. 7, where these topics are discussed.

63 See the exegesis of Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987; rev. edition, 2014), 231–242, or Anthony Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 423–438.

64 The quotation is from 1 Cor. 6:12 and is viewed as a slogan of those Paul is opposing.

to Jesus. Allowing each to “do their own thing” on such matters would make the Jesus movement boundary-less and thus lead to its dissolution.⁶⁵ What is more, it would make the claim of allegiance to Jesus meaningless.

It is a totally different matter when Paul discusses what differing interpretations of divine revelation meant for contemporary believers in Jesus as the Anointed One on issues to which Jesus did not speak. If the Jewish believer felt he or she should express the continuity of the one grand narrative of Scripture by living according to their interpretation of the boundary markers that God had given the people of Israel, that was fine, *so long as he or she did not condemn others* for living otherwise. There was a physical continuity for these ethnic Jewish believers, and they were free to express the continuity of the grand narrative by living out this physical continuity in their behavior. “God has not rejected his people—see, I am one of the historical people of God.”⁶⁶ If the Gentile believer felt that they should express the reinterpretation of the meaning of being part of the people of God by not observing these ethnic Jewish boundary markers, that was also good, *so long as they did not condemn their believing Jewish brother or sister* and so long as they did not claim that there was no continuity. The fact was that the Gentile believer was “circumcised . . . in the circumcision of the Anointed One.”⁶⁷ They were made, in the Anointed One, to be part of the people of God so that the promises of Exodus 19:6 were as true for them as they were for believers originally from ethnic Israel: “you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”⁶⁸ Paul allows for such differences so long as they are held in a manner consistent with seeking the good of the other and maintaining the unity of the one Body of the Anointed One.

3. Conclusions

What has been argued here is that a core concern of Paul in all of his letters is the unity of the Jesus movement, the people of God, the Church. He did not know the developed structure of the Church, but he did know that it was and should be one. God had one chosen people, a people continuous from Abraham on through the New Testament to today. In the Hebrew Scriptures this one people was based on their descent from Abraham, although even then there were clear exceptions showing that a Gentile, even a Gentile from a hostile people, such as Rahab and Ruth, could be

65 It would also return it to the first sin of Gen. 3:5, becoming their own determiners of what is right and wrong (“knowing good and evil”) and thus taking the place of God, rejecting dependence upon and obedience to God.

66 Rom. 11:1.

67 Col. 2:11.

68 This is referred to in a number of places in the New Testament, but especially 1 Pet. 2:9, which is addressed to a group of believers who were mainly from a Gentile background.

received into the people of God. In the New Testament, Gentiles who believe in the Anointed One, Jesus, are grafted into this people of God in such numbers that they will, in the end, become the majority. Yet, who the majority is does not matter, since all are one people, one extended family, one “in the Anointed One.”

According to Paul, believers may choose to continue the identity markers of their previous ethnicity, whether they be Jew or Gentile. The Jew does so because these markers identified the people of God before the Anointed One came and, thus, have a historically rooted meaning for their ethnicity as being part of the ongoing grand story of God’s dealing with the world. The Gentiles do so because they recognize that God is God of all of the nations, and so they celebrate how he chose them to be incorporated into his people without changing their ethnicity.

But there are three provisos. The first is that neither Jew nor Gentile are to think that they are better than the other (nor one Gentile group better than the other) due to the observing of their identity markers. This is especially dangerous in the case of non-Jews taking up the Jewish ethnic markers. The second proviso is that no group is to despise another ethnic group for its private living out of their markers, nor can that group force its practice on the rest of the believing community. The rule is love, seeking the good of the other. Since one is not better (morally) if one abstains from pork, for example, and since one might violate their ancestral conscience before God if one indulges, love means that the abstainer not try to force others to abstain and that the indulger do so in a manner that does not put pressure on the abstainer to violate their conscience and indulge. The third proviso is that no practice should contradict the life and teaching of Jesus the Anointed One, including the organic development of that teaching by his official delegates (or apostles). Thus the use of prostitutes and mistresses may have been accepted in the Greco-Roman world (although not in the Jewish culture),⁶⁹ but it violated both the teaching of Jesus and the deeper meaning that his followers saw in

69 While in the Hebrew Scriptures some wealthier Hebrews practiced polygamy and there is no absolute condemnation of using a prostitute, by the first century at least the Pharisees rejected prostitution as making one unfit for worship and Jews in general were monogamous (as were Greco-Romans). Some parts of first-century Judaism were strictly monogamous—faithfulness to one wife for life unless she committed adultery (The School of Shammai)—and other parts allowed divorce, and so in some cases practiced more of a serial monogamy (The School of Hillel). For the latter group, not just apparent sterility of the wife, but also “if he sees another fairer than she” or “if she burns his bread” were grounds for divorce. Jesus speaks to this issue, especially in Matt. 19:3–12, and he is very clear that not even adultery breaks the exclusive marriage bond. As a contemporary of this author expressed it, “Adultery is grounds for forgiveness; it is not grounds for divorce.” This, of course, is precisely how God/Jesus relates to his people, for they have often been unfaithful and yet God or Jesus (depending on the passage) remains faithful.

faithfulness of God to us, in what would be seen as the sacramental parallel of marriage to the Anointed One—Church relationships—and in the purpose of sex and the nature of marriage. Jesus is God's Imperial Ruler and if the acknowledgement of him as that ruler is to have meaning, one must obey his teaching (including his lifestyle) and his official delegates (since he appointed them for the very purpose of conveying his teaching). There is one Church, not a Jewish church and a Gentile church; for there is one God and one Imperial Ruler, Jesus.

Yet even within the one Church, on the local level Paul will not allow division. There would, of course, be different local groups, since the geography and the size of meeting places meant that the whole local community of believers could not meet at one time. Romans 16 contains indications of at least seven house-churches in Rome that Paul knows about (and surely there were many more that he did not know about). Geography (namely, that various ethnic groups and social classes would tend to concentrate in various parts of a city) would also lead to minor differences among the groups. For example, the foods served at the common meal would vary, and perhaps the music employed as well. One group might have a spacious, airy meeting place, and another be cramped on the ground floor of a tenement (Latin: *insula*). So long as this did not lead to rivalries among the groups, that would not be a problem for Paul (of course, if there was suffering due to poverty, then he would counsel sharing). But when groups tried to get an advantage by identifying with socially higher ranking patrons or with leaders whom they ranked as higher than the teachers of another group (Peter versus Paul versus Apollos),⁷⁰ then Paul spoke quite strongly. There is one people of God in the city. The social distinctions of the city are meaningless, for Jesus turned such measures upside down though his death on the cross. Leaders are no more and no less than his workers—he is the one and only head of the community. And to divide the community is to split or tear down God's very temple. In 1 Corinthians Paul puts it that strongly, while in Philippians he gives the example of Jesus and then instructs other leaders to assist two apparently rival house church leaders in reconciling. In both letters, unity is his goal.

This article has covered a lot of Pauline territory. It has not attempted to go into great detail on the Pauline arguments for Jew-Gentile unity in Jesus, for there is just too much to cover.⁷¹ Rather, it has outlined the basic issues and the Pauline approach in terms of both unity and diversity. Besides, this division was based on different doctrinal perceptions, and that is where the

70 There is no indication that doctrinally or ethically there were significant differences among these leaders or their would-be followers, certainly not in 1 Corinthians.

71 For instance, see N. T. Wright's two-volume *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), especially 912–1041.

argument for unity is more likely to be expected. It has given more attention to the Pauline argument for inner-Church unity that does not involve doctrinal differences, especially as it is found in 1 Corinthians (with side glances at Philippians). Even without the doctrinal fire, Paul argues for unity, and in particular for the exclusion of the thinking of this age (social hierarchy, societal honor, and shame valuations, etc.) from Christian relationships. Paul is very clear: the Church is one and should live as one. Any divisions into congregations and the like should be based on practical considerations, not on devaluation of others. Anything else displays the wisdom of this age, which has been overthrown by the divine wisdom—that the crucified Jesus has triumphed over this age and the principalities and powers behind it. In other words, whichever way one looks at it, Paul argues for Church unity.

This concern for unity is shown in 2 Corinthians 8–9 in the collection for Jerusalem that aims to both build solidarity in the Church and to express the solidarity that is already there. It is shown in Ephesians in Paul's argument that the dividing wall has been broken down, so in Christ, Jews and Gentiles are one. It is shown in 1 Corinthians where the presence of sectarian groups in the community is roundly condemned. The list of passages could go on, for it would include the whole Pauline corpus.

What remains for those reading Paul is to express a similar burning heart for the unity of the Body of Christ in their own communities and lives. What remains is for contemporary followers of Jesus to live as Pauline Christians.